

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

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### TOPLINE TAKEAWAYS

- *Trump's budget prioritizes war and militarism, kicks diplomacy and development to the curb.*
- *The South Koreans are moving ahead with talking to North Korea, with or without the U.S.*
- *As Team Trump contemplates fueling Syria's fire, Secretary Mattis says it's time for the U.S. to get out.*

### TRUMP BUDGET EXPOSES WAR PRIORITIES

It might seem like several years ago, but earlier this week, the Trump administration released its FY2019 budget proposal. The document shows where **Donald Trump's priorities** are. With regard to foreign policy and national security, Trump wants to unnecessarily ([don't just take our word for it](#)) **shower the Pentagon with gobs of cash, while slashing everything from school safety to food aid.**

#### THE FACTS

Trump asked for [\\$716 billion](#) in total defense spending for fiscal year 2019, a **13 percent increase**, including funds to build [more nuclear weapons](#) we don't need.

At the same time, **Trump's budget slashes funding for diplomacy** and efforts to combat climate change: the State Department would see a [23 percent cut](#), while the EPA's budget is cut by [25 percent](#).

#### THE BUDGET 'DEAL'

While Trump's non-defense portion of the budget may be DOA, Congress recently reached a two year spending agreement that also throws tons of money at the Pentagon -- \$168 billion

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over the spending caps set by Congress back in 2011 to be exact. Over at Inkstick, our own Stephen Miles [breaks down](#) why this is a terrible idea.

## MESSAGING

### **The Pentagon's budget is at historic highs.**

- Today, the U.S. spends [\\$100 billion more](#) than it spent on average during the Cold War.
- The Pentagon doesn't need more money. Take it from Gen. David Petraeus who [said](#): "there is no crisis in military readiness."

### **The Pentagon budget is already bloated with wasteful spending.** For example:

- A [recently exposed](#) internal DOD study found "\$125 billion in administrative waste in its business operations."
- The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter is estimated [\\$160 billion over-budget](#) and years behind schedule.
- The Pentagon has yet to complete a full financial audit, which means we don't fully understand where the Pentagon spends its money.

### **The State Department and USAID play pivotal roles in U.S. national security.**

- More than [150 retired admirals and generals](#), as well as [1,215 veterans](#) from every branch of the military across the country, recently called on Congress to spend more on diplomacy.
- Trump's own Defense Secretary, James Mattis, [has infamously said](#): "If you cut the State Department's budget, then you need to buy me more bullets."

### **Climate change is a national security threat.**

- The Department of Defense has [said](#) that climate change is a national security "[threat multiplier](#)" and military leaders have [urged](#) Trump to declare it as such.
- Trump's own Defense Secretary James Mattis [said](#) last year that "climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today."

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- The Republican-led House [passed](#) a defense policy bill in July that declared climate change a national security threat.

Federal spending on education, health care, and clean energy [creates more jobs](#) than Pentagon spending does.

- The primary beneficiaries of more Pentagon spending are [defense industry executives](#).

**The Pentagon doesn't need any more money. The United States spends more on its military than anyone else in the world.**

Read our statement on Trump's budget proposal [here](#), our rundown of waste and unaccountable spending at the Pentagon [here](#), and check out the National Priorities Project's [graph](#) illustrating the Pentagon's MASSIVE share of the discretionary budget.

## [TEAM TRUMP CONFUSED ON NORTH KOREA AS DIPLOMACY WORKS](#)

The Olympic truce on the Korean peninsula has offered a welcome break from the usual warmongering from Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un. But with the Paralympics concluding on March 18 -- and U.S.-South Korea military exercises as well as North Korean missile or nuclear tests possibly resuming -- it's unclear which direction the [Trump induced](#) crisis will take.

One thing is clear, **diplomacy is working** and it's largely South Korean President Moon Jae-in leading the way.

At the same time -- aside from making zero effort at diplomacy and instead trying to sell war -- Team Trump's North Korea policy is all over the place. Consider the following:

- Mike Pence traveled to PyeongChang to poo-poo the Korean detente, but no one jumped on board. "As it turned out," the AP [reported](#), "with the two Koreas celebrating a moment of unity, **the United States was left outmaneuvered** by an adversary and out of step with an ally."
- Outmaneuvered indeed. At first Pence [called on](#) South Korea to cut off engagement with the North after the Olympics were over, but **he backpedaled a few days later**, [saying](#) the U.S. will pursue "maximum pressure and engagement at the same time."

AND DON'T FORGET:

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- Rex Tillerson, you know, our Secretary of State and chief diplomat, **is largely absent from the North Korea issue**. He tried to push unconditional diplomacy back in December but the White House [shot him down](#).
- **Yet Tillerson himself contradicted Pence's change of heart** on negotiations, [saying](#) the U.S. isn't quite ready yet.
- Trump's nominee for U.S. ambassador to South Korea was forced to withdraw [reportedly](#) because **he wasn't onboard with a preventive first strike on North Korea**.
- Three key Trump administration positions responsible for diplomacy and other issues related to North Korea **remain vacant**.
- The Trump administration and its [allies in Congress haven't been shy](#) about publicly **building a case for war against North Korea**.

## TOPLINE TALKING POINT

**War with North Korea would be “catastrophic,”** in the words of Defense Secretary James Mattis.

- Hundreds of thousands [would die](#) in the first days of a conflict alone.
- The global economy could collapse. War and reconstruction would cost trillions.
- Fully eliminating North Korea's nuclear weapons program [would](#) require a ground invasion.
- So-called “limited strikes” could quickly spiral out of control, leading to “a [massive mobilization](#) of U.S. forces onto the Korean Peninsula, and high military casualty rates,” with total casualties estimated at least [one million dead](#) – and that's without the conflict going nuclear.

**SHARE:** Republican Rep. Thomas Massie recently [sat down](#) with Church & Society's Mark Harrison to chat about North Korea. “[U]pon any act of war, hundreds of thousands -- if not millions -- of civilians and military personnel will die,” he said. “We must do what we can to prevent that from happening.”

## **AFTER ISIS, SYRIA'S WARS WIDEN AS TEAM TRUMP PONDERES FUELING THE FIRE**

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The situation in Syria continued to escalate this week serving as a stark reminder of the United States and the world's collective failure to end Syria's brutal and deadly civil war.

Over the past two weeks, a cycle of escalation between American troops, Syrian Kurds, and Syrian and Russian government forces [has erupted](#). This might be why Secretary of Defense Mattis [thinks](#) "it's best we leave Syria."

Meanwhile, **Assad** and **Russia** have significantly [escalated attacks](#) in Eastern Ghouta, one of the last remaining opposition strongholds that they've laid siege to for four years, killing over 200 people and injuring at least 700 civilians.

Meanwhile, **French President Emmanuel Macron** [drew a redline](#) on Syria, threatening to attack if there's proof that Assad has continued to use chemical weapons in the civil war.

Just last weekend, **Israel** [unleashed](#) its biggest attack yet on pro-Syrian government forces and its Iranian allies, sparking the first open, direct clash between **Iran** and Israel in Syria.

And as if the civil/regional war couldn't get any worse, the Israeli incursion prompted many in Washington to [call on the United States to enter the fray](#), and **attack Iranian assets inside Syria**.

And just as you thought the bloody Syrian quagmire couldn't widen further, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson [said today](#) that **U.S.-Turkish relations** are at a "crisis point" due to [escalating differences](#) over U.S. support for Syrian Kurds.

## KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER:

- **The war in Syria is, first and foremost, a devastating crisis of human suffering** that will only be further fueled by the Trump administration's policy of [unconstitutional escalation](#).
- **President Trump is recklessly endangering America's security while potentially making the intractable Syrian civil war even worse.** The U.S. retaliation against pro-Syrian government forces highlight the quandary of leaving American troops on the ground in Syria with unclear objectives or exit strategies.
- **There is simply no military solution to the conflict**, despite the Trump administration's response doubling down on a [same old broken hawkish thinking](#) that every problem in the Middle East can be resolved with more American bullets and bombs.

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- Trump's military incursion last April has [already shown](#) that increased military escalation will not lead to accountability for Assad or other armed actors, nor will it end the endless spiral of atrocities committed in the war.
- The deepening quagmire shows [Secretary Mattis is right](#): a **political solution to the conflict in Syria is desperately needed** and "The Syrians and Staffan de Mistura's efforts by the U.N. to solve this in Geneva is the right way to go."

## BURIED LEDES

The Foundation for the Defense of Democracies "[can complain all they want](#) about being painted as warmongers. But when they reflexively call for military action against Iran at every opportunity, **it's hard to see them as anything but.**"

ICYMI: A reporter **spent two years trying to fix the gender imbalance in his reporting**. This is what he learned and [why he did it](#).

The United States is [giving up](#) the high ground and **retreating on human rights**.

[\\$30 million](#): That's how much it will cost **to feed Donald Trump's ego**.

The nation's top intel officials [said this week](#) that Russia is already working to meddle in the 2018 midterms, and **Trump hasn't directed anyone to do anything about it**.

**We've spent \$5.6 trillion on war since 2001** -- war that is still ongoing with no end in sight -- and [no one really cares](#).

And finally, [come on Facebook](#), **you can do better**.