

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: As the People Suffer, the Pentagon Demands \$ for Arms Manufacturers

The Takeaway:

- The Pentagon budget was already oversized. In its COVID-19 response, Congress gave it an additional \$10.4 billion. Now, it's asking for more.
- The COVID-19 crisis lays bare the failures of the status quo: pouring money into the Pentagon while cutting funding for public health and other human needs has not made us safer.
- This week, over 60 organizations from across the country [sent a letter](#) urging Congress to ensure that future COVID-19 response bills will not further fund the Pentagon.

No More COVID-19 Money For the Pentagon

In the middle of a pandemic — as people across the country struggle to buy food, to make rent, to merely survive — the Pentagon is [asking](#) for billions of dollars for weapons manufacturers. The COVID-19 crisis has revealed that funneling trillions into the Pentagon in order to wage wars around the world while gutting critical social services, has made us less safe, not more. Now, of all times, it should be unthinkable to double down on the status quo. That's why we're leading a nationwide call: No more COVID-19 money for the Pentagon.

“We're talking billions and billions”

The Pentagon budget is enormous — \$745.6 billion before the crisis. That's about [15 times](#) annual U.S. contributions to the WHO and the budgets of the CDC and NIH, *combined*. For the trillions of dollars fed into its maw, we have received little in return but endless war, unnecessary death and destruction, and a world that is in no meaningful way safer than it was years ago. Yet in the Phase III COVID-19 response bill, Congress gave the Pentagon an additional \$10.4 billion. Now, they're asking for more: “We're talking billions and billions on that one,” [according](#) to one Pentagon official. Unsurprisingly, this demand is [driven by](#) the lucrative defense contracting industry, which sees in the crisis an opportunity to rake in even more taxpayer dollars.

The Pentagon Has More Than Enough

There arguably *is* a role for the Pentagon to play in responding to the coronavirus — the Army Corps of Engineers could, for example, aid in the construction of hospitals. But the Pentagon

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already has far more than enough resources to do so, receiving [54 cents](#) of every federally appropriated dollar. Just this year, Trump was able to find more than [\\$13 billion](#) in the Pentagon budget to be redirected for his racist border wall. And, as new research shows, it actually [returned](#) almost \$15 billion in unspent funds last year.

Yes, you read that right. The Pentagon literally has more money than they know what to do with.

No Shortage of Alternatives

Consider how else those billions could be spent. Over 26 million people [have filed](#) for unemployment since the crisis began. Hospitals are in desperate need of ventilators and protective equipment. Those who have required medical care struggle with the exorbitant bills. Most people have received only a paltry \$1200 — if they're lucky enough to [get](#) even that. And that's only within the U.S. — the global economic crisis is affecting billions more, particularly in the [Global South](#).

People Over the Pentagon

For too long, “national security” has been seen solely through a military lens — only military threats matter, and only bombs and wars can address them. Thus, when the Pentagon wants more money for military adventurism; when defense contractor CEOs want a fatter annual bonus; when fearmongering politicians start demanding more war, they tend to get their wishes, in the name of national security. Not only has this approach failed to produce security in the military sense, it has undermined it in the larger sense — for how “secure” are we really when tens of thousands die from lack of public health infrastructure? The status quo of putting the Pentagon over the people is what got us here. More of the same won't fix it.

Taking Action

This week, over 60 organizations from around the country — representing pro-diplomacy, veteran, faith, environmental, and anti-war communities — signed [a joint letter](#) to Congressional leadership demanding that future COVID-19 response bills not contain another dollar for the Pentagon. The action received considerable media [coverage](#), and the call was [echoed](#) by members of Congress like Rep. Ro Khanna. Heeding the lessons of the coronavirus means redirecting the Pentagon budget from its current destructive uses toward better ends — to actually making people safer, healthier, and more secure. No more COVID-19 money for the Pentagon.

Do defense contractors need more taxpayer dollars? Let's take a look...

- Lockheed Martin had [\\$6.2 billion](#) in net earnings last year, with the federal government accounting for [more than 70%](#) of its entire revenue.
- Raytheon CEO Thomas Kennedy received almost [\\$25 million](#) in compensation in 2018 (that's a 22% bump since 2015, his first year on the job).

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- Collectively, the heads of the top ten defense contractors in the U.S. received [\\$167 million](#) in the last year available. And that's just the CEOs.

Can't get enough progressive foreign policy analysis?

Our very own Policy Director Kate Kizer just published the first installment of her new, monthly column in *Inkstick*. [Check it out](#). This week's piece focuses on bold internationalist ideas to meet the moment.

BURIED LEDES

Today is the 105th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide — a word that the full U.S. government still, shamefully, [refuses](#) to use. Read our Mariam Iskajyan on her family's [personal](#), painful experience with the continued genocide denial.

Remember when we [said](#) that Trump would use the coronavirus to further his racist nationalist agenda? Well... **this week he announced new [restrictions on immigration](#)**.

Muslims in India are increasingly being blamed for spreading COVID-19, sparking a [wave of violence](#) against the country's largest religious minority — just weeks after a visit by Trump was accompanied by anti-Muslim [pogroms](#).

How can Biden win over progressives? **Simple: by listening to their [foreign policy](#)**.

An update on Global South debt relief: **G20 and World Bank debt suspension is welcome, but [far from enough](#)**. Plus: **the U.S. [blocks](#) a desperately needed infusion of cash**.

The UN's refugee agency [declared](#) that **stateless Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar should be allowed to seek safety in other countries**. (Something the U.S. has [refused](#)).

Thursday marked the beginning of Ramadan. In wake of the pandemic, Muslims around the world [have moved online](#) to celebrate.

Donald Trump is corrupt — you know it, we know it. But [did you know](#) that, while many small businesses have not been able to receive loans from the government's SBA relief program, **a company with close ties to Trump was able to get a \$5.5 million loan?**

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A historic trial is taking place in Germany — **two Syrian intelligence workers [are being tried](#) for crimes against humanity that took place between 2011 and 2012**. This is the first time officials related to the Assad regime will be tried by an independent court.

And finally — hungry for another cute animal story? Enjoy [this video](#) of a **groundhog from Philadelphia eating pizza** (while staring down two large dogs).