

WIN WITHOUT WAR

Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: **What's war got to do with feeding your family?**

The Takeaway:

- Thousands of poor people, low wage workers, and their allies will be marching on Washington this June, calling out a system that allows so many to live in poverty.
- Endless militarism and the massive Pentagon budget exacerbate inequality and injustice. We need to reallocate resources towards human security.
- Reducing our military footprint is necessary to address the climate crisis, which disproportionately impacts poor, rural, and racialized communities.

How Militarism Hurts the Poor

A March on Washington

On June 18, crowds will gather in D.C. for [The Poor People's and Low-Wage Workers' Assembly and Moral March](#) on Washington. The march, organized by the [Poor People's Campaign](#), will send a powerful message to legislators: the status quo in the United States is perpetuating inequality, poverty, and violence. Instead of continuing to invest in a system that is killing people, we must use this country's abundant resources to meet people's needs.

When considering why nearly [12.6 million children](#) in the United States live in poverty, you might not immediately think that militarism has something to do with it. But the reality is that the military-industrial complex disproportionately harms low-income people, and too often compounds the historical oppression of Black, brown, and Indigenous communities. Moreover, the exorbitant Pentagon budget undermines funding for essential services, including education, health care, and green jobs and infrastructure.

That's why one of the Poor People's Campaign's [core demands](#) is to end war-mongering, cut the Pentagon budget, and reallocate some of its resources towards human security. As an organization endorsing the June 18 march, we're calling attention to how militarism contributes to inequality and injustice.

Who's Really "Draining the Economy"?

Frequently, poor and low-income people are unfairly blamed for "draining the economy" by using public resources. Yet rarely does anyone ask, "but how will we pay for it?" when it comes to the enormous Pentagon budget.

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In fact, the [average taxpayer](#) pays \$2,000 per year in taxes to the Pentagon alone, approximately \$900 of which goes straight to weapons contractors. In comparison, yearly the average taxpayer only contributes \$36 to welfare, \$62 to school lunch programs, and less than \$8 to homeless assistance programs.

High spending on the Pentagon shows no signs of slowing down. Already, the president's FY23 budget proposed [\\$31 billion more](#) than last year for the Pentagon – a whopping [\\$813 billion](#) in total that Congress may increase by further billions before the year is out. Over the next ten years, the United States is set to spend at least [\\$7.5 trillion](#) at the Pentagon. Meanwhile, the ten year, \$1.5 trillion Build Back Better Act — which included policies tackling child poverty, climate change, and racial inequities — has not been passed because key senators consider it “too costly.”

The numbers don't lie. They show that our government's priority is funding the Pentagon over ending poverty. And this choice is influenced by the people who profit the most from the exploitation of poor and low-income folks — including those who profit off of endless warmaking.

The Big Business of War

In 2020, the five biggest weapons and defense contractors – Lockheed Martin, Boeing, General Dynamics, Raytheon, and Northrop Grumman – [earned over \\$150 billion](#) in contracts from the Pentagon. To guarantee that the contracts keep coming, these companies employ, on average, [700 lobbyists per year](#), and they also fund many foreign policy “think tanks” that release reports urging more funding for — you guessed it — war.

And let's be clear: most servicemembers and workers for these companies are not reaping the benefits. Instead, top executives are getting rich off their backs, [earning \\$276.5 million](#) in 2020 alone, with Lockheed Martin's CEO earning the highest individual salary at \$23.3 million. They celebrate new wars and weapons sales as a [good business opportunity](#), with complete disregard for how this military adventurism harms so many.

Abroad, the many failed U.S. wars and interventions have killed, injured, and displaced millions of largely Black and brown people. At home, they have disproportionately harmed poor, racialized, and Indigenous communities — from weapons factory workers who aren't paid a living wage, to veterans who lack sufficient care and economic opportunities, to people suffering from health conditions linked to weapons testing and military activity.

The Nexus of Militarism, Climate Change, and Poverty

In our [last Debrief](#), we honed in on the “military-industrial carbon footprint” — or the ways that militarism contributes to climate change. Reigning in militarism will help tackle the climate crisis, which is also important as an anti-poverty measure.

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Climate change increases extreme weather events like hurricanes and droughts, which especially hurt people living in rural areas and poor people, who have less infrastructure and fewer resources to recover. The fossil fuel and resource extraction needed to fuel militarism has also destroyed the land and wellbeing of many Indigenous communities, which have the [highest poverty rate](#) in the United States.

Military activities have also caused horrible health conditions, which are especially debilitating for people without health insurance. Contaminated water sources near at least [126 U.S. military sites](#) have put thousands of people at higher risk for cancer, childhood developmental delays, and other severe health problems. Nearly 80 years of [U.S. nuclear weapons testing](#) have also had devastating health impacts on uranium workers and people living “downwind” of nuclear sites, exposed to radioactive fallout on crops and livestock. Even decades after some of these nuclear tests were conducted, the land and water in some communities remains unsafe for agriculture or fishing.

Turn Out to Turn the Tides

Limitless spending at the Pentagon reinforces widespread poverty and rampant inequality as the status quo. The good news is: we can change course. Congress can choose to cut the massive Pentagon budget and invest in public education, green jobs and infrastructure, veterans’ care, and health care. But for lawmakers to summon the political will to do so, we must pressure them to stop pandering to corporate greed. So we urge you to turn out for the march on June 18, and if you can’t, to support the [Poor People’s Campaign](#) and the demands of low-income folks to create a system that invests in true human security.

BURIED LEDES

We are [horrified](#) at the school shooting in Uvalde and recent mass shootings across the country. We’re also outraged at the politicians and their supporters who went to the NRA’s annual gun cult...er, convention. **Win Without War activists showed out to [ruin their party](#).**

[Adel Al Manthari](#), a Yemeni civil servant, was grievously injured in a U.S. drone attack that killed four of his cousins. **[A GoFundMe](#) paid Adel’s medical bills, since the Pentagon won’t compensate him, or admit it killed innocent people.** DoD must investigate this strike — and all past strikes where it’s likely that civilian deaths were swept under the rug.

The U.S. has spent decades trying to spread our policies and ideologies around the world — and now we desperately need a dose of our own medicine. We could look to **New Zealand’s PM [Jacinda Ardern](#) on how to tackle issues such as gun control and abortion rights.**

Our favorite “[ass-kissing and murder-excusing](#)” villain is back. Those are Vanity Fair’s words, but we couldn’t have put it better ourselves.

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The U.S. government and K-Pop go together like...well, they don't. But on Tuesday, **K-Pop sensations BTS** [went to the White House](#) to speak about the rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and discrimination. We hope the president is as starstruck by BTS as we are, and that he turns his attention to this pressing issue.

Buckle up: **up to 6 major hurricanes** may hit the Atlantic coast this summer. While the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has called this an "unusually active" hurricane season — it'll soon be the norm unless we address the climate crisis, now.

14 principled and courageous Representatives are [asking The State Department](#) to urge Israel not to expel the Palestinian residents of Masafer Yatta. As our Policy Director, Sam Ratner, put it: "If U.S. laws conditioning security assistance on upholding human rights don't apply in Masafer Yatta, then they don't apply anywhere."

Along those lines...a new report shows that **\$2 billion in "counterterrorism" assistance to Nigeria has not only failed to defeat militants, but has enabled horrible human rights abuses**. Maybe, just maybe, our solution to everything shouldn't just be "more weapons."

D.C. gets a bad rap, but sometimes it does great things — like [suing Mark Zuckerberg](#) over the Cambridge Analytica security breach that exposed millions of people's personal information. Long live the swamp.

And finally, **What Does the Fox Play?**