

Myth: The Military Prevents Wars

The frequency and destructiveness of wars has increased dramatically since the end of World War II. The number of wars underway at any one time has risen from about five in the mid-1940s to about 15 major armed conflicts and 21 low-level violent conflicts in 2006. Following World War II, there have been 163 wars resulting in the deaths of 25 million people. Being well-armed has made it easier for the U.S. to resort to conflict. During this period, the U.S. used its military in 17 foreign conflicts involving the loss of six million lives, more than half of them civilian.

Myth: Without the Military, We'd Be Enslaved

Following every war (until World War II) the U.S. essentially disbanded the military. Why is such a bloated military so "essential" now? Why does a country—flanked by two giant oceans and two friendly neighbors to the north and south—need a military at all? Who exactly is going to invade the U.S. or destroy our cities with nuclear weapons if we don't have a military?

No country even remotely comes close to the U.S. in military power. Yet what was gained by spending 15 trillion dollars—\$15,000,000,000,000—on the Pentagon (since WW II) if that meant millions of Americans went hungry, became homeless, died of curable diseases, remained illiterate, spent their lives as slaves to boring jobs? Relying on secrecy, violence, and militarism has other devastating consequences:

- A government that solves problems with guns, can expect its citizens will also.
- The largest military in history cannot protect Americans from terrorism. Such acts are likely to continue as long as the U.S. intervenes—militarily and economically—in other countries.
- In the name of "national security," governments lie to citizens about the need for more weapons, the every day dangers encountered by soldiers and military workers, casualties, battles won or lost, goals achieved, and so forth.
- Ultimately, the military exists to protect those with power, influence, and money here and abroad. It's those without who are made to suffer.

Our security depends more on a population that is healthy, confident, and hopeful about the future than it does on an enormous, saber-rattling military. By rejecting a foreign policy built on fear and intimidation, and instead using much of our military budget to rebuild America and improve the quality of our lives as well as those in developing countries, we would earn the respect of the world thus improving our security dramatically.

Myth: Military Spending Creates Jobs

Fewer jobs are created through military spending than through civilian spending because military spending is capital intensive. For example, for every billion dollars, either 25,000 military jobs could be created or 47,000 health care jobs. Consequently, tax money spent to create military jobs means more unemployment.

Myth: The Military Provides Opportunities

Most military training is not useful in the civilian world. Besides, you don't need to join the military to learn how to peel potatoes, file, type, clean latrines, etc. In a recent survey, only 12 percent of men and 6 percent of women made any use of military skills later in civilian jobs. Furthermore, unemployment for young male veterans is 31 percent higher than among non-veterans of the same age; women veterans face 58 percent higher unemployment.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported that discrimination in the military still haunts African-Americans, Latinos, and women. Most women report experiencing sexual harassment; one in ten are sexually assaulted. Though a third of enlisted personnel are of color, only 13% of officers are of color.

Finally, the Pentagon always aggressively recruits the young, the poor, and the unskilled, because the military knows they have fewer job options, are more easily trained, and are less likely to resist orders to kill or be killed.

Myth: More Is Spent on Welfare than on the Military

Welfare amounts to 4 percent of what you pay in federal income taxes each year. However, expenditures for current and past military programs account for 52% of your federal income taxes.