



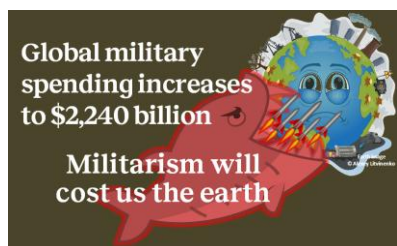
Peace Movement Aotearoa

PO Box 9314, Wellington 6141, Aotearoa New Zealand. Tel +64 4 382 8129

Email icanz@xtra.co.nz Web site www.converge.org.nz/pma

Global military spending increase: Militarism will cost us the earth

24 April 2023



Despite the rapidly escalating climate emergency and humanitarian crises around the world, global military spending increased to its highest ever recorded level last year according to new figures released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) today - the Global Day of Action on Military Spending.

SIPRI has estimated global military expenditure last year was at least \$2,240 billion (US) - a spending increase of 3.7% in real terms in 2022 (a 6.5% nominal increase in current prices without adjusting for inflation) - which averages out to more than \$6.1 billion (US) spent every day. ^[1]

By way of contrast, on average more than 13,600 children under the age of five died every day last year from mainly preventable causes - lack of access to adequate food, clean water and basic medicines - a figure UNICEF describes as an “immense, intolerable” loss of life. ^[2] This is one of the prices paid, the collateral damage that is seldom talked about, for maintaining armed forces in a state of combat readiness around the world.

It is inexcusable that many states - including New Zealand - continue to prioritise spending on combat-ready armed forces over human health and wellbeing, and care for the planet. Over the past few years both the COVID-19 pandemic and the rapidly escalating climate emergency have devastated lives and livelihoods around the world, highlighted and exacerbated systemic social, economic and political inequities, and exposed multiple flaws in government spending and other priorities, including the folly of maintaining armed forces in a constant state of combat readiness when there are so many other more pressing needs.

It is more obvious than ever before that military spending does nothing to address the major global threats and their local impacts, whether a pandemic, obscene levels of poverty and social inequity, or the climate catastrophe - instead, military spending diverts resources that could be put to far better use.

Every dollar of military expenditure is a dollar taken away from socially useful spending - a dollar that could be used to take real action on climate change, to ensure a decent standard of living for all, and to ensure health and social welfare systems can function well in national, regional or global emergencies: it is a dollar that could be used to save lives, to promote climate justice, flourishing communities and care for the planet, rather than being spent on endless preparations for war.

Now more than ever, with the future of life on earth at stake, states must work together to find sustainable solutions, instead of continuing to pour public money into wasteful destructive military activity - the ultimate in unsustainability, with military emissions estimated to be at least 5.5% of the global total.

The five largest military spenders in 2022 were the US (39% of the global total), China (13%), Russia (3.9%), India (3.6%) and Saudi Arabia (3.3%), which together accounted for 63% of world military spending. ^[1] Military expenditure decreased in Africa (-5.3%) last year, but increased in four of the five geographical regions, with the highest increase in Europe (+13%), followed by the Middle East (+3.2%), then Asia and Oceania (+2.7%) and the Americas (+0.3). Overall in 2022, the military burden (military spending as a share of gross domestic product) globally was 2.2%. ^[1]

New Zealand's military spending

While New Zealand does not feature in the SIPRI table ranking the highest increases in military spending around the world this year as it did in 2020 ^[3], that is simply because other states increased their spending by more, not because there has been any reduction in New Zealand's military spending.

Despite the urgent need for action on climate change, as well as the desperate need for increased funding for essential public services including health, education, housing and support for persons with disabilities, the New Zealand government continues to prioritise military spending.

In last year's 'Wellbeing' Budget, military spending was a total \$6,077,484,000 - an average of more than \$116.8 million every week, and a 10.4% increase on actual spending in 2021. ^[4] The spectre of an additional \$20 billion (NZ) to be spent over the next decade on increased combat capability, warships and military aircraft continues to threaten the possibility of substantive action on human health and wellbeing, and climate justice. ^[4]

The ongoing prioritising of military spending - whether here in Aotearoa or around the world - is a reflection of the destructive deadly ideology of militarism, which focuses on outdated narrow military security concepts that continue to harm the future of humanity and the planet, rather than real human security that meets the needs of all.

It is truly shameful that military spending continues to rise in the midst of ongoing social inequities, the rapidly worsening climate catastrophe and humanitarian crises: a transition from combat-ready armed forces to civilian agencies to meet the needs of all peoples and the planet is long overdue. ^[5]

The IPCC has warned that if we want to have a liveable future, taking the right action now is needed for the transformational change essential for a sustainable, equitable world ^[6] - clearly it is time to invest in the future for peoples and planet, and budget for peace, not war. Unless there is an immediate and meaningful change in states' priorities, militarism will cost us the earth.

Resources and references:

- Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign on Military Spending, <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm>
- SIPRI, <https://www.sipri.org>

^[1] 'World military expenditure reaches new record high as European spending surges, SIPRI, 24 April 2023, and 'Trends in world military expenditure 2022', SIPRI Fact Sheet, April 2023, both are available at <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm>

^[2] 'Levels and Trends in Child Mortality: Report 2022', UN Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, January 2023

^[3] 'Global military spending increases, New Zealand ranks in report', Peace Movement Aotearoa, 27 April 2020, <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/nzgdams2020.pdf>

^[4] 'NZ military spending increases again: Time to #BudgetForPeace', Peace Movement Aotearoa, 19 May 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/PeaceMovementAotearoa/posts/5103486763031985>

^[5] As outlined, for example, in 'NZ military spending increases again', note above.

^[6] See, for example, 'Urgent climate action can secure a liveable future for all', IPCC, 20 March 2023, <https://www.ipcc.ch/2023/03/20/press-release-ar6-synthesis-report>