

Peaceful Conflict Resolution Benefits Everyone

by Victoria Ross,

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In response to the interesting question in The Buffalo News Aug. 2, “Does America Spend Enough on Defense”?: We don’t need more military spending – we need less. Our military aggression makes us a target.

John Quigley rightly points out that we should be building bridges at home, rather than bombing bridges abroad and maintaining about 1,000 military bases worldwide. He observes that the average annual defense budget has risen, not fallen, since George W. Bush left office.

In opposition, James Jay Carafano claims that cuts to military spending will leave the United States weaker than before 9/11: without continual increases in military spending, others will think we’re weak and attack us. However, al-Qaida’s 9/11 attack was not caused by perceived weakness.

The United States spends \$15 billion more on its military than the next nine countries put together (International Institute for Strategic Studies), or more than 34 percent of the military spending for the entire world (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2015).

What have we got to show for such spending?

- A drone program that kills 28 people for each one targeted, and they may be reported killed up to seven times (Reprieve’s 2014 study “You Never Die Twice”) – prompting the question: who was actually killed?
- Ever-multiplying numbers of potential “terrorists,”

persons violently disposed toward U.S. citizens in reaction to U.S. terrorizing of whole communities (by soldiers' night raids on suspect family homes, and frequent drone surveillance with intermittent deadly attacks).

- Culpability for war crimes. Attacks are made without regard for humanitarian principles of international law governing armed conflicts (e.g., necessity and proportionality; protection for civilians, especially women and children; and prohibition against collective punishment).

We are the only country that has used nuclear bombs, and we maintain our nuclear arsenal at great financial and environmental cost rather than pursuing nuclear disarmament. The treaty with Iran is the first recent serious attempt toward nuclear nonproliferation.

Hopefully Congress will support the treaty with Iran. Iran will benefit by the end of sanctions – as will U.S. businesses eager to enter that market. Diplomacy rather than military efforts make this a real victory for the United States.

Such peaceful and just conflict resolution benefits all, and is much more effective in reducing violence. Let's invest in life-sustaining efforts instead.

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