



# ***A Global Day of Reckoning***

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On Tuesday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, the International Peace Bureau and the Institute for Policy Studies will kick off its second annual "[Global Day of Action on Military Spending](#) ." The event seeks to bring public, political, and media attention to the rising costs of military spending and the folly of war. It also aims to stress the dire need to realign our priorities to address the crisis's impacting our troubled world.

The annual occasion coincides with the release of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) new annual figures on military expenditures. In 2010 alone, global military spending rose to an all-time high of \$1.63 trillion. Organizers of the event are calling for a united focus on "human lives and needs" and new direction in tackling the scourges of poverty, hunger, lack of education, poor health care and environmental issues that threaten the planet.

In America, the Global Day of Action should also be a day when politicians are forced to obey the will of the people. On that day vast constituencies of conscientious Americans ought to send a message to war hungry political candidates and a Congress stubbornly intent on slashing America's safety nets for the poor and disadvantaged while refusing to trim a military budget gone drastically awry.

According to researchers at [Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies](#), the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq will eventually cost Americans between \$3.2 and \$4 trillion. That amount--according to several anti-war organizations --is more than enough to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs, fully fund a national health care plan, provide free college education to all high school graduates and completely fund a nationwide renewable energy program .

Even though the primary factor that led to the nation's current deficit dilemma was war spending, bull-headed politicians astonishingly declare they will initiate yet another deadly military adventure in Iran if necessary.

If all other strategies fail, GOP presidential nominee hopefuls Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich said they'd be [willing to go to war](#) to keep Iran from attaining nuclear weapons. Ron Paul, who definitely won't be the GOP nominee, was the only candidate who voiced a common sense retort to war rhetoric: "I'm afraid what's going on right now is similar to the war propaganda that went on against Iraq," Paul said.

President Barack Obama also challenged [candidates who expressed a need for the U.S. to harden its position against Iran](#) : "When I see the casualness with which those folks talk about war, I am reminded of the costs involved in war," Obama said. It's not the candidates "popping off" about war who will make sacrifices, Obama added, "it's these incredible men and women in uniform and their families who pay the price."

Not only are political candidates and mostly right-leaning legislators ignoring Paul and Obama, they continue to disregard the wishes of the American people. According to a Reuters/Ipsos [poll](#) released in March, the majority of Americans prefer cutting defense spending to reduce the federal deficit rather than taking money from public retirement and health programs. The polling data indicates that 51 percent of Americans support reducing defense spending and only 28 percent want to cut entitlement programs such as Medicare and Medicaid for the elderly and poor.

Romney, the candidate most likely to challenge Obama in the 2012 elections, has [introduced a plan](#) that's 60 percent higher than the \$525 billion Obama proposed in his FY 2011 defense budget, according to the Cato Institute .

Since the so-called "Super Committee" failed to [produce](#) a debt reduction plan, \$1.2 trillion in across-the-board defense and non-defense cuts are supposed to kick in automatically. Some Republican lawmakers, like Senate Minority Whip [Jon Kyl](#) (R-Ariz.) who sat on the super committee, vow to fight military spending cuts. The "off limits" approach is unacceptable, said Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) who insists deficit-reduction efforts include more military cuts: "Under an all-of-the-above approach, the Pentagon should not be treated as off limits," Schumer said. "There is waste in defense just like there is waste in the rest of the discretionary budget."

The military industrial complex is a powerful force supported by war barons and private-sector monopolies dependent on the production of weaponry and exorbitantly-paid privatized security forces to maintain the messes they create. Politicians have turned a deaf ear to the will of the people and are perfectly content with bartering new jobs and the safety of elderly and impoverished Americans in order to protect and increase an already out-of-control military spending budget.

The Global Day of Action on Military Spending is the appropriate time to refute the "propaganda" Paul mentioned and beat back the callous drumbeat of war and more wars. April 17<sup>th</sup> should be the day we collectively stir the nation's consciousness and direct its attention to issues that really matter. It should be a time of reckoning for morally reckless politicians-a rallying cry for massive reaction. The global day of action is the perfect time

to bring international attention to the real costs of war and the desperate need to protect our planet and defend humanity.