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NOVEMBER 01, 2009

For the Common Defense?



Cato's Christopher Preble [passes along](#) the following remarkable (though unremarked) news:

Earlier this week, President Obama signed into law the \$680 billion FY 2010 Defense Authorization Bill, the largest such budget since the end of World War II. If you missed that aspect of the story, you weren't alone. Many news stories chose instead to focus on the hate crime provisions tacked onto the bill....

You see, most of the money we spend on our military is not geared to defending the United States. Rather, it encourages other countries to free-ride on the U.S. military instead of taking prudent steps to defend themselves.

The massive defense bill represents only part of our military spending. The appropriations bill moving through Congress governing veterans affairs, military construction and other agencies totals \$133 billion, while the massive Department of Homeland Security budget weighs in at \$42.8 billion. This comprises the visible balance of what Americans spend on our national security, loosely defined. Then there is the approximately \$16 billion tucked away in the Energy Department's budget, money dedicated to the care and maintenance of the country's huge nuclear arsenal.

All told, every man, woman and child in the United States will spend more than \$2,700 on these programs and agencies next year. By way of

comparison, the average Japanese spends less than \$330; the average German about \$520; China's per capita spending is less than \$100.

And yet, despite these enormous expenditures, we cannot achieve our aims in one of the poorest countries in the world, against an adversary that spends an infinitesimal amount on their arms. Maybe it's time to rethink our defense strategy.

(AP Photos)

Posted by Greg Scoble at 5:49 PM | [Send to a Friend](#) | [Email Author](#) | [Print](#) | [Permalink](#) | [Comments](#)

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