

Matt Yglesias

Today at 3:15 pm

America Spends A Lot on Defense

Yesterday, congress appropriated a [\\$680 billion for the Department of Defense in FY 2010](#). Chris Preble observes that, shockingly enough, this \$680 billion isn't even the whole bill:

The 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.**

Preble says that this enormous expenditure “flows directly from our foreign policy.” But it's worth also saying that our foreign policy flows from the vast scope of our defense spending. My biggest concern about the war in Afghanistan isn't overblown feasibility concerns, but the failure to take seriously David Obey's point that we should put this in [some kind of cost-benefit framework](http://yglesias.thinkprogress.org/archives/2009/10/david-obeys-radical-idea.php). Arne Duncan doesn't have a \$700 billion per year budget to play with as he tries to help American kids learn. Jay Rockefeller doesn't get to say “I could make this health plan really good by kicking the ten year cost up to \$7 trillion.” People are [starving in Ethiopia](#) for want of a fraction of the DOD's *daily* budget in food aid.

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2 Responses to “America Spends A Lot on Defense”

1. *tsg* Says:

[October 23rd, 2009 at 3:25 pm](#)

It's nice that Yglesias is aware that sure do spend vast sums on *the military* (although irritating that he continues to use the word “defense” as an Orwellian synonym).

Enough about that, though. It's time we get to taxing beer and soda to pay for some health clinics.

2. *Jasper* Says:

[October 23rd, 2009 at 3:28 pm](#)

By rights one should also included that portion of interest expense attributable to defense spending over the years. The real total is around a trillion.

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