



# *Peace Movement Aotearoa*

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## **Global military spending rises / Welfare or warfare? forum in Wellington**

5 April 2016

Today is the start of the Global Days of Action on Military Spending, when the latest global military spending figures are released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). A public forum on government spending priorities - 'Welfare or warfare? Dollars and sense' - will be held in Wellington tomorrow to mark the Global Days of Action, with speakers from UNICEF, the NZ Council of Christian Social Services and Peace Movement Aotearoa (details below).

According to the figures released by SIPRI today, world military expenditure last year was more than \$1,676 billion (USD), an increase of 1 per cent in real terms from 2014. The increase reflects continuing growth in Asia and Oceania, Central and Eastern Europe, and some Middle Eastern states; and a decline in spending in Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>1</sup>

The United States remained by far the world's biggest spender in 2015, despite its expenditure falling by 2.4 per cent to \$596 billion. Among the other top spenders, China's expenditure rose by 7.4 per cent to \$215 billion, Saudi Arabia's grew by 5.7 per cent to \$87.2 billion - making it the world's third largest spender - and Russia's increased by 7.5 per cent to \$66.4 billion.

Last year's global military spending averages out to US\$4.6 billion every day. By way of contrast, on average more than 16,160 children under the age of five die every day around the world from mainly preventable causes - lack of access to adequate food, clean water and basic medicines. 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.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the military expenditure figures, this year SIPRI has released a backgrounder 'Military versus social expenditure: The opportunity cost of world military spending', which includes comparative figures for military and health expenditure, and between military expenditure and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>3</sup>

According to SIPRI, military spending in Asia and Oceania rose by 5.4 per cent in 2015 and by 64 per cent between 2006 and 2015, reaching \$436 billion in 2015 at current prices and exchange rates. China had by far the highest military expenditure in the region: an estimated \$215 billion, or 49 per cent of regional spending. This was more than four times that of India, which was the region's second largest spender. Almost all countries in the region

increased their spending between 2006 and 2015. However, the level of growth varied widely: Afghanistan, New Zealand and Singapore each increased by around 9 per cent compared with China and Indonesia which grew 132 and 150 per cent, respectively. Only Fiji recorded a significant decrease between 2006 and 2015 (-23 per cent). Japan's spending was down by 0.5 per cent over the period.<sup>4</sup>

It is shameful to see New Zealand included in the list of states that have increased military spending - in last year's Budget, more than \$3.45 billion (NZD) was allocated for the armed forces, which averages out to more than \$66.4 million dollars a week. The combat capability upgrade for the navy's two frigates alone will cost \$450 million. In addition to annual military spending of more than \$3 billion, a forecast \$16 billion will be spent over the next 15 years to replace military aircraft and the two frigates.<sup>5</sup> This at a time when child poverty is at an all time high with 29% of children living in families with an income below the poverty line, a further 14% of children are living in conditions of material hardship, there is a crisis in social housing and other areas of social spending.

Better uses for New Zealand's military budget will be discussed in a public forum in Wellington starting at 1pm on Wednesday, 6 April, at St Andrew's on The Terrace, 30 The Terrace.<sup>6</sup>

## **Links to more information**

\* Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign on Military Spending,  
<http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm>

<sup>1</sup> SIPRI release: 'World military spending resumes upward course, says SIPRI', 5 April 2016) World military expenditure, 5 April 2016,  
<http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/milexrel2016.pdf> and <http://www.sipri.org>

<sup>2</sup> Time for action on military spending, Peace Movement Aotearoa, 5 April 2016 - leaflet at  
<http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/milspend-leaflet.pdf> - poster at  
<http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/milspend-poster.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> 'Military versus social expenditure: The opportunity cost of world military spending', SIPRI, 5 April 2016, <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/milexopp2016.pdf> and <http://www.sipri.org>

<sup>4</sup> [4] SIPRI fact sheet: 'Trends in world military expenditure 2015', 5 April 2016,  
<http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/milexfacts2016.pdf> and <http://www.sipri.org>

<sup>5</sup> Public consultation: Defence White Paper 2015, Peace Movement Aotearoa, June 2015,  
<http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/afrev15.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> 'Dollars and sense', public forum in Wellington on Wednesday, 6 April 2016 - on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/events/844286715701094> - A4 poster at <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/dollars-and-sense-forum2016.pdf>