

Who Will Pay for this Puny Defense Budget?

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[Back to Previous Page](#)

The new 2008 Defense Budget has been on the street since February 5th. A consensus has emerged in Washington about its size. That consensus has little to do with the facts and much to do with political maneuvering, which has been orchestrated with brilliant success by the very same White House that everyone in Washington discounts as washed up.

President Bush's request for a Pentagon budget for fiscal year 2008 is \$481 billion. To know total US security costs, add to that \$142 billion to cover the anticipated costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; add again \$17 billion requested for nuclear weapons costs in the Department of Energy; add another \$5 billion for miscellaneous defense costs in other agencies, such as the General Services Administration's National Defense Stockpile, the Selective Service, and some Coast Guard and international FBI costs. You get a total of \$647 for 2008.

That considerable amount will strike some as incomplete. An inclusive definition of our defense budget might also include homeland security costs; for those expenses (beyond the ones already in the Defense Department) add \$36 billion. There are other essential US security costs in the budget of the State Department for diplomacy, arms aid to allies, UN peacekeeping, reconstruction aid for Iraq and Afghanistan and foreign aid for other countries; add all or most of the International Affairs budget (\$38 billion). Some might want to include some of the human costs of past and current wars; add another \$84 billion from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Still others might also want to add the share of annual payments on the interest of the national debt that can be attributed to the Defense Department; add still another \$75 billion. There's more; various defense related costs, such as costs to the Treasury for military retirement, are distributed all over the federal government.

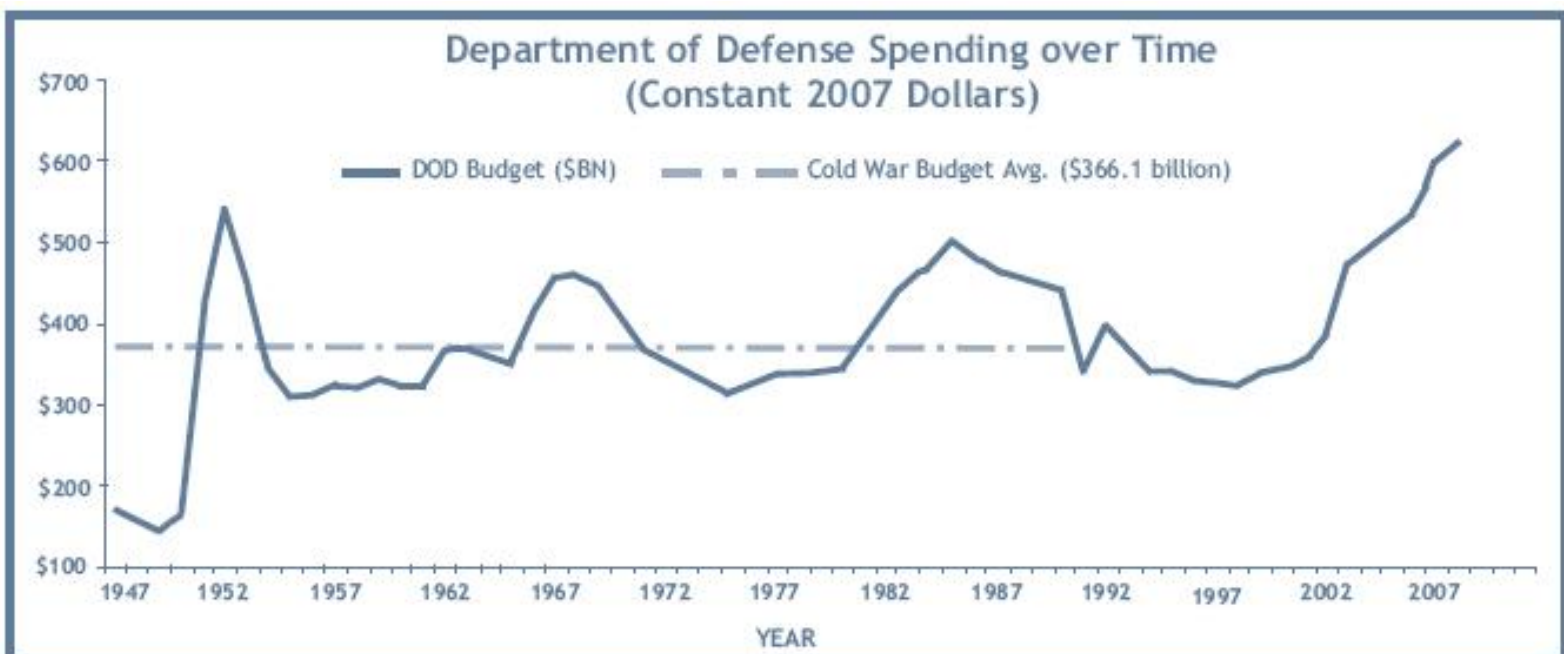
The total for costs identified here comes to \$878 billion for 2008: a huge amount, but there will probably be even more. Many analysts believe the war costs will grow for 2008, especially if the tempo of the fighting grows in Iraq or Afghanistan, which has been the pattern for both up to now. Moreover, if the White House and Congress have cut corners on the costs to repair and replace equipment worn out by war operations, which has been their routine all the way through 2007, there will be additional "reset" costs for 2008, very probably in the billions of dollars.

What is the "Defense Budget?" (\$Billions, Total Budget Authority)

Category	2006	2007	2008 (Requested)
"Peacetime" DoD (Discretionary only)	410.7	435.5	481.4
Mandatory Programs	59.3	1.7	1.8
Emergencies	123.8	163.4	141.7
Total DoD	593.8	600.1	624.6
DoE/Defense	17.5	17.0	17.4
Miscellaneous	5.9	5.2	5.2
National Defense Budget Function	617.2	622.4	647.2
Homeland Security (non DoD)	32.4	33.0	36.4
DVA	71.0	74.5	84.4
International Affairs	32.8	34.1	38.3
Grand Total	694.6	761.5	802.9

There are also the costs estimated by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) to actually execute the 2008 Pentagon budget. For many years, CBO has found that DOD underestimates its own costs to develop, produce, and maintain weapons and to support military personnel - beyond the other underestimations of war costs. If CBO is right (and just about every Pentagon budget analyst says it is), add somewhere between \$50 and \$100 billion, just for 2008.

The actual total for 2008 is unknown; it will not be the \$878 billion cited above.



Include or exclude any of the incremental costs listed above according to your own biases of what you believe should be counted; by any measure it is not puny. Spending just for Pentagon expenses in 2008 (\$625 billion) is today larger in inflation-adjusted dollars than at any point since the end of World War II.

Graphics and text are by Winslow T. Wheeler, Director of the Straus Military Reform Project of the Center for Defense Information in Washington. Dr. Wheeler spent 31 years working on national security issues for senators from both political parties and for the Government Accountability Office.

To read the full commentary, which was printed in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* on March 4, 2007, and also published by the *McClatchy-Tribune News Service* syndicate on March 5th, click on this link:

[Ringin' Up the Bill for America's Defense](#)