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FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

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Militarism: Escaping the Trap

Friends have long sought to live, in the words of George Fox, “in the virtue of that life and power that [takes] away the occasion for all wars.” What does that commitment look like today, in a country that seems to be moving in the opposite direction?

Militarism permeates our society. Our nation’s budget is skewed towards the Pentagon, and local economies depend increasingly on military industries as contractors reap the benefits. Our government gives surplus military equipment to local police forces and then wrings its hands when police officers see their own communities as the enemy.

Without belief that change is possible, nothing will change; but faith can move mountains.

Diana Francis, Quaker and peace campaigner
Faith, Power, and Peace: The 2015 Swarthmore Lecture

Abroad, U.S. military drones bring death from the sky, and our military equipment and advisors support violence and aggression. Fear of terrorist attacks has led Congress to abdicate its power to debate U.S. military action, which is only increasing.


Long before President Trump’s election, the U.S. was deep in the throes of militarism, what the Quaker Philip Noel Baker called “a deep rooted and malignant disease.” In the United States military force is equated with effectiveness, while talking, engagement, diplomacy, and cooperation are seen as “soft.”

In the last year, President Trump has sent more troops to Afghanistan—continuing that 16-year-long conflict—and threatened war with North Korea and

Iran. The president and Congress are vying to see who can increase the Pentagon budget the most—despite the agency’s documented mismanagement of billions of dollars. Meanwhile, our leaders propose budget cuts in programs vital to the health and well-being of our neighbors and communities.

Yet we also see members of Congress who are willing to question this approach. We can escape from the trap of militarism when we advocate for policies that commit to the future of all our country’s people. We find hope in the power of those people working boldly for peace and justice.

That power is evident in the work of FCNL’s Advocacy Teams—more than 80 across the country—who are building relationships with their members of Congress to urge them to rein in Pentagon spending. It was evident at FCNL’s Quaker Public Policy Institute this November, when 450 people lobbied Congress to invest in our communities rather than the tools and weapons of war. Every phone call, letter to the editor, and email urging a different approach to addressing our nation’s problems is an antidote to the militarism around us.

People are at the heart of escaping the militarism trap in our country—both our action and our care for all our neighbors, without exception. In 1967, Martin Luther King, Jr. called for a shift from a “thing-oriented” to a “person-oriented” society, saying “When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.” We must continue to name and oppose militarism where it appears—in our communities as well as in our public policies—and keep working for the alternatives that recognize the Light that is in us all. 

Every Person Is Sacred: Lobbying on Immigration

The U.S. has a failed immigration system. Our elected leaders agree, regardless of political party or ideology. What they don't agree on is what to do about it.

FCNL's advocacy offers solutions that respect the rights, safety, and dignity of all immigrants, refugees, and migrants. Despite the challenges of advancing these policies in Washington today, we are continuing to lay the groundwork for a better way.

More Walls Aren't the Answer

President Trump came into office demonizing immigrants, advocating more walls on the Mexico border, and wanting to arm more border agents. The U.S. has pursued these militarized strategies before—and our immigration system remains broken.

Study after study has shown that most immigrants don't choose to uproot their lives and start over again far from their home and family. Rather, collapsing economies, political and social unrest, and need for workers in the United States are among the factors that drive immigrants to enter this country, with or without legal papers. Applying more force at the border and in our communities does nothing to address the reasons people are risking so much to come to the U.S. in the first place.

Punitive immigration policies are both ineffective and destructive. They have decimated border communities, sent children back into danger, and destroyed the lives of millions of people in this country and across the world.

Toward a Compassionate Immigration System

FCNL's advocacy on immigration starts with a belief in the inherent worth of every person, regardless of their country of origin. From that foundation, we press for both short- and long-term remedies for the tangled web of our current immigration system.


Our immigration system desperately needs comprehensive reform. We must keep pursuing that goal, even when the path seems blocked. At the same time,

we must be vigilant to keep the system we have from getting any worse.

Congress' daily decisions can help or hurt our country's ability to welcome and respect immigrants. Working with the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, which FCNL co-chairs:

- » We lobby to keep immigration laws enforced by federal, not local, authorities, and we insist that border communities, including tribal governments, are directly involved in shaping border enforcement policies and practices.
- » We oppose the militarization of our borders and the excessive use of force in immigration enforcement. This year we helped keep Congress from spending billions of extra dollars to increase deportations, detention, and border militarization.
- » We protect Dreamers—undocumented young adults who arrived in this country as children—and advocate for a pathway for them to become citizens. President Trump recently made good on his campaign promise to cancel the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which allows many of these young people to live and work legally in the United States. Now we are working with both Republicans and Democrats in Congress to pass legislation to give this group of immigrants a pathway to citizenship.

The United States derives its strength and character from the many peoples who have built it. Yet all too often, our country seeks to exclude and punish those who come to contribute.

Speaking at FCNL's Annual Meeting in November, Executive Secretary Diane Randall challenged us to "imagine that those iconic words on the Statue of Liberty, 'Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,' actually meant that we welcomed strangers, refugees, and immigrants to our country." Our continued advocacy is what can move us closer to that vision. 



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“Law and Order”: Militarism, Racism, and the Criminal Justice System

Law enforcement is supposed to keep us all safe. But communities of color are also concerned about being kept safe from law enforcement.

In many of our towns and cities, police officers feel—and sometimes even see themselves—more like an occupying force than community servants. Who can forget the 2014 images of police in Ferguson, Missouri perched on top of tanks, facing down people protesting the killing of Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager? As these images gained traction in the news and on social media, the reality of militarized policing was broadcast across the country, waking up many people to a problem decades in the making: police and policymakers are treating our streets like de facto war zones.

Long before these images jolted our country’s consciousness, FCNL was lobbying members of Congress to end the government’s 1033 program, which allows police departments to receive free surplus military equipment. President Obama responded, constraining the transfer of military equipment from war zones to U.S. cities and criticizing the militarization of U.S. police forces. But President Trump is putting the U.S. back on the path of militarized policing. The new administration has authorized grenade launchers, bayonets, armored vehicles designed to withstand roadside explosives, and more to flow back into the hands of police officers. This equipment reinforces the threats that communities see in law enforcement, widening the gulf of distrust that separates police officers and the communities they are supposed to serve.

Thankfully, Congress is pushing back. Sen. Rand Paul (KY) has introduced bipartisan legislation to stop these weapons transfers. At the same time, Republicans and Democrats are working together to tackle the ways that racism and militarism permeate the entire criminal justice system, from police departments to courtrooms to jails and prisons. Senators Dick Durbin (IL) and Chuck Grassley (IA) recently re-introduced legislation to reform U.S. prison and sentencing laws. Their bill, which nearly passed in 2016, would give judges more discretion by rolling back mandatory minimum prison sentences that have clogged our judicial system and left thousands of nonviolent drug offenders languishing in prison. FCNL is leading lobbying efforts to support this legislation, particularly in the faith community. We have mobilized hundreds of grassroots advocates in the last several years to advocate for sentencing reform.

Sentencing practices that prioritize punishment and control disproportionately burden people of color, who are arrested more readily, sentenced more harshly, and treated less compassionately upon re-entry. Meanwhile, our country’s inefficient and expensive approach to law enforcement has come at the expense of resources for education, youth programs, mental health services, and other ways to address the root causes of crime. The Trump administration, led by Attorney General Jeff Sessions, is only making these problems worse. The president has proposed billions more for police crackdowns and militarization while cutting back on programs

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FOREIGN POLICY

The Endless War

The 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force has provided three presidents with a blank check to wage war against anyone, at any time, anywhere in the world without congressional review or approval.

For 16 years, FCNL has lobbied relentlessly for this authorization's repeal—while the United States has engaged in an ever-expanding war that has not brought stability to any country or reduced the danger of violent extremism. Today, we are working with a growing number in Congress who want to see this endless war ended at last.

Expanding Military Action

Our presidents have cited the 2001 authorization to justify at least 37 military actions in 14 different countries—everything from the ongoing U.S. war in Afghanistan to lethal drone strikes. Under President Trump, military operations are accelerating. In his first 200 days in office, President Trump sent his military on more than five times as many lethal combat operations in non-battlefield countries—such as Yemen and Somalia—as President Obama did in the final 193 days of his administration.

Article I section 8 of the Constitution states that “The Congress shall have power to...declare war,” yet for 16 years Congress has not fully debated whether our country should expand its military operations.

New Energy for Repeal

After years of silence from all but a few members of Congress, more are pushing back against this excessive executive power. Following the death of four U.S. military personnel in Niger in October 2017, Reps. Barbara Lee (CA), Walter Jones (NC), and 46 other representatives from both parties wrote to President Trump, questioning his administration's legal justification for U.S. involvement in the conflict and urging him to seek congressional authorization going forward. They wrote, “We are...gravely concerned that the United States is committing itself to a long-term war in Niger and elsewhere in Africa.”


In a series of hearings this fall, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee questioned

administration officials on legal justification for military action around the world. These hearings could result in Senate legislation to repeal both the 2001 authorization and a companion bill from 2002 that allowed the U.S. to go to war in Iraq.

When I was the only member to oppose the 2001 authorization to use military force, I was honored to have FCNL and the Quakers by my side standing up to war without end.

~ Rep. Barbara Lee (CA)

These hearings come on the heels of efforts in both chambers to force a vote on repealing the 2001 authorization. The House Appropriations Committee added a repeal amendment to the military appropriations bill, but House leadership removed it before the final bill came to a vote. FCNL released a statement opposing leadership's decision. Sen. Rand Paul (KY) was likewise unsuccessful in getting the Senate to repeal the authorization—but he called Senate attention to the issue by forcing a debate as part of consideration of a military policy bill. Previously, Congress has refused to seriously consider repeal; FCNL applauds these steps toward a full debate on endless war.

Congress provides a critical check on presidential military actions. The Constitution's framers drew a distinction between the president, who merely commands the military, and a king, who “possesses [the power] of declaring war... by his own authority.” (Federalist 69). So long as the 2001 authorization stands, it erases that distinction and paves the way for continued expansion of U.S. military action. FCNL will continue to advocate for Congress to fully debate and vote on this authorization and to take back its authority over U.S. war-fighting. Members of Congress also need to hear your voice; **please contact your representative and senators and urge them to support repeal of the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force: fcnl.org/laumf** 

Amid Crises, Diplomatic Paralysis

“Make no mistake about it, this is a hard power budget, not a soft power budget. That is what the president wanted and that is what we gave him,” Mick Mulvaney, director of the Office of Management and Budget, boldly declared when he released President Trump’s budget blueprint in March.

President Trump inherited a world embroiled in crisis. From the greatest humanitarian crisis of our generation in Syria and Iraq to entrenched violent conflicts in Somalia, Nigeria, Yemen, Afghanistan, and North Korea, all require the most creative tools at our disposal. Unfortunately, the president’s prescription is to increase military spending by almost 10 percent and cut U.S. diplomatic and development engagement by more than 30 percent.

Exit creativity, enter brute force.

In President Trump’s first year, U.S. coalition forces have stepped up air strikes in Iraq and Syria, killing an increasing number of civilians. The U.S. is selling more weapons to Saudi Arabia, enabling that country to carry out a devastating war in Yemen, and to Nigeria, with its terrible human rights record.

Meanwhile, Trump administration officials are restructuring and reorganizing the State Department, reducing our diplomatic capacity. Those bureaus and offices tasked with preventing violent conflict, mass atrocities, and building peace are particularly vulnerable to being eliminated—despite their proven record of creatively promoting lasting peace. Kenya, Burundi, Sri Lanka, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are among those countries to benefit from U.S. support to prevent and mitigate violence.

FCNL argues that our country needs to invest more in these kinds of civilian-led programs that prevent conflict—not look for ways to eliminate them. These investments save money and protect U.S. interests. According to the Institute for Economics and Peace, investments in peacebuilding will return at least sixteen times the cost of military interventions. Investing in more military solutions, meanwhile, continues us down the path to perpetual war. In 2016 alone, violence cost the global economy upwards of \$14 trillion dollars—about 12.6 percent of global GDP.



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Young Fellows
Applications due: February 12, 2018
Program: August 2018-July 2019

Summer Internship
Applications due: March 5, 2018
Program: June-July 2018

The good news is that Congress is listening. When the president sent his budget request to Congress, many members on both sides of the aisle spoke up against the cuts to diplomacy. In instructions in a funding bill, the Senate Appropriation Committee wrote, “Battlefield technology and firepower cannot replace diplomacy and development.” This legislation maintained funding (albeit at lower amounts than are needed) for programs such as the Complex Crises Fund, the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, and the U.S. Institute of Peace, which FCNL has consistently lobbied to support.

Another piece of positive news is the growth of bipartisan U.S. efforts to prevent genocide and mass atrocities. FCNL is collaborating with congressional allies

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Anthony Wier presents at FCNL's Annual Meeting, November 2017.

Pentagon (from p. 8)

That lobbying—and your continued advocacy—can help sway members' opinions during budget negotiations right now. But it's also about a longer-term struggle that FCNL is leading to put the brakes on administration and congressional designs for skyrocketing Pentagon growth next year and in the years beyond. Throughout its nearly 75-year history, FCNL has persistently lobbied to oppose increases in Pentagon spending and instead invest in programs that advance peace, justice, and an earth restored. That work today is as urgent as ever.

So long as we keep funding military strategies at the expense of other approaches, the military strategies will seem like the only option. Taking on militarism requires cutting off the taxpayer dollars that enable it to flourish.

Members of Congress hear a lot of stories about why Pentagon spending needs to keep growing. Regardless of that groupthink in the DC herd, the truth is that U.S. military spending exceeds Russia,

China, Iran, and North Korea combined—and only the United States is also backed by a globe-spanning web of allies.

Congressional members and staff will claim that taxpayer spending on the Pentagon is a key source of jobs in their districts and states. But the truth is, dollar-for-dollar, U.S. military spending is less effective at creating jobs than spending on education, health care, or clean energy, according to a study out of Brown University.*

The truth is that the Pentagon already wastes much of what taxpayers give it.

The truth is that the Pentagon is the only major federal agency that still has not passed a full, clean financial audit.

The truth is that misuse of Pentagon funds is so rampant that, when the Pentagon itself conducted an internal study, it identified \$125 billion in potential savings over five years.

A big part of my work at FCNL is to share these truths with


members of Congress. Across the country, people in the FCNL network are joining me in offering their stories and perspectives. We're asking members of Congress why they hold the Pentagon budget to lower standards than any other agency. We're showing that we don't believe this is the right direction for our country.

We may not change a member's mind right away. But members will pay attention to what voters say. You will make an impression. And all those impressions will add up to a real difference.

What's more, if we aren't out there saying these things, reminding this town of some of these *actual* facts, then we can't really count on anyone else to say them either.

I believe that the best way to help make our time here on this earth a little bit better, a little bit lighter, is for an active citizenry to come together and get busy improving things—rather than just sit on the sidelines in the always vain hope that a government would just take care of it for us.

I am amazed all the time by what can happen when just one person has the courage to ask a question or speak up for their truth.

Militarism is embedded deeply in our country and culture. The size of the Pentagon budget is just one manifestation of that mindset and the problems it causes. By working together and speaking out and speaking up, we can start to change the power it has. 

* Heidi Garrett-Peltier, "The Job Opportunity Cost of War," August 2014.



YOU DECIDE WHAT CONGRESS HEARS FROM FCNL


Your meeting or church can share your discernment on FCNL's priorities by April 13, 2018. Find out more: fcnl.org/priorities

Contact Policy Committee members for guidance: Kitty Ufford-Chase (kitty@stonypointcenter.org) and Michael Snarr (michael_snarr@wilmington.edu)

Law and Order (from p. 3)


that serve communities and investigations into abuse by local police departments.

In November, FCNL organized a press conference in Rep. Bob Goodlatte's central Virginia district to encourage him to act on sentencing reform. The speakers included the Rev. Aundrea Alexander, Esq., an associate general secretary of the National Council of Churches, who said, "We believe...all people were created by God. The system we have now is...a penal system that is predicated on retribution and punishment. Once you connect with that system, you have a life sentence no matter what the situation is. It's not right."

More than ever before, Congress needs to act to re-orient the U.S. justice and policing system towards protecting all people in all communities. 

Amid Crisis (from p. 5)

to advance the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act, which would enable the U.S. to respond and prevent the worst kinds of violence and forestall the need for late military interventions once the killing starts.

In a world embroiled in violence and complex crises, the Trump administration is pushing us toward foreign policy paralysis. But Congress can help to reverse course. **Your members of Congress need to hear your support for funding and legislation that promotes peace rather than violence and gives our country the tools it needs to be an effective leader:** fcnl.org/peacebuilding. 

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Washington Newsletter No. 782, December 2017

Breaking the Militarism Mindset: The Pentagon Budget

By Anthony Wier, Legislative Secretary

Today, U.S. taxpayers are giving as much money to the military as they did during the Vietnam War's height. The Pentagon budget rivals military spending in the last years of the Cold War. And, unless we can change their minds, members of Congress are going to give the Pentagon even more.

These budget increases reflect a mindset I observed in a decade of service inside the federal government. Any time a new national security challenge arose—from Iran to Ukraine, from Syria to North Korea—the default instinct of far too many in Washington, DC has been to mindlessly reach first for military power to respond—to look first for the Pentagon and the tools of war to address the problem.

The instinct to increase Pentagon spending runs right across Congress' partisan divides. In large part, that's because members of Congress and their staff hear practically every day both from all manner of Pentagon officials and from the legions of defense contractor lobbyists who swarm Capitol Hill.

If these are the only people they are hearing from, then it is going to make sense to many in Congress to go along with Pentagon budgets of \$600 billion, or \$700 billion, or even more in years ahead.

That's why they need to hear from all of us—right now, when leaders in Congress are quietly talking behind the scenes to work out top-line numbers for a budget for the rest of the year.

This November, I stood before a room of Quakers and friends at FCNL's Quaker Public Policy Institute. These grassroots advocates were about to go into congressional offices and urge them to reject budget proposals that grow Pentagon spending or force cuts for urgent needs in diplomacy, development, and domestic priorities. That lobbying was bolstered by the dedication of FCNL's Advocacy Teams—more than 1,300 people in 35 states as of this writing—who have been working for almost a year asking Congress to rein in Pentagon spending.

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