

2015 Memorial Day: Praying for Peace While Waging Permanent War?

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But is it possible to honestly pray for peace while our country is far and away number one in the world in waging war, military presence, military spending and the sale of weapons around the world?

Permanent War

Since 1980 the US has engaged in [aggressive military action in 14 countries in the Islamic world alone, according to research published in the Washington Post](#): Iran (1980, 1987-1988), Libya (1981, 1986, 1989, 2011), Lebanon (1983), Kuwait (1991), Iraq (1991-2011, 2014-), Somalia (1992-1993, 2007-), Bosnia (1995), Saudi Arabia (1991, 1996), Afghanistan (1998, 2001-), Sudan (1998), Kosovo (1999), Yemen (2000, 2002-), Pakistan (2004-) and now Syria. In [this hemisphere](#), US military forces invaded Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989), and landed 20,000 military forces in Haiti (1994).

US Global War Machine

The US has [1.3 million people in the military and another million serve in the military reserves](#). The US has over [700 military bases in 63 countries across the world](#) deploying over 255,000 US military personnel there. The [Department of Defense officially manages over 555,000 buildings on 4400 properties inside the US](#) and in over 700 properties across the globe. The US has over [1500 strategic nuclear warheads](#), over [13,000 military aircraft](#), [dozens of submarines](#), many of which carry nuclear weapons, and [88 huge destroyer warships](#).

Global Harm

[Nearly 7000 US military people died](#) as a result of the wars waged by the US since 9/11. Just as important, in Iraq [over 216,000 combatants, most of them civilians](#), have died since the 2003 invasion. [No one even counted civilian deaths in Afghanistan for the first five years](#) of our war there. Our drone attacks have [murdered hundreds of children and hundreds of civilian adults](#) in Pakistan and dozens more in Yemen.

World Leader in War Spending

[US military spending is about the same as the total of military spending by the next eight largest countries combined](#), that is more than China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, France, UK, India and Germany combined.

Since 9/11 US spending on our military cost well over \$3 trillion. Direct combat and reconstruction costs for wars in Afghanistan and Iraq since 9/11 have officially cost US taxpayers \$1.6 trillion dollars according to the [Congressional Research Service](#). [Additional trillions have been spent on growing the Pentagon budget and for present and future increased health and disability benefits for veterans](#).

The US military [captures 55 percent of our national discretionary spending and spending on veterans benefits is another 6 percent](#). Since 9/11 military spending has increased by 50 percent while spending on other discretionary domestic spending increased by 13 percent [according to the National Priorities Project](#).

Corporate War Profiteers

With these trillions being spent on war, there are legions of corporations profiting.

The number one war profiteer is Lockheed Martin, [according to USA Today](#), with annual arms sales of \$36 billion. Not surprisingly [Lockheed Martin spends over \\$14 million a year lobbying](#) the people who make the decisions about how much money is spent on weapons and which weapons will be purchased. Their CEO is paid over \$15 million, [according to their 2015 shareholder report](#), and on their board is James Ellis, a former Admiral and Commander in Chief of US Strategic Air Command, who gets paid over \$277,000 for the part time work and James Loy, former Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, who gets over \$260,000 for his part time work. Lockheed receives substantial government contracts amounting, by one calculation, to [over \\$260 from each taxpaying household in the US](#). They are so entitled that a [2014 special investigation by the US Department of Energy](#) found Lockheed used taxpayer funds to lobby for more taxpayer funds.

Number two war profiteer is [Boeing with annual arms sales of \\$31 billion](#). Boeings spends [over \\$16 million a year lobbying](#). The rest of the [top ten corporations profiting from war](#) include BAE Systems, General Dynamics, Raytheon, EADS, Finmeccanica, L-3 Communications, and United Technologies. You can track their corporate contributions to members of Congress, especially the politicians on the Appropriations Committees of the House and Senate on [Open Secrets](#).

While [most of the lobbying money has gone to Republicans](#), all the arms merchants hire lobbyists who can influence Democrats and Republicans, according to the Center for

Responsive Politics.

And these war profiteers do not just sell to the US government. [The US sold more than \\$26 billion in weapons to foreign nations](#) and has been number one for a long time though recently that title has been going back and forth with Russia as to which is the world biggest international arms merchant.

What To Do

On April 4, 1967, in his famous Riverside Church address, [Martin Luther King Jr. said the US government was the greatest purveyor of violence in the world.](#) In response he called for a [true revolution of values.](#) This revolution calls us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies including war and the contrast of wealth and poverty in our own country and across the world.

Former US President and General Dwight Eisenhower warned citizens as he left office of the growing military industrial complex. He saw the influence of the war machine and urged all citizens to be alert and [force "the huge industrial and military machinery of defense" to respond to democracy](#) and the peoples' desires for peace.

What must we do? First, we must learn the facts and face the truth that the US is the biggest war maker in the world. Second, we must commit ourselves and organize others to a true revolution of values and confront the corporations and politicians who continue to push our nation into war and inflate the military budget with the hot air of permanent fear mongering. Third, we must admit what our country has been doing wrong and we must make amends for the violence the US has waged on countries all over our world. Fourth, we must withdraw our military from all other countries, dramatically downsize our military, disarm our nuclear weapons, and truly stick to defending our own country. Fifth, we must work for peaceful, just solutions for conflict here at home and across our world. Only when we work for the day when the US is no longer the world leader in war will we have the right to pray for peace on Memorial Day.

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