

**Testimony before New York City Council Committee on State and Federal Legislation  
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**Testimony on Resolution No. 367**

Good afternoon, Honorable Members of the City Council. Thank you City Council Member Bill Perkins for your Resolution in support of the “Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Act.” And thank you to all the other members who stand in support of this important statement.

My name is Frida Berrigan, and I am a Senior Research Associate with the New School University’s World Policy Institute. And I have been asked to speak briefly on U.S. military expenditures.

First the basics. As you can see from the “Global Military Expenditures” bar graph, the United States spends more money on the military than any other country in the world. A new report from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) finds that the United States alone spends what the 32 next most powerful nations spend together, accounting for half the world’s total military expenditures of \$1.04 trillion.<sup>1</sup>

The consensus among many military experts is that more spending on the military does not equal more security. I know our time is short here, so rather go into great depth on this topic; I have included key findings from the Task Force on A Unified Security Budget for the United States at the end of my written statement.

One example points to the larger problem: Congress allocated \$9.9 billion for National Missile Defense in 2005. This “system” has cost American taxpayers an estimated \$200 billion since first introduced by President Ronald Reagan in 1983 as a way of rendering Soviet nuclear missiles “impotent and obsolete.” President Bush has continued to pump money into this system despite the fact that the system is technologically impossible, strategically unnecessary and politically detrimental.

Just New York State’s contribution towards missile defense for 2005<sup>2</sup> is enough to train, outfit and support more than 12,000 Port Container Inspectors. As you well know, port container security was highlighted as an area of concern by the 911 Commission in New York City and throughout the country.<sup>3</sup>

While more money does not equal more security, the Bush administration continues to hand out hard-earned tax dollars to the Pentagon.

The Bush Administration is requesting \$419.3 billion for the Department of Defense in Fiscal Year 2006, which begins on October 1, 2005. This represents a \$19.2 billion increase over the current level of \$400.1 billion (a 4.8% increase).

Once funding for the Department of Energy’s nuclear weapons activities—a whopping \$6.6 billion (or one and a half times the Cold War average) -- are added in, the United States will devote \$425.9 billion to the military in fiscal year 2006.

Put make this figure more comprehensible: we spend \$1.16 billion each day on the military, enough to buy Mayor Bloomberg two Olympic stadiums each a day for a year. More practically, we can pay the annual salaries of 17,377 elementary school teachers here in New York for what the United States spends each day on the military.

As you can see from the pie chart titled “Federal Discretionary Spending,” the President’s Budget for FY2005 allocates more than half of all discretionary spending to the Pentagon. For fiscal year 2006 we can expect more of the same. In fact, the Pentagon estimates that total annual funding for the Defense Department will grow to \$502.3 billion by Fiscal Year 2011.

All of these billions of dollars do not cover the costs of the United States’ illegal and unnecessary war in Iraq and ongoing military occupation of Afghanistan. Just as the President hides the human costs of the war by refusing to acknowledge the more than 1,600 men and women who have died in Iraq- including more than 30 New Yorkers- the financial costs of the war are also hidden in “Emergency Supplementals” rammed through Congress.

To date, the Pentagon has received \$230 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (\$64 billion in FY’03, \$66 billion in FY’04, and \$25 billion in early FY’05 and an additional \$75 billion for the remainder of FY’05). Further funding will clearly be necessary to fund operations during FY’06. Each month, we spend another \$5 billion in Iraq.

The American people don’t want their hard earned tax dollars to pay for war making.

A recent survey conducted by the Program for International Policy Alternatives shows that 65% of Americans believe the federal government should transfer tax dollars out of several areas of the defense budget that have nothing to do with fighting the global war on terrorism.

About two-thirds of those who favor Pentagon cuts wanted some of the savings to pay for reducing the deficit. They also wanted to see that money go into the budgets for education, job training and employment, medical research, Veterans benefits and housing.<sup>4</sup> These are all areas that have been cut or not funded at the rate of inflation in President Bush’s 2006 budget.

The American people believe that Iraq war was a mistake.

According to a new ABC News/Washington Post poll, nearly 60% of Americans think the United States should never have gone to war in Iraq.

And, nearly 75% called the number of casualties unacceptable, two-thirds said the U.S. military is bogged down - and more than 40% said Iraq is becoming a new Vietnam.<sup>5</sup>

These are the voices that the White House is trying to ignore. Many of these same voices are calling for new ways to register their opposition to government policies. The Resolution before the City Council in support of a “Peace Tax Fund” is one tool for the people. Thank you for your kind attention and your tireless work on behalf of all of us.

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### **For Your Information**

Task Force on *A Unified Security Budget for the United States*

<http://www.fpif.org/pdf/defensereport/fulltext.pdf>

Foreign Policy In Focus / Center for Defense Information

The Task Force on *A Unified Security Budget for the United States*, drawing on the knowledge of analysts with expertise in different dimensions of the security challenge, welcomes the opening of this overdue debate, and offers this contribution to help point it in the right direction. Among its findings:

**Key finding:** Despite promises of a comprehensive approach to fighting terrorism, the Bush administration has concentrated its resources overwhelmingly on its military forces, at the expense of other security tools. **Bush's 2005 budget would spend seven times as much on the military as on homeland security and all other forms of non-military security programs combined.**

**Key finding:** The Bush military budget is being spent on a force structure that does not match today's security challenges, because it is designed for a cold-war-style large-scale conventional challenge that we no longer face.

The Task Force on *A Unified Security Budget for the United States* shows how funding can be shifted within military accounts for an overall saving of \$51 billion. And it outlines \$52 billion in spending on non-military measures that could enhance U.S. security substantially.

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<sup>1</sup> *SIPRI Yearbook 2005: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, Released June 7, 2005 and available online at <http://yearbook2005.sipri.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Taxpayers in New York will pay \$802.7 million for ballistic missile defense in FY2006. National Priorities Project, [www.nationalpriorities.org](http://www.nationalpriorities.org).

<sup>3</sup> "Right now, only two percent of the thousands of containers that come into the country are physically inspected, but neither the technology nor the manpower is available to inspect 100 percent of them." Gerald Dillingham, Civil Aviation Issues, General Accounting Offices, in testimony before *The National Commission On Terrorist Attacks Upon The United States* Public Hearing, April 1, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> "THE FEDERAL BUDGET: THE PUBLIC'S PRIORITIES," The Program on International Policy Attitudes, March 7, 2005, [http://pipa.org/OnlineReports/budget/030705/Report03\\_07\\_05.pdf](http://pipa.org/OnlineReports/budget/030705/Report03_07_05.pdf). PIPA studies public opinion on international issues. PIPA is a joint program of the Center on Policy Attitudes (COPA) and the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM), University of Maryland.

<sup>5</sup> "Iraq War A Mistake," Celeste Katz, *New York Daily News*, June 8, 2005