

April 22, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer,

As Congress continues to provide urgent and vital relief to the people of the United States in response to the coronavirus pandemic, **we write to urge against providing additional money to the Pentagon in this fiscal year.** With the additional \$10.4 billion provided to the Pentagon as part of the Phase III package [P.L. 116-136], the Pentagon's Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 appropriated funding now totals over \$756 billion and provides more than enough resources to respond to the pandemic.

The coronavirus pandemic has made it crystal clear that federal spending is dangerously misaligned with our national priorities and actual threats to human security. Over half of all spending appropriated by Congress annually goes to the Pentagon, leaving other federal agencies to compete with one another for scarce resources. In this context, the United States has chronically underfunded human and environmental needs while, particularly in recent years, passing historically high Pentagon budgets that foster militarism, enable endless war, engender waste, and sow corruption. To give just one example of the spending mismatch: the combined annual budgets of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institute of Health and the annual U.S. contributions to the World Health Organization together equal just seven percent of the annual Pentagon budget. If our spending was in line with actual human security needs at home and abroad prior to the crisis, we may have been better prepared to confront the global pandemic.

**Any arguments that the Pentagon cannot use existing resources to respond to the crisis should be met with considerable skepticism, for several reasons.** First, the Trump administration has been able to find Pentagon resources for non-Pentagon spending when it wanted. By the end of this fiscal year, it will have redirected at least [\\$13.3 billion](#) toward the President's wasteful, dangerous, and politically-motivated border wall. Second, the Pentagon often ends up with excess balances that it returns to the U.S. Treasury. From FY 2013 - 2018, the Pentagon returned \$80 billion in unspent funds — a time when the budget was more than \$100 billion less than it is today. Finally, the Pentagon is not transparent about how it will use the additional money it has already been appropriated. Former Office of Management and Budget official Mark Cancian has [suggested](#) that the Pentagon's share of the most recent supplemental spending package could be “used for virtually anything” and is “a classic ‘slush fund.’” While extreme spending flexibility may be warranted in some cases, more constraints on how and where money is spent is essential for the sole federal agency that has never passed an audit.

There are a number of [options](#) for finding savings at the Pentagon that can be redirected toward this crisis, and the government's larger pandemic response. In the short term, there are likely to be savings from decreased operational tempo both in training and overseas operations, which will also prevent exposure to the virus of U.S. servicemembers. Given the steep drop in the price of oil, the Pentagon, as the [world's largest](#) purchaser of oil, stands to save billions. In addition, economic and public health realities will likely necessitate slower production of military hardware and arms, further saving funds while protecting the workforce. In the longer term, [some estimates suggest](#) that the Pentagon could save hundreds of

billions of dollars by ending wars, reforming defense contracting, right-sizing the military services, scaling back or forgoing the purchase of legacy weapons systems, and closing overseas bases. Taking these steps would not only incur savings, but also create more security and stability in the U.S. and abroad.

As every family around this country has had to do, the Pentagon should not be immune from making tough decisions on how to reallocate its resources in light of this crisis. If taxpayers are being asked to adjust their budgets, surely the recipient of three quarters of a trillion of our tax dollars can be asked to do the same. Appropriating a dollar more to the Pentagon in FY 2020 would be throwing good money after bad. We urge you to focus your attention on the national pandemic response and economic relief for people across the United States rather than providing more money for the Pentagon's already overflowing coffers.

Sincerely,

350.org

About Face: Veterans Against the War

Action Corps

American Friends Service Committee

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain

Arms Control Association

Beyond the Bomb

Center for International Policy

Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy

CODEPINK

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Common Defense

Council for a Livable World

Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Demand Progress

Detention Watch Network

Earth Action, Inc.

Equality Labs

Franciscan Action Network

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Friends of the Earth - US

Grassroots Global Justice Alliance

Greenpeace US

Hawai'i Peace and Justice

Indivisible

Institute for Policy Studies, New Internationalism Project

Just Foreign Policy

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office  
MPower Change  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
National Iranian American Council Action  
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies  
Nuclear Watch New Mexico  
Pax Christi USA  
Peace Action  
Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Ploughshares Fund  
Progressive Change Campaign Committee  
Project South  
Public Citizen  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team  
Social Security Works  
Southern Border Communities Coalition  
The Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)  
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society  
Tri-Valley CAREs  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
United We Dream  
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights  
Veterans For Peace  
Veterans For Peace, Chapter 113-Hawaii  
Vets For The People  
War Resisters League  
Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Win Without War  
Women Cross DMZ  
Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)  
Women's March  
Working Families Party