

U.S. Nuclear Weapons Spending Compared to Other Government Programs

Updated October 2013, Marc Quint and Benjamin Pack, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies



The following table provides both “guns vs. guns” and “guns vs. butter” comparisons of estimated U.S. nuclear weapons spending vs. spending on other government programs. In most cases, the funding for other military, public health, and emergency management services pales in comparison to nuclear weapons costs. The table therefore lends some perspective to both the military and civilian trade-offs involved in funding the nuclear arsenal. The James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies intends to publish a comprehensive review of U.S. nuclear weapons spending in Fall 2013.

Projected Nuclear Weapons Spending	Guns vs. Guns Comparisons	Guns vs. Butter Comparisons
\$537 million this year for B-61 LEP ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay raises for troops as proposed - \$580 million² • Provide tuition assistance to nearly 120,000 soldiers³ • Fully fund the Department of Defense portion of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program to keep nuclear materials and other WMD from terrorists - \$528 million.⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alzheimer’s disease - \$562 million⁵ • Kidney disease - \$560 million⁶ • Vaccine-related (AIDS) - \$575 million⁷ • Nearly 3x as much as autism - \$192 million⁸
\$10 billion for the B-61 LEP (first bomb set to be delivered in 2020) ⁹	A new Gerald R. Ford class aircraft carrier to support our troops in battle - \$11.3 billion ¹⁰	The new guided tail-kit feature of the refurbished B-61 alone costs about as much as the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is spending to combat veteran homelessness in FY2014 (\$1.1 billion vs. \$1.4 billion) ¹¹
\$18 billion on NW per year (conservative estimate) ¹²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 4x what the Department of Veterans Affairs spends to meet the medical care needs of nearly 675,000 veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan - \$4.1 billion¹³ • 3x what the Army needs to maintain force readiness and reinstall canceled training exercises that keep our troops ready for battle - \$6 billion¹⁴ • 6x the size of the cut to the U.S. military’s health care system which could lead to denial of elective medical care for retirees and dependents of active duty service members¹⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 3x as much as on cancer research - \$5.67 billion¹⁶ • Almost 3x as much as FEMA’s total budget to assist states and communities that have been devastated by disasters and emergencies - \$6.2 billion¹⁷
\$30 billion on NW per year (larger estimate) ¹⁸	More than 7x what the Department of Veterans Affairs spends to meet the medical care needs of nearly 675,000 veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan - \$4.1 billion ¹⁹	More than 5x as much as on cancer research - \$5.67 billion ²⁰
\$350 billion on NW-related expenditures over the next decade ²¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 6 years of medical care for all veterans (at FY2014 levels) - \$54.6 billion per year²² • Salaries of military personnel for almost 2.5 years at FY2014 force and compensation levels²³ 	Almost 1.5x federal corporate income tax revenue in FY2012 - \$243 billion ²⁴
\$500 billion over the next 20 years to maintain triad ²⁵	More than 9 years of medical care for all veterans (at FY2014 levels) - \$54.6 billion per year ²⁶	More than the budgets of Departments of Education, Agriculture, Veterans Affairs and Transportation combined (for a single year) ²⁷

Related content is available on the website for the Nuclear Threat Initiative, www.nti.org.



This material is produced independently for NTI by the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of and has not been independently verified by NTI or its directors, officers, employees, or agents. Copyright © 2012 by MIIS.

Sources:

- ¹Department of Energy, *National Nuclear Security Administration FY2014 Budget, B61 Life Extension Program*, p. WA-17, <http://energy.gov>.
- ²2014 U.S. Military Basic Pay Charts, U.S. Navy, www.navycs.com. President Obama has proposed a cap on military pay increases at 1.0% for FY2014, to which the Senate Appropriations Committee has agreed, while the House Appropriations Committee has recommended an increase of 1.8%. The final agreement likely will not be made for several months. www.asmconline.org.
- ³Military Tuition Assistance provides financial assistance at a maximum of \$4,500 per fiscal year per soldier (\$4,500 X 120,000 military personnel = \$540 million), www.military.com.
- ⁴*Defense Threat Reduction Agency FY2014 Budget, Cooperative Threat Reduction*, p. CTR-79, <http://comptroller.defense.gov>.
- ⁵National Institutes of Health, "Estimates of Funding for Various Research, Condition, and Disease Categories (RCDC)," April 10, 2013, <http://report.nih.gov>. It is important to note that "the NIH does not expressly budget by category. The annual estimates reflect amounts that change as a result of science, actual research projects funded, and the NIH budget. The research categories are not mutually exclusive. Individual research projects can be included in multiple categories so amounts depicted within each column of this table do not add up to 100 percent of NIH-funded research."
- ⁶National Institutes of Health, "Estimates of Funding for Various Research, Condition, and Disease Categories (RCDC)," April 10, 2013, <http://report.nih.gov>.
- ⁷National Institutes of Health, "Estimates of Funding for Various Research, Condition, and Disease Categories (RCDC)," April 10, 2013, <http://report.nih.gov>.
- ⁸National Institutes of Health, "Estimates of Funding for Various Research, Condition, and Disease Categories (RCDC)," April 10, 2013, <http://report.nih.gov>.
- ⁹Department of Defense, *Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE), Independent Cost Estimate*, p. 2, www.ucsusa.org.
- ¹⁰The U.S. Navy's proposed FY2014 budget estimates the procurement costs of the second (CVN-79) of three Gerald R. Ford class aircraft carriers to be about \$11.3 billion. www.fas.org.
- ¹¹*U.S. Air Force FY2014 Research and Development Budget*, Volume 2, p. 821: www.saffm.hq.af.mil; Department of Veterans Affairs, *Strategic Planning Major Initiatives: Zero Homelessness*, p. 1A-16: www.va.gov.
- ¹²James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, *U.S. Nuclear Weapons Budget: An Overview*, September 27, 2013, www.nti.org.
- ¹³Department of Veterans Affairs, *FY2014 Medical Care Budget, Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn*, p. 1I-53: www.va.gov.
- ¹⁴Department of Defense, "Services: Sequestration Will Affect Force Readiness," www.defense.gov.
- ¹⁵*New York Times*, "The Real Cost of Shrinking Government," February 16, 2013, www.nytimes.com.
- ¹⁶National Institutes of Health, "Estimates of Funding for Various Research, Condition, and Disease Categories (RCDC)," April 10, 2013, <http://report.nih.gov>.
- ¹⁷*Department of Homeland Security FY2014 Budget*, Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Disaster Relief Fund," p. 180: www.dhs.gov.
- ¹⁸Stimson Center, "Resolving Ambiguity," p. 6, www.stimson.org.
- ¹⁹Department of Veterans Affairs, *FY2014 Medical Care Budget, Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn*, p. 1I-53: www.va.gov.
- ²⁰National Institutes of Health, "Estimates of Funding for Various Research, Condition, and Disease Categories (RCDC)," April 10, 2013, <http://report.nih.gov>.
- ²¹Stimson Center, "Resolving Ambiguity," p. 6, www.stimson.org.
- ²²Department of Veterans Affairs, *Medical Care 2014 Direct Appropriations Request*, p. 2A-1: www.va.gov.
- ²³Department of Defense *FY2014 Green Book, Budget Authority by Title: Military Personnel*, p. 148, <http://comptroller.defense.gov>.
- ²⁴President's Office of Management and Budget, Historical Table 2.1, www.whitehouse.gov. Previous estimates listed FY2014 federal corporate income tax revenue at \$348 billion.
- ²⁵James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, *U.S. Nuclear Weapons Budget: An Overview*, September 27, 2013, www.nti.org.
- ²⁶Department of Veterans Affairs, *Medical Care 2014 Direct Appropriations Request*, p. 2A-1: www.va.gov.
- ²⁷For FY2012, the Budget Authority of these departments totaled \$403.4 billion: President's Office of Management and Budget, Historical Table 5.2: www.whitehouse.gov.