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## ***U.S. Armed Forces Ready for War? Part Two***

In all cases, the United States dragged its allies into confrontation with countries of the South, with a low level of development and limited economies. However, a slight overview shows that neither in Central Asia, nor in West Asia, nor in Africa have they obtained palpable victories that could have changed the world correlation of forces in their favor.



On December 14, a day after writing the first part of this work, it was announced that the [U.S. Senate approved the National Defense Authorization Act \(NDAA\)](#), an instrument that establishes the spending and policies of the U.S. Department of Defense, empowering the Pentagon a record spending of \$886 billion for fiscal year 2024.



The U.S. Senate approved the defense budget for almost 900,000 million dollars (EFE/JIM LO SCALZO)

Now, the bill will be considered by the House of Representatives. The document contemplates expenditures such as the purchase of ships, ammunition and aircraft, as well as military aid to Ukraine and measures aimed at countering China's influence in the Pacific. However, this figure is false because in reality, it is much higher.

For decades, independent researchers have claimed that actual U.S. military spending is about twice as much as officially recognized. [In 2022, real U.S. military spending reached \\$1.537 trillion](#), doubling the publicly reported \$877 billion. This data is reported from figures from the [U.S. Office of Management and Budget](#) (OMB).

But they face a trap because they suffer from two major shortcomings. First, the figures provided by the OMB regarding "defense spending" are substantially lower than those provided in the U.S. National Income and Output Accounts (NIPA), the most comprehensive and definitive source on the country's national income and expenditure to the point that it is the total basis of analysis of the U.S. economy.

Second, as is well known, key areas of U.S. military spending are included elsewhere in federal spending and do not fall into the OMB's "defense spending" category. To that amount should be added federal space expenditures, and the actual total of grants to foreign countries. Military health insurance (which consists of payments for medical services for dependents of military personnel on active duty at non-military installations) should also be considered.

According to a study for the Monthly Review by [Gisela Cernadas](#), an economist at the National University of La Plata in Argentina, and [John Bellamy Foster](#), professor emeritus

of sociology at the University of Oregon in the United States, these figures should also include benefits, life insurance and other costs for veterans, military health insurance, military parts of space, and more. expenditures, grants in aid to other governments, and the proportion of net interest attributed to actual federal military expenditures.

In any case, U.S. reported military spending is three times that of China (\$292 billion) and 10 times that of Russia (\$86.4 billion). In fact, U.S. military spending is nearly equal to that of the next 10 countries in the table, including Russia, China and India, its NATO allies, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Italy as well as Japan, South Korea and Ukraine.



[U.S. military spending far exceeds that of China and Russia](#)

Given the data I mentioned in the first part of this paper, it is not expenditure that measures the efficiency of the armed forces on the planet. In the case of the United States, this situation also has a different view, considering that the manufacture of weapons is the main component of its ailing economy. In this way, the increase in its military spending and the pressures on its allies to imitate it is directly related to the need to safeguard the country's economic potential and stability.

In such a way that waging war or generating conflicts responds to a vital need of the North American nation. Peace is considered an enemy of its economy. This is clear from the statements of James O'Brien, Undersecretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on funding for Ukraine, who admitted that the armed conflict in that country points in this direction. O'Brien said: "The battle for Ukraine also allows us to revitalise our own industrial base. We are creating new energy technologies and putting them into practice around the world. We're building new defense technologies."

This statement coincides with reports that military orders for Ukraine have [increased](#) the revenues of major U.S. defense contractors, such as Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, Raytheon Technologies Corporation (RTX), Boeing, and Northrop Grumman, among others.

It was President Joe Biden himself who came to corroborate O'Brien's assessment. In urging Congress to approve a war aid budget for Ukraine and Israel, the president used the same argument as his official by revealing what until now was a "secret" in the country: the significant dependence of its economy on wars. In this regard, Biden was even more explicit than O'Brien: "We send equipment to Ukraine that is in our arsenals. And when we use the money approved by Congress, we use it to replenish our own stockpiles, our arsenals, with new equipment. Team that defends the United States and is made in the United States." And he detailed: "... Arizona-made Patriot missiles for anti-aircraft batteries; artillery ammunition manufactured in 12 states across the country [including] Pennsylvania, Ohio, Texas."

For its part, the Wall Street Journal reports Jason Aiken, chief financial executive of General Dynamics, who commented that the war in Ukraine had already increased demand for the company's products. Aiken said he believed "that the Israeli situation will only put even more upward pressure on that demand." Similarly, William D. Hartung, a senior fellow and specialist on the military-industrial complex at the Quincy Institute in Washington, explained that the nation's largest military contractors "would not exist without a steady flow of funding from the Pentagon." And for the avoidance of doubt, he gave the example of Lockheed Martin, which receives 73% of its sales revenue through contracts with the U.S. government. He topped off his idea by stating that these were not capitalist enterprises in the traditional sense.

In this way, the macabre link between war and the economy that sustains the existence of the United States in its daily evolution was exposed with express authenticity. Although, it

also needs to demonstrate leadership to maintain its hegemony. In this regard, the Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin, assured that the current problems will only "worsen" without "strong and firm" American leadership.

Austin, who retired from active duty in the military in 2016 and went on to serve on the board of directors of Raytheon Technologies, Nucor and Tenet Healthcare, regularly issues opinions aimed at elevating sales at the Military Industrial Complex. Thus, on December 2, during his speech at the Reagan National Defense Forum in California, he stated that "only one country on Earth can offer the kind of leadership that this moment demands." That country, according to him, is the United States.

This was the context in which Austin launched what he called "the most ambitious modernization effort in nearly 40 years," consisting of an investment of some \$50 billion in the defense industrial base. This, he argues, will give the U.S. a "final strategic advantage that no competitor can match." But, as has become customary among Washington's political leaders, this announcement could not be made without the rhetoric that has characterized the imperial nation since its very birth: "The U.S. military is the most lethal fighting force in human history. And we're going to keep it that way. We must not give our friends, rivals, or enemies any reason to doubt America's resolve.



Of course, Austin now speaks as a civil servant and employee of the big military contractors. Money made him forget his "military qualities" and now he expresses desires that reality is responsible for denying. A single Russian hypersonic missile can dash their dreams of grandeur.

It is the U.S. sources themselves who refute Secretary Austin's chimeras. Reading a draft of the first "National Defense Industry Strategy," cited by the U.S. news service "Politico" on Dec. 2, shows that the U.S. military-industrial complex (CMI) is struggling to achieve the pace and receptivity that would allow it to stay ahead of China.

The document points to the inability of the U.S. industrial base to meet demands at the speed and scale needed. Nor would they be able to respond "to a modern conflict at the speed, scale, and flexibility required to meet the dynamic demands of a larger conflict." Ukraine is in sight.

The report exposes the impossibility [of the WCC] to manufacture the weapons requested of it with the desired speed, which would be causing a mismatch representative of "a strategic risk" for the United States as the country becomes involved in an increasing number of conflicts, particularly in the "Indo-Pacific".

According to the study, the Russian military operation in Ukraine and the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Hamas movement "laid bare a different set of industrial demands with corresponding risks," making it clear that insufficient production and supply capacities are now deep-seated problems at all levels of production supply chains.

So far this century, the U.S. military has been involved in several wars, losing them all even though its military potential had not been tested until the conflict in Ukraine. Overwhelming interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia and Libya have been sealed with defeats, destruction of countries and endless interventionist military presences that wore down Washington without it being able to obtain tangible results that would bring it strategic successes.



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overview shows that neither in Central Asia, nor in West Asia, nor in Africa have they obtained palpable victories that could have changed the world correlation of forces in their favor.

But when Washington launched NATO against Russia using Ukraine to do so, its inability to win strategic victories became apparent. On the contrary, its economy has been further weakened, its capacity for diplomatic manoeuvre has been limited, its potential to generate security and confidence in its allies has diminished, and its usual instruments of pressure: blackmail, threats, arrogance and intimidation have lost their effectiveness in the face of the growing determination of peoples to follow a different path.

All the military potential of the United States - which, as this paper has shown - is still enormous, is not enough to wage a war of great proportions and triumph in it. This equation that advances under the shadow of hypersonic missiles and that hangs over the United States the specter of its total destruction in the event of unleashing an atomic war, could be a powerful instrument that leads those who decide in Washington to desist from the assumption that it is possible to obtain a strategic victory that certifies that "history had ended" with the absolute domination of capitalism and states United on this planet.

That will no longer be possible.

*Sergio Rodríguez Gelfenstein for La Pluma, December 19, 2023*

*Edited by [Maria Piedad Ossaba](#)*

*Read in the pen*

### **[U.S. Armed Forces Ready for War? Part One](#)**

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