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# Pay Up You NATO Deadbeats, or Else. NATO to Serve as a US Foreign Legion in Africa and Asia

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*'We are the schmucks' thundered President Donald Trump, using a favorite New York City Yiddish term. The object of Trump's wrath at his Make America Great Again' rally in Great Falls, Montana was the craven, stingy European members of NATO, only 16 of 22 members are on budget for their US-commanded military spending. Trump wants them to spend much more.*

Trump and his fellow neocons want NATO to serve as a sort of US foreign legion in Third World wars in Africa and Asia. NATO was formed as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to defend western Europe, not to fight in Afghanistan and who knows where else?

Equally bad, according to Trump, is that the US runs a whopping trade deficit with the European Union which is busy shipping high-end cars and fine wines to the US. The wicked foreigners don't buy enough Amerian bourbon, corn and terribly abused pigs.

Trump is quite right that America's NATO allies, particularly Germany and Canada, don't spend enough on defense. Germany is reported to have less than twenty operational tanks. Canada's armed forces appear to be smaller than the New York City police department.

But the Europeans ask, 'defense against whom?' The Soviet Union was a huge threat back in the Cold War when the mighty Red Army had 55,000 tanks pointed West. Today, Russia's land and navel power has evaporated. Russia has perhaps 5,500 main battle tanks in active service and a similar number in storage, a far cry from its armored juggernaut of the Cold War.

More important, Russia's military budget for 2018 was only $61 billion, actually down 17% from last year. That's 4.3% of GDP. Russia is facing hard economic times. Russia has slipped to third place in military spending after the US, China and Saudi Arabia. The US and its wealthy allies account for two thirds of world military spending. In fact, the US total military budget (including for nuclear weapons and foreign wars) is about $1 trillion, 50% of total US government discretionary spending.

In addition, Russia must defend a vast territory from the Baltic to the Pacific. The US is fortunate in having Mexico and Canada as neighbors. Russia has North Korea, China, India, the Mideast and NATO to watch. As with its naval forces, Russia's armies are too far apart to lend one another mutual support. Two vulnerable rail lines are Russia's main land link between European Russia and its Pacific Far East.

Trump's supplemental military budget boost this year of $54 billion is almost as large as

Russia's entire 2018 military budget. As for Trump's claim that Europe is not paying its fair share of NATO expenses, note that that Britain and France combined together spend more on their military forces than Russia.

In Europe, it's hard to find many people who still consider Russia a serious threat except for some tipsy Danes, right wing Swedes, and assorted Russophobic East Europeans. The main fear of Russia seems concentrated in the minds of American neoconservatives, media, and rural Trump supporters, all victims of the bizarre anti-Russian hysteria that has gripped the US.

Equally important, most civilians don't understand that neither US and NATO forces nor Russia's military are in any shape to fight war that lasts more than a few days. Both sides lack munitions, spare parts, lubricants, and battlefield equipment. The overworked US Air Force, busy plastering Muslim nations, has actually run low on bombs. US industry can't seems to keep up supplies. There has even been talk of buying explosives from China!

These essentials of war have been seriously neglected in favor of buying fancy weapons. But such weapons need spares, electronics, fuel depots, missiles and thousands of essential parts. As former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld observed, 'you go to war with what you have.' Neither side has enough. A war would likely peter out in days after supplies were exhausted. Besides, no side can afford to replace $100 million jet fighters or $5 million apiece tanks after a war, however brief.

President Trump has learned about war from Fox TV. Europeans have learned from real experience and don't want any more.

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