

The “Emergency” War Spending Fund Is Now a Permanent Fixture Inflating the Pentagon’s Budget

Buried Within Omnibus Bill, a 'Long-Term Blank Check for War Spending'

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Global Research, December 12, 2014

[Common Dreams](#)

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

A U.S. Army helicopter taking off from Forward Operating Base Shindand, Afghanistan, Oct. 3, 2012.
(Photo: DoD/public domain)

The government funding bill that [narrowly passed](#) the House of Representatives on Thursday has been widely criticized, including from [within Congress](#), as a give-away to Wall Street. However, its 1,600 pages raise numerous other red flags for activists and analysts, including a bloated military budget and what journalist Julia Harte [calls](#) “a long-term blank check for ‘war’ spending.”

The bill approves \$554 billion overall in Pentagon spending—in keeping with the trajectory of a country that spends [more](#) on the military than the next 11 countries combined. As Dave Gilson [points out](#) in *Mother Jones*, this sum means that total Pentagon funding during 2015 is “close to what it got during the height of the Iraq War” and “close to its highest level since World War II.”

When this sum is broken down, its sources raise further concerns, say analysts.

Buried within the budget is \$64 billion in military funding from what is called the Overseas Contingency Operations. Established in 2001 under a different title, the OCO was supposed to be for “temporary” emergencies relating to the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, it has become a permanent, and seemingly bottomless, source of funding for war. Even President Obama noticed this in 2008, when he issued the campaign promise to reign in abuse of emergency war spending.

As Harte writes for the *Center for Public Integrity*, “The OCO budget isn’t subject to spending limits that cap the rest of the defense budget for the next seven years; it’s often omitted altogether from tallies of how much the military spends each year; and as an ‘emergency’ fund, it’s subject to much less scrutiny than other military spending requests.”

Furthermore, Lindsay Koshgarian [points out](#) for National Priorities Project, included within the bill is a “spending spree for defense contractors,” which includes \$479 million for F-35s and war ships. In addition, the bill green-lights \$5 billion for the expanding U.S.-led war in Iraq and Syria, despite the fact that that military operation still has not been approved—or even subject to real debate—in Congress.

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