

The Senate Just Gave the Pentagon an \$82 Billion Boost. That's More Money Than Russia's Entire Military Budget.

Democrats will oppose anything Trump wants, unless it's more money for the Pentagon.

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Global Research, June 24, 2018

[Reason.com](#) 21 June 2018

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Militarization and WMD](#)

There are few bipartisan projects in Congress these days, but Republicans and Democrats have no trouble joining together to feed more money into the Pentagon's gaping maw.

By a vote of [85-10](#) on Thursday morning, the Senate approved the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)—technically known as the “John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act” because *you wouldn't vote against something named after an American hero, right?* It serves as the budget for the U.S. military, which this year is receiving \$716 billion, an increase of \$82 billion from last year. That increase was agreed upon in March as part of an overall two-year budget deal that smashed Obama-era spending caps and [boosts military spending](#) by \$165 over the next two years.

It's not just that military spending crosses party lines, but that it smooths over nearly every political division in Washington today. Democrats have shown virtually no interest in Trump's major policy priorities, but only seven Democrats plus Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), who caucuses with Democrats, voted against Trump's new nukes. Sens. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Mike Lee (R-Utah) were the only Republicans to vote against the NDAA. An attempt by Sander, Lee, and some other senators to include [an amendment](#) prohibiting the Pentagon from continuing to participate in an unauthorized war in Yemen was defeated.

The spending increase will allow the Pentagon to buy more fighter jets, to create “cyberwarfare units,” and to develop new, [smaller nuclear weapons](#). There is, however, [no Space Force](#). The extra \$82 billion will “bring us back to a position of primacy,” Defense Secretary James Mattis [said](#) in February.

To put the Pentagon's \$82 billion funding increase in perspective, consider that Russia's entire military budget totals [only \\$61 billion](#). China, which boast the next most expensive military in the world after the United States, plans to spend [about \\$175 billion](#) this year.

Maybe the problem isn't how much funding the military receives, but how the money it already gets is spent. Unfortunately, we don't know much about that because the Pentagon has still not been subjected to a full scale audit, despite the fact that all federal agencies and departments were ordered to undergo mandatory audits in 1990. A preliminary audit of one office within the Pentagon found [more than \\$800 million](#) could not be located. Auditors

said the Pentagon's Defense Logistics Agency (DLA)—described as “the military's Walmart” because it's responsible for processing supplies and equipment—has financial management “so weak that its leaders and oversight bodies have no reliable way to track the huge sums it's responsible for.”

Whether it's investing in [bomb-sniffing elephants](#), paying [\\$8,000 for something that should cost \\$50](#), or the [famous \\$640 toilet seat](#), there's no shortage of absurd waste in the Pentagon. A *Reuters* [probe in 2013](#) found “\$8.5 trillion in taxpayer money doled out to the Pentagon since 1996 ... has never been accounted for. That sum exceeds the value of China's economic output [for 2012].”

“To give the Defense Department more money without making sure the waste is addressed is foolish and strategically unwise,” Bonnie Kristian, a fellow at Defense Priorities, [wrote](#) for Reason earlier this year.

But Congress and the White House have no such qualms about handing the Pentagon more money to burn.

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