



# **A VISION FOR BLACK LIVES:** **POLICY DEMANDS FOR BLACK POWER, FREEDOM, & JUSTICE**

## **A Cut in US Military Expenditures and A Reallocation of those Funds to Invest in Domestic Infrastructure and Community Wellbeing**

### **What is the problem?**

- America is an empire that uses war to expand territory and power. American wars are unjust, destructive to Black communities globally and do not keep Black people safe locally. The military industrial complex offers massive profits to private corporations from the death of our global diaspora by handing out massive government contracts to expand US military presence across the globe, while resources for domestic infrastructure and social programs to meet the needs of Black people and working class communities within the US diminishes.
- The US military accounts for over 50 percent of discretionary federal spending, a total of 598.5 Billion dollars spent annually, as compared to 70 billion spent on education, 66 billion spent on healthcare, \$63.2 billion spent on housing and 29.1 billion spent on social security and unemployment.<sup>1</sup> In addition, approximately 3 billion dollars in US aid is allocated to Israel, a state that practices systematic discrimination and has maintained a military occupation of Palestine for decades. Together with aid to Egypt -- Israel's most important regional ally -- this figure represents nearly 75 percent of all US aid dollars. As these figures demonstrate, resources and funds needed for reparations and for building a just and equitable society domestically are instead used to wage war against a majority of the world's communities.
- In the years since September 11 and the US-driven "global war on terror", US military spending has increased by 50 percent. This war has led to the killing of 4 million civilians in the Middle East. US arms and military corporations have made billions of dollars in profit off of waging disaster and destabilization in the Middle East, while increasing western control over the land and resources of the region. In South America and the Caribbean the war on terror has combined with a long-running war on drugs intensifying forced migrations, land grabs, and political disenfranchisement. The war on terror, has not made us safer and has only increased hopelessness as our fears are realized.
- In 2006, AFRICOM was established by the US government to expand US military presence on the continent under the claim of protecting the region against "terror" and "radical Islam". In reality, this effort was designed to expand western colonial control over

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nationalpriorities.org/budget-basics/federal-budget-101/spending/>

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the region, its people and their resources. AFRICOM is a major example of U.S. empire and is a direct threat to global Black liberation.

- The U.S. militarization of Africa includes air strikes and commando raids in Libya; "black ops" missions and drone murders in Somalia; a proxy war in Mali; secretive actions in Chad; anti-piracy operations that result in increased piracy in the Gulf of Guinea; wide-ranging drone operations out of bases in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Niger, and the Seychelles; "special" operations out of bases in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo; CIA bungling in Somalia; over a dozen joint training exercises a year; arming and training of soldiers in places like Uganda, Burundi, and Kenya; a "joint special operations" operation in Burkina Faso; base construction aimed at accommodating future "surges" of troops; legions of mercenary spies; the expansion of a former French foreign legion base in Djibouti and joint war-making with France in Mali.<sup>2</sup>
- Somalia has not only experienced extended military intervention as a result of AFRICOM but has been treated as an experimentation site for the U.S. devastating drone policy.<sup>3</sup> The Democratic Republic of Congo as a region has had a long history of U.S. intervention that have coincided with some of the worst genocides in the world.<sup>4</sup> Not only have U.S. backed African intervention armies committed atrocities but U.S. private companies extract the worlds wealth from Congolese soil.<sup>5</sup> And as is true here, women and the most vulnerable in our communities pay the price of U.S. intervention and the accompanying genocides and civil wars. The U.S. must make room for African-led development and peace-making that is led by grassroots decision-making of the most marginalized and directly affected. We insist on African leaders and demand resources be made to begin the process of community-building at home.
- The Garifuna have experienced rounds of forced migration leaving ancestral homeland in Honduras and across the Central American region in part because of U.S. war-making. Garifuna community members now living as part of the expanding local Black diaspora have dealt with U.S. backed coups in Honduras along with U.S. trained

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.globalresearch.ca/a-preview-of-coming-wars-do-black-lives-matter-in-africa/5446393>

<sup>3</sup>

<https://theintercept.com/2016/03/08/nobody-knows-the-identity-of-the-150-people-killed-by-u-s-in-somalia-but-most-are-certain-they-deserved-it/>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.workers.org/2009/world/africa\\_0827/](http://www.workers.org/2009/world/africa_0827/)

<sup>5</sup> <http://blackagendareport.com/content/second-wave-genocide-looms-congo-susan-rice-point>



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militaries that have devastated the region.<sup>6</sup> They enter an American landscape where the resources for community life have been drained by the last 50 years of post-civil rights cuts. We need end to war, and shift of national resources to rebuilding our local communities and repairing the damage done by American empire abroad.

- There may not be a greater example of the disastrous impact of U.S. military intervention and manipulation than Haiti. We remember and celebrate Haiti as a key center of global Black struggle, and we are disheartened as we recall the continual U.S. intervention that has filled modern Haitian history with coups and violence.<sup>7</sup> On the border of Haiti we have also seen Dominicans of Haitian descent deported and mistreated with the most brutal violence. We can not sit idly by as U.S. funds are used to finance deportations and the border guard that violate the rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent under the guise of our global wars on terror and drugs.<sup>8</sup> We need those funds to be repurposed to heal the damage U.S. intervention has wrecked and rebuild our communities locally.
- The US justifies and advances the global war on terror via its alliance with Israel and is complicit in the genocide taking place against the Palestinian people. The US requires Israel to use 75 percent of all the military aid it receives to buy US-made arms. Consequently, every year billions of dollars are funneled from US taxpayers to hundreds of arms corporations, who then wage lobbying campaigns pushing for even more foreign military aid. The results of this policy are twofold: it not only diverts much needed funding from domestic education and social programs, but it makes US citizens complicit in the abuses committed by the Israeli government. Israel is an apartheid state with over 50 laws on the books that sanction discrimination against the Palestinian people. Palestinian homes and land are routinely bulldozed to make way for illegal Israeli settlements. Israeli soldiers also regularly arrest and detain Palestinians as young as 4 years old without due process. Everyday, Palestinians are forced to walk through military checkpoints along the US-funded apartheid wall.
- The expansion of the war on terror has been vividly expressed in the violence the West with U.S. leadership used to attack the people of Libya. Not only was a government overthrown but arms were given to rebel groups who have violated the human rights of all Libyans.<sup>9</sup> In the wake of this war crime Somalis, Nigerians, Eritreans and other communities who have been taking the risk of traveling through Libya for decades have

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/06/29/honduras-bleeding/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.globalresearch.ca/us-sponsored-coup-detat-the-destabilization-of-haiti/5323726>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/11/border-patrol-us-haiti-dominican-republic>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/feb/1/hillary-clinton-libya-war-push-armed-benghazi-rebe/>

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are experiencing even more hardship. The right of migration for many Africans inside and outside Libya has been placed in even greater jeopardy. Our family, our diaspora are now faced with rebel groups who attack them and smugglers who make them risk their lives in unsafe boats in dangerous waters. It is now not uncommon for hundreds of Africans to drown in the mediterranean every week.<sup>10</sup> This happens as the west ignores its role in creating this crisis, but we can not sit by.<sup>11</sup> We can no longer fund coups, and civil wars. Our resources should be used to repair the damage we have done to our global community and rebuild our neighborhoods domestically.

- The interlinked systems of white supremacy, imperialism, capitalism and patriarchy shape the violence we face. As oppressed people living in the US, the belly of global empire, we are in a critical position to build the necessary connections for a global liberation movement. Until we are able to overturn US imperialism, capitalism and white supremacy, our brothers and sisters around the world will continue to live in chains. Our struggle is strengthened by our connections to the resistance of peoples around the world fighting for their liberation. The Black radical tradition has always been rooted in igniting connection across the global south under the recognition that our liberation is intrinsically tied to the liberation of Black and Brown people around the world.
- The movement for Black lives must be tied to liberation movements around the world. The Black community is a global diaspora and our political demands must reflect this global reality. As it stands funds and resources needed to realize domestic demands are currently used for wars and violence destroying communities abroad. State violence within the U.S. is intimately linked with empire and war-making globally.

## **What does this solution do?**

- Severely limits the war-making ability of the American military.
- Cuts the US military budget by 50%, which will lead to the closure of the over 800 U.S. military bases the U.S. around the world, the elimination of the the sale of weaponry to violators of human rights, reduces the use and stockpiling of nuclear weapons<sup>12</sup> and return all troops back from the current theatres of war..
- Increases accountability of federal spending. Careful audits of Pentagon and military contractors to retrieve and address misallocated funding. 70% of pentagon budget goes

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/30/world/europe/migrants-deaths-mediterranean-libya-italy.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/30/world/europe/migrants-deaths-mediterranean-libya-italy.html?_r=0)

<sup>11</sup> <http://blackalliance.org/realmigrationcrisis/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://petitions.moveon.org/sign/cut-military-spending-2>



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to private contractors reviewing military contracts that currently have minimal to zero accountability is central to expanding resources for reparations.<sup>13</sup>

- Drastically lowers war casualties by eliminating large share of casualties of civilians, “enemy combatants” and American soldiers.
- Provides reparations to countries and communities devastated by American war-making, such as Somalia, Iraq, Libya and Honduras
- Cease the military aid and funding of countries and organizations with human rights violations.<sup>14</sup>
- Shifts national resources away from war-making institutions to peace-making.
- Deploy military personnel in domestic peace-making roles that redesign and rebuild the country’s polluting and crumbling infrastructure with released funds from war-making.
- Expands resources available for reparations and the various demands of the broad movement for Black lives:
  - [Universal health care](#).
  - Full [employment](#).
  - [Housing](#) for all.
  - Free quality public [education](#) at all levels.
  - Etc.
- Contributes to the stabilization of regions throughout the world who have been devastated by US and US-backed military intervention, including Somalia, Kenya, Congo, Libya, Honduras, Colombia, El Salvador, the Middle East and across the world.

## Federal Action:

- Build invest/divestment campaigns that ends US Aid to Israel’s military industrial complex and any government with human rights violations.<sup>15</sup>
- Detail rebuilding and repair plan for domestic infrastructure across the country based on a commitment to a green economy and deep understanding of the threat of climate change.
- Expand American public transportation system with federal job guarantee for re-trained military personnel.
- Repair domestic infrastructure that is currently dilapidated.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.dailydot.com/via/bernie-sanders-defense-spending/>

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.jill2016.com/halt\\_us\\_arm\\_sales\\_to\\_saudi\\_arabia](http://www.jill2016.com/halt_us_arm_sales_to_saudi_arabia)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.vocativ.com/311094/saudi-u-s-tensions-havent-slowed-obamas-weapons-spigot/>



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- Engage the Leahy Law, which prohibits the U.S. government from providing military assistance to a foreign military unit where credible information exists that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights.
- Organize campaigns against G4S and other global private prison companies that are profiting from the shackling of our community in the US, in Palestine, in Brazil and around the world.
- Detail funding needs of priority community building efforts like healthcare, education, and housing and re-route funding to address outlined needs.

### **State Action:**

- Pass state resolutions supporting cuts in military spending and local re-investment in operations and resources for Black and working class communities.
- Fight the expanding number of Anti-BDS bills being passed in states around the country. This type of legislation not only harms the movement to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine, but is a threat to the constitutional right to free speech and protest
- Circulate sign-on letters demanding an end to the building of military bases and factories locally.
- Map out state wide infrastructure needs and pass resolutions calling for the necessary reinvestment and rebuilding efforts.
- Coordinate direct actions of solidarity with South Africa, Columbia and liberation movements across the globe.

### **Local Action:**

- Organize direct actions demanding a cut in military spending and local re-investment.
- Circulate sign-on letters demanding an end to local military spending.
- Fight for the de-militarization of local police forces and elimination of purchases of military surplus equipment.
- Map out local infrastructure needs and pass resolutions calling for the necessary reinvestment and rebuilding efforts. Coordinate direct actions of solidarity with South Africa, Palestine, Columbia and liberation movements across the globe.

### **How does this solution address the specific needs of some of the most marginalized Black people?**

- Eliminate much of the destruction and loss of life Black people experience as soldiers and victims of U.S. war-making.
- Provides massive resources for reparations.
- Increase available resources to address a number of needs including:
  - Health care for Black LGBT youth and undocumented immigrants.



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- Housing for Black homeless community members.
- Childcare for Black working class children and parents.

## Resources:

- [How Can I Help Cut the Military Budget by 25 to 50 Percent](#)
- [www.BDSmovement.net](http://www.BDSmovement.net)
- [www.blackpalestiniansolidarity.com](http://www.blackpalestiniansolidarity.com)

## Organizations Currently Working on Policy:

- AFL-CIO<sup>16</sup>
- NAACP
- Green Party<sup>17</sup>
- United for Justice with Peace<sup>18</sup>
- The Dream Defenders
- The US Campaign to End the Occupation
- The Institute for Middle East Understanding
- American Friends Service Committee
- The Black Alliance for Just Immigration
- The Black Immigration Network
- Adalah - The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/node/986>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.jill2016.com/plan>

<sup>18</sup> <http://justicewithpeace.org/taxonomy/term/26>