

# ~ MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS ~

The United States of America plays a unique role in international affairs particularly as it relates to defense issues. Since World War Two the United States military has occupied a role of overwhelming power throughout the world. I believe that we need to maintain a position of strength to guarantee our continued security. Nevertheless we are spending a staggering amount of money on defense. It is worthwhile to examine whether we need to be spending more than the next 8 or 9 nations combined.

We should look at what our 21st century defense needs are in an era when cyber-warfare and hardware such as drones and robotic systems play an increasing role. We are in an age when disinformation and media manipulation can help bring down a country with hardly a shot being fired.

The other crucial consideration in defense is the human element. Our men and women of the armed services should not be placed in harms way except for the most serious circumstances in which our national security is truly at risk. Anything less than that is disrespectful of the sacrifice that they are offering the rest of us by putting on that uniform and serving to protect us.

I do believe that we should be taking a more active role in the defense of Ukraine against Russian aggression. The expansionist actions of Putin represent the most significant military threat to us and our allies since the Third Reich. Sadly there are legislators who have been repeating Russian propaganda about the war.

We should not be militarily involved in “boots on the ground” operations for the sake of securing oil resources or other quasi-economic goals. We should not be putting our troops at risk for repressive, undemocratic regimes just for political goals. Additionally, any estimate of the cost of war should include the cost of caring for our veterans.

Once those service men and women are no longer on active duty, we owe them a debt. Veterans should be supported with proper veteran’s services, VA medical care, social and psychological services for successful transition to civilian life and aid for education and training to re-enter the job market. No vet should ever be homeless. These services must be fully funded.

Our current Senator has not shown this type of consistent support of our veterans. John Thune recently voted against the PACT ACT that would provide benefits to veterans exposed to toxicity from burning pits. Fortunately the bill passed in spite of his opposition to providing full benefits to veterans. His refusal to pass the bill met with veterans disapproval pressuring him to pass it. We can’t have a Senator who votes against veterans just because that is what his party wants him to do.

The problem of sexual assault in the military needs to be investigated fully, and our military personnel need to feel completely safe with their comrades in arms. Allegations of rape and sexual assault must never be ignored, and perpetrators fully punished.

Finally, Congress must regain its power to declare war and not yield it to the President. The best way to keep our defense spending reasonable is to avoid getting involved in wars unless our national security is truly at stake. One of the reasons our Constitution gives the power to declare war to congress, is to keep that power from the whim of a single leader. Lasting peace gives us a better chance for prosperity and provides an environment that is best suited for the well being of our families.

~ We need a sensible national defense that treats active duty personnel with fairness and respect for the sacrifices they make and a system that doesn't short change veterans. ~

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