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## **Military Spending vs. Affordable Housing and Veteran's Affairs Spending**

### **NCH Fact Sheet #23**

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The Department of Defense has a budget of \$419.3 billion dollars for FY 2006. This represents a 5% increase from FY 2005. Our nation's military budget has experienced a 41% increase since September 11, 2001 and continues to grow each day with the long-term occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>

The Bush Administration has asked for \$80 billion dollars in supplemental appropriations for FY 2006. \$75 billion dollars of these supplemental appropriations will be used to maintain the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan for the coming year.<sup>2</sup>

To date, the Iraq War has cost American taxpayers \$182 billion dollars and counting. The National Priorities Project estimates that over 1.6 million affordable public housing units could have been built with these funds.<sup>3</sup>

So, including the primary defense budget and the supplemental appropriations bill, the U.S. government will spend roughly \$500 billion dollars on defense operations.

The amount that the government spends on affordable housing and taking care of its war veterans tells a different story.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development has a remarkably smaller budget at \$28.5 billion dollars for FY 2006. Sadly, this represents an 11% decrease from FY 2005. Only \$1.4 billion dollars from the entire budget is devoted to "homeless assistance programs".<sup>4</sup>

It must be noted that this is a \$200 million dollar increase from anti-homeless programs in FY 2005.<sup>5</sup> However, this anemic amount will not do nearly enough to alleviate the problems faced by our nation's homeless population. This small amount becomes even more inadequate when compared to the \$860 million dollars that the U.S. government

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<sup>1</sup> The White House Office of Management and Budget, The Department of Defense FY 2006 Budget.

<sup>2</sup> The Washington Post, Fiscal Year 2006 Budget Breakdown.

<sup>3</sup> [www.costofwar.com](http://www.costofwar.com)

<sup>4</sup> The White House Office of Management and Budget, The Department of Housing and Urban Development FY 2006 Budget.

<sup>5</sup> The Washington Post, Fiscal Year 2006 Budget Breakdown.

spent last year on its drone program alone (radio controlled unmanned reconnaissance airplanes).<sup>6</sup>

The Department of Veterans' Affairs has a budget of \$33.4 billion dollars for FY 2006. This represents a 3% increase from FY 2005. Veterans' Affairs estimates that there are more than 250,000 homeless veterans in the Nation. The department also boasts that its homeless assistance programs now constitute the largest integrated network of services in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

But, strikingly the Veterans' Affairs budget only allocates \$231 million dollars to support this network and the department reports that it only serves roughly 40,000 of the estimated 250,000 homeless veterans on the street.<sup>8</sup>

The budget also provides \$1.5 billion dollars for medical care to homeless veterans. With the U.S. government spending almost \$1 billion dollars a day in Iraq, this amount seems insufficient to meet the medical needs of the nation's homeless veterans.<sup>9</sup>

The Department of Veterans Affairs reports that three-fourths of homeless veterans suffer from mental illness and/or a substance abuse problem. However, the budget does not call for specific initiatives to address these problems. It only says that it will work with other federal departments and state and local governments to ensure that homeless veterans will be able to keep a job and live independently.<sup>10</sup>

**Resources:** Please refer to footnotes for all citations.

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<sup>6</sup> The Washington Diplomat.

<sup>7</sup> The White House Office of Management and Budget, The Department of Veterans Affairs FY 2006 Budget.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*