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What the World Pays to Fight

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What the World Pays to Fight

The Sale of Small Arms

The New York Times Sept 4, 2006, had a chart that graphically displays the world's biggest exporters of small firearms and where most of these guns wind up.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/05/opinion/05stohl.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

According to this chart, there is one weapon for every ten people in the world, and every year enough ammunition is manufactured to kill each and every person worldwide twice (assuming good aim). The United States exports \$533 million worth of small firearms each year, and we also purchase more guns than any other country, with sales topping \$286 million. As the largest exporter of arms, continued international unrest is good for business.

The Watch Dogs

Many of the figures supporting this op-ed graphic were taken from the Center for Defense Information

<http://www.cdi.org/>

The CDI, though based in Washington, DC accepts no funding from the Department of Defense nor related defense industries in order to claim unbiased information. Their mission is to strengthen global defense by providing policy makers and the general public with "alternative views on security." The views promoted by the center are really not so alternative however. CDI believes that conflict can be resolved through reduced reliance on military power and nuclear weapons, international cooperation, and oversight of defense spending. In other words, it's about the economy, stupid. Statistics here do not come in neat packages. Instead consider CDI a watch-dog group commenting on U.S. defense expenditures as they happen, and though many of their reports and publications require a subscription, others are free in .pdf format. Their report entitled, Report of the Task Force on a Unified Security Budget for the United States, 2007

<http://www.cdi.org/pdfs/0605securitybudget.pdf>

offers various embedded charts on domestic and international military spending. They discuss how President Bush has increased the military budget while cutting funding for environmental health, chronic disease prevention, and occupational safety programs (see pp. 2 and 42 of this report). Though some of the figures in this report are derived from the CDI's own past reports, they primarily review the Department of Defense' fiscal budget.

If I Had a Billion Dollars

If you have ever wondered what a Joint Strike Fighter costs these days, Google: "department defense fy 07 budget program acquisition costs"

The Program Acquisitions Costs by Aircraft report shows that a billion dollars just doesn't buy what it used to. I scrolled down to p. 20 of the latest budget to see that \$5.3 billion dollars was procured for the purchase of five such JSF aircrafts for the purpose of "reducing cost and risk." This is a 68-page report, so there's time to pour another cup of coffee while loading this report, even with a high-speed connection.

The Federation of American Scientists' Arms Sales Monitoring Project maintains a page called Fast Facts

http://www.fas.org/asmp/fast_facts.htm

which provides an informative overview of information regarding the total value of arms exports, human rights records of countries, U.S. tax dollars spent to train military soldiers of other countries, and the value of arms sold by the top defense contractors.

What I like about this site, in addition to being concise and loaded with information, is that the footnotes are hyperlinks to their sources, while so many reports are merely .pdfs with references that lead to nowhere.

Worth Its Weight in Gold

The Defense-Aerospace.com, reports in Sticker Shock: Estimating the Real Cost of Modern Fighter Aircraft, that "one fighter is worth its weight in gold; three are worth their weight in caviar." This occasional report can be found at:

<http://www.defense-aerospace.com/dae/articles/communiques/FighterCostFinalJuly06.pdf#search=%22department%20of%20defense%20fy07%20budget%20program%20acquisition%20costs%22>

Their claim is that though the average unit procurement cost of NATO area fighter aircraft is \$112.4 million, if research and development costs are factored into the equation, each unit costs \$148.9 million. The F22-A Raptor, the most expensive unit for FY06 costs \$338.9 million. The defense-aerospace.com website is a news service for defense and aerospace professionals. Again, though much of their analysis is free, a premium service is available for 245 EUR (313 USD) a year. The July 2006 article entitled "Persian Gulf Arms Orders Top \$35 billion Since December" offers keen insight of the industry, by the industry. As conflicts in the Middle East prevail, the U.S. rushes in with weapons to Saudia Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emerates, Jordan and Egypt. Notice in the second paragraph, that these are only arms deals which have been announced to the public. The figures used are provided by the General Accounting Office, the Department of Defense, the Pentagon, and the U.S. Air Force (see the bottom of each of pages 7-12 which discuss specific aircrafts). The F-22 was in fact the only aircraft that was actually worth more than its weight in gold!