

Voter Guide 2014: Overseas Contingency Operations (War Funding)

National Priorities Project examines issues related to the federal budget in time for the 2014 election.

What is Overseas Contingency Operations?

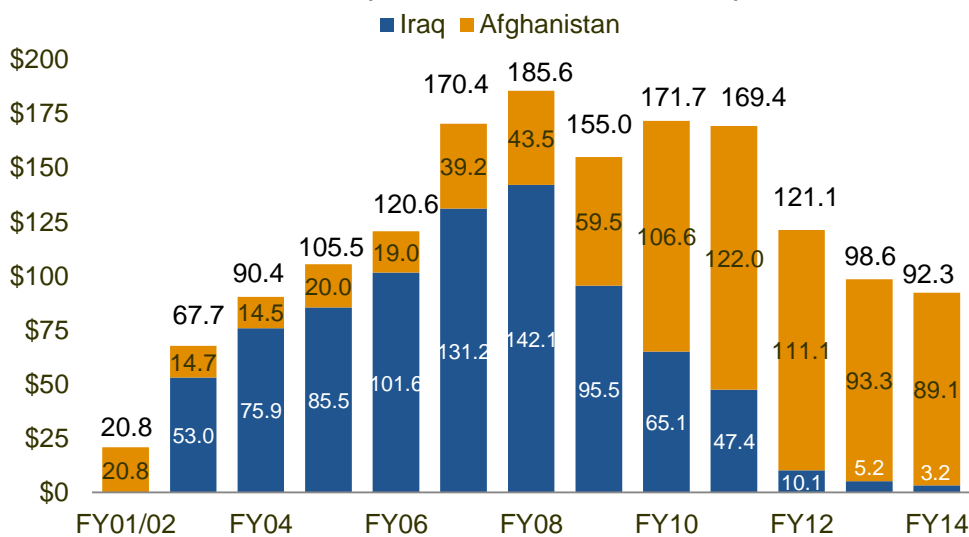
- The Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) fund is a separate pot of funding operated by the Department of Defense and the State Department, in addition to their base budgets. Originally used to finance the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the funding has paid for everything from military training and salaries, to ground support, to military contractors and more.
- For fiscal year 2015, the president has requested \$60 billion in war funds, of which \$58.6 billion is designated for the Department of Defense, and \$1.4 billion is designated for the State Department.¹ That's in addition to \$496 billion for the Department of Defense base budget.²
- Since OCO is not subject to the sequestration cuts that impact every other part of the discretionary budget, and is not necessarily limited to war-related funding, many experts consider it a “slush fund” for the Pentagon.
- This year, in addition to funding for Iraq and Afghanistan operations, the President has also requested special war funding for operations in or around Syria, the Central African Republic, and Europe.

War Spending in Iraq and Afghanistan

By the end of fiscal year 2014, the U.S. government will have spent \$1.57 trillion in direct costs on the wars in Afghanistan (\$751.5 billion) and Iraq (\$817.8 billion).³

Some say that the \$60 billion requested for fiscal year 2015 is too high given that the number of troops in Afghanistan this

Annualized Costs of the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
(In Billions of Current Dollars)



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year will drop significantly.

A major question is whether the Pentagon will request additional funds in the coming year, given recent developments in Iraq and Syria.

Public Opinion

When given information about the national defense budget, 58 percent of Americans would support substantial reductions in military spending.⁴ Other polling shows that 57 percent of Americans think sending troops into Iraq was a mistake, and more recent public opinion shows that 74 percent of Americans oppose sending troops back into Iraq this year.⁵

What Americans Say

"I hope that as America moves into a more peaceful time we can decrease our focus on military and increase our focus on education."

-Sage, Belfast, ME

What to Ask Your Congressional Candidates

- Is OCO spending being used wisely to ensure America's security and position in the world?
- Does the United States need Overseas Contingency funding to be separate from regular Department of Defense and State Department spending? If so, for how much longer will the United States need this funding?
- How will you make sure that OCO funding is not used as a "slush fund" to unfairly get around the government spending limits posed by sequestration?
- What is your position on continued U.S. spending and involvement in Iraq given the crisis there?
- Are continued U.S. spending levels in Afghanistan justified? Why or why not?

More About Military and War Spending: bit.ly/NPPmilitary

¹ The White House, [Fiscal Year 2015 Overseas Contingency Operations Request](#).

² Office of Management and Budget, Administration's Fiscal Year 2015 Overseas Contingency Operations Request.

³ National Priorities Project, Cost of War Counters.

⁴ Program for Public Consultation [poll](#), conducted Apr. 12-18, 2012.

⁵ Public Policy Polling [poll](#), conducted June 14-15, 2014.