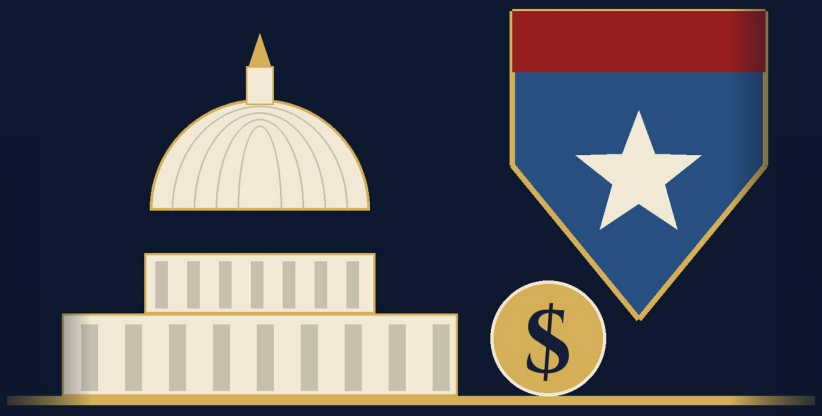
A PLAIN-ENGLISH FACT CHECK

MILITARY, DEFENSE SPENDING AND WAR POWERS

What the Records Show



BUDGET | AUDIT | WAR POWERS | IRAN | FOREIGN AID

The Budget, Foreign Aid and Who Can Start a War

ANDREW DOMINGUEZ

TRINFINITY Enterprises

MILITARY, DEFENSE SPENDING AND WAR POWERS

What the Records Show About the Budget, Foreign Aid and Who Can Start a War

The defense budget, the Pentagon audit, the War Powers Resolution, the 2026 Iran conflict, foreign aid and Ukraine, and the claims people make about all of it

Andrew Dominguez

Fact Check Series

Trinfinity Enterprises

Military, Defense Spending and War Powers: What the Records Show About the Budget, Foreign Aid and Who Can Start a War

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The information in this book stops at November 18, 2026. Each figure comes from the newest report I could open on that date and carries the date of its source. Budgets change every year, and the situation with Iran was still changing on that date, so check the sources named in the footnotes for newer information.

This book is for general information only. It is not legal or policy advice, and it does not tell you what policy to support.

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Introduction: How to Read This Book

The information in this book stops at November 18, 2026.

The United States spends more on its military than any other country, and in 2026 it fought a war with Iran that Congress never authorized. Those two facts sit behind most of the arguments in this book. How much does the country spend on defense, and where does the money go? Can the Pentagon account for it? Who has the power to send the country to war, the President or Congress? How much goes to foreign aid, and how much went to Ukraine?

People on every side make claims about these questions. Some are true, some are half true and some are wrong. I wrote this book to put the records in one place. Every number traces to a source you can open and check. The book does not take a side on any war or any budget. It lays out what the records show and lets you decide what they mean.

What this book covers

- **Part One** covers the defense budget: how it is made, where the money goes and how it compares with the rest of the world.
- **Part Two** covers the Pentagon's financial audit.
- **Part Three** covers war powers: what the Constitution says, the War Powers Resolution, and how they played out in the 2026 conflict with Iran.
- **Part Four** covers foreign aid, including the end of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) as a separate aid agency and aid to Ukraine.
- **Part Five** tests common claims and gives each one a verdict.
- **Part Six** shows where things stand and what nobody knows yet.

Where the facts come from

Tier	What it means	Examples in this book
1. Primary and official	Government agencies reporting their own data	Cited through the Congressional Research Service reports that quote them
2. Nonpartisan and research groups	Research offices that do not lobby for a side	Congressional Research Service (CRS), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Brookings Institution
3. Scholarly	Peer-reviewed research	None needed for this book
4. Journalism and commentary	News reports and expert commentary, used for recent events	Defense News, Reuters, NPR, Al Jazeera, Scripps News, Arms Control Today, Council on Foreign Relations, Iran International
5. Advocacy groups	Groups that argue a side	None used

CRS is the research office that works for Congress, and it writes for members of both parties. It is the backbone of this book. I read its reports through EveryCRSReport.com, a public copy, because the

congress.gov site refused automated reading. SIPRI is an independent research institute in Sweden that publishes the most widely used comparison of military spending between countries.

The Iran chapter relies on news reports, because the events are recent and CRS had not published a full account that I could open. I used outlets from different countries and points of view, and I label each one. Iran International, for example, is a London-based outlet opposed to the Iranian government. Where reports disagree on a date, I say so.

Facts, interpretations and unknowns

- **Confirmed facts** are things the records show, such as how much Congress appropriated for the Department of Defense (DOD) for 2026.
- **Interpretations** are what someone makes of the facts, such as whether a war was legal. When I give one, I say whose it is.
- **Unknowns** are things the records don't settle yet. When I could not confirm something, I mark it **[Not verified]**.

The four verdicts

- **True:** The records support the claim as stated.
- **Partly true:** Part of the claim holds up, but it leaves out something important or overstates it.
- **False:** The records contradict the claim.
- **Inconclusive:** The evidence is not strong enough to say either way, or it is too soon to know.

A word about fiscal years and the two kinds of defense bills

The federal fiscal year (FY) runs from October 1 to September 30. FY2026 began October 1, 2025.

Congress passes two kinds of defense bills each year, and people confuse them:

- The **National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)** sets policy and authorizes spending levels. CRS notes that the NDAA itself "provides no budget authority."[1]
- The **defense appropriations act** actually provides the money.

So when you hear that Congress "passed a $1 trillion defense bill," ask which kind it was.

[1] Congressional Research Service, "FY2027 NDAA: Summary of Funding Authorizations (Insight IN12703)", updated July 24, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-07-24_IN12703_5f452c92184ad86e4a4bef8ac0971a49109efb05.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Part One: The Defense Budget

Chapter 1: What Congress Provided for 2026

FY2026 started without a budget. Government funding lapsed from October 1 to November 12, 2025, for 42 days, and lapsed again briefly from January 31 to February 3, 2026.[2] The final Department of Defense Appropriations Act for 2026 was signed on February 3, 2026, as part of a larger spending law. The Senate passed it 71 to 29 and the House 217 to 214.[3]

The act provided $839.2 billion for DOD, $8.4 billion more than the department requested.[4] Here is how the main pieces compare, in billions of dollars:[5]

Category	FY2025 enacted	FY2026 request	FY2026 enacted
Military personnel (pay and benefits)	$182.4	$194.7	$193.3
Operation and maintenance (running the force)	$290.3	$295.7	$294.4
Procurement (buying weapons and equipment)	$167.5	$153.1	$167.5
Research, development, test and evaluation	$141.2	$142.0	$145.9
Total	$842.0	$831.2	$839.2

Operation and maintenance is the largest piece, about 35 percent of the total by my calculation. Pay and benefits come next.

The extra money from the 2025 budget law

That is not the whole picture. The 2025 budget law, Public Law 119-21, signed July 4, 2025, added $156.2 billion for defense, including $152.3 billion for DOD and $3.9 billion for nuclear weapons

[2] Congressional Research Service, "FY2026 Department of Defense Appropriations: In Brief (R48891)", April 2, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-04-02_R48891_d10ea9332fc2254298736b29a40ef149c04f62ac.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[3] Congressional Research Service, "FY2026 Department of Defense Appropriations: In Brief (R48891)", April 2, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-04-02_R48891_d10ea9332fc2254298736b29a40ef149c04f62ac.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[4] Congressional Research Service, "FY2026 Department of Defense Appropriations: In Brief (R48891)", April 2, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-04-02_R48891_d10ea9332fc2254298736b29a40ef149c04f62ac.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[5] Congressional Research Service, "FY2026 Department of Defense Appropriations: In Brief (R48891)", April 2, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-04-02_R48891_d10ea9332fc2254298736b29a40ef149c04f62ac.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

programs at the Department of Energy. That money can be spent through FY2029.[6] DOD counted $113 billion of it as part of its FY2026 plans.[7] It is not included in the $839.2 billion.

The FY2026 NDAA, Public Law 119-60, authorized $890.6 billion for all of national defense, which also counts nuclear weapons programs and some other agencies.[8] SIPRI reports that spending approved by Congress for 2026, counting everything, came to over $1 trillion.[9]

Chapter 2: The 2027 Request

For FY2027, the administration requested about $1.15 trillion in regular national defense funding, plus another $350 billion it expected to come through a separate budget reconciliation law.[10]

The House and Senate Armed Services Committees both wrote NDAA bills close to the request: $1,141.7 billion in the House version and $1,140.2 billion in the Senate version. CRS says both would authorize about $250 billion, or 28 percent, more than FY2026.[11] The House approved its defense bill on July 21, 2026, according to Al Jazeera.[12]

Whether FY2027 defense appropriations have been enacted as of November 18, 2026, is **[Not verified]**. SIPRI noted that if the request is approved, U.S. military spending could rise to $1.5 trillion in 2027.[13]

Chapter 3: How the U.S. Compares With the World

SIPRI's 2026 report covers spending in calendar year 2025:[14]

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[6] Congressional Research Service, "FY2026 Department of Defense Appropriations: In Brief (R48891)", April 2, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-04-02_R48891_d10ea9332fc2254298736b29a40ef149c04f62ac.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[7] Congressional Research Service, "FY2026 Department of Defense Appropriations: In Brief (R48891)", April 2, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-04-02_R48891_d10ea9332fc2254298736b29a40ef149c04f62ac.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[8] Congressional Research Service, "FY2027 NDAA: Summary of Funding Authorizations (Insight IN12703)", updated July 24, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-07-24_IN12703_5f452c92184ad86e4a4bef8ac0971a49109efb05.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[9] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Global military spending rise continues as European and Asian expenditures surge", April 27, 2026. https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2026/global-military-spending-rise-continues-european-and-asian-expenditures-surge. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[10] Congressional Research Service, "FY2027 NDAA: Summary of Funding Authorizations (Insight IN12703)", updated July 24, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-07-24_IN12703_5f452c92184ad86e4a4bef8ac0971a49109efb05.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[11] Congressional Research Service, "FY2027 NDAA: Summary of Funding Authorizations (Insight IN12703)", updated July 24, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-07-24_IN12703_5f452c92184ad86e4a4bef8ac0971a49109efb05.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[12] Al Jazeera, "US House votes to limit Iran war for first time since ceasefire breakdown", July 23, 2026. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/7/23/us-house-votes-to-limit-iran-war-for-first-time-since-ceasefire-breakdown. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[13] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Global military spending rise continues as European and Asian expenditures surge", April 27, 2026. https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2026/global-military-spending-rise-continues-european-and-asian-expenditures-surge. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[14] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Global military spending rise continues as European and Asian expenditures surge", April 27, 2026. https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2026/global-military-spending-rise-continues-

- World military spending was $2,887 billion, up 2.9 percent after inflation, the 11th yearly increase in a row. That was 2.5 percent of the world's economy, the highest share since 2009.
- **United States:** $954 billion, down 7.5 percent from 2024. SIPRI says the drop came mainly because Congress approved no new military aid for Ukraine in 2025, after approving $127 billion over the three years before.
- **China:** $336 billion, up 7.4 percent.
- **Russia:** $190 billion, up 5.9 percent, or 7.5 percent of its economy.
- **Germany:** $114 billion, the largest among European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- **India:** $92.1 billion. **United Kingdom:** $89.0 billion. **Ukraine:** $84.1 billion. **Saudi Arabia:** $83.2 billion. **France:** $68.0 billion.

The United States, China and Russia together made up 51 percent of the world total.[15] By my calculation, the United States alone was about 33 percent, or one-third.

Also by my calculation, the eight other countries listed above spent a combined $1,056 billion in 2025, more than the U.S. total of $954 billion. So in 2025, the United States did not outspend the next 10 countries combined, a comparison people often make.

european-and-asian-expenditures-surge. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[15] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Global military spending rise continues as European and Asian expenditures surge", April 27, 2026. https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2026/global-military-spending-rise-continues-european-and-asian-expenditures-surge. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Part Two: The Pentagon Audit

Chapter 4: Eight Years Without a Clean Audit

Major federal agencies have their financial statements audited each year. An auditor checks whether the agency can show what it owns, what it owes and where its money went. A "clean" or "unmodified" opinion means the auditor could verify the books.

In December 2025, DOD announced that it had failed its audit for FY2025, the eighth year in a row. Defense News reported that DOD is the only one of the government's 24 major agencies that has never passed.[16]

- DOD reported $4.65 trillion in assets and $4.7 trillion in liabilities.[17]
- Auditors found 26 material weaknesses, meaning serious problems in how the department tracks money and property, plus two significant deficiencies.[18]
- DOD's chief financial officer, Jules Hurst, wrote that the goal is a clean opinion by 2028.[19]

The result of the FY2026 audit, which would normally be released in late 2026, is **[Not verified]**. I did not open a report on it.

What a failed audit does and doesn't mean

A failed audit means the auditors could not confirm that DOD's financial records are complete and accurate. It does not, by itself, measure how much money was lost, stolen or wasted. In my reading, claims that the Pentagon "lost" or "can't find" a specific number of trillions confuse the size of the books being audited with money that is missing. The audit shows the department cannot yet prove where everything is. It does not put a dollar figure on what is gone.

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[16] Tanya Noury, Defense News, "Pentagon fails financial audit for 8th year in a row", December 19, 2025. https://www.defensenews.com/news/pentagon-congress/2025/12/19/pentagon-fails-financial-audit-for-8th-year-in-a-row/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[17] Tanya Noury, Defense News, "Pentagon fails financial audit for 8th year in a row", December 19, 2025. https://www.defensenews.com/news/pentagon-congress/2025/12/19/pentagon-fails-financial-audit-for-8th-year-in-a-row/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[18] Tanya Noury, Defense News, "Pentagon fails financial audit for 8th year in a row", December 19, 2025. https://www.defensenews.com/news/pentagon-congress/2025/12/19/pentagon-fails-financial-audit-for-8th-year-in-a-row/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[19] Tanya Noury, Defense News, "Pentagon fails financial audit for 8th year in a row", December 19, 2025. https://www.defensenews.com/news/pentagon-congress/2025/12/19/pentagon-fails-financial-audit-for-8th-year-in-a-row/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Part Three: War Powers

Chapter 5: What the Constitution Says

The Constitution splits the war power between the two branches.[20]

- **Congress (Article I, Section 8)** has the power to "declare war" and to "provide for and regulate the Armed Forces." Congress also controls the money.
- **The President (Article II)** is "Commander in Chief" of the armed forces and directs them in combat.

Congress has passed 11 formal declarations of war against foreign nations, in five different wars. In addition, it has passed about 50 laws authorizing the use of military force for specific purposes without a formal declaration.[21]

Presidents have also used force without either one, as Chapter 7 shows. Where the President's power ends and Congress's begins is an old argument, and this book does not try to settle it.

Chapter 6: The War Powers Resolution

Congress passed the War Powers Resolution on November 7, 1973, over President Nixon's veto.[22] Its main rules:[23]

- **Report within 48 hours.** The President must notify Congress within 48 hours after U.S. forces are sent into hostilities.
- **60-day limit.** The President must end the use of those forces after 60 days unless Congress declares war or authorizes the action.
- **30 more days.** The deadline can be extended 30 days if the President certifies "unavoidable military necessity" for a safe withdrawal.

The law also said Congress could order troops out by a **concurrent resolution**, which passes both chambers but does not go to the President. In 1983, the Supreme Court ruled in INS v. Chadha that this

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[20] Congressional Research Service, "Defense Primer: Legal Authorities for the Use of Military Forces (In Focus IF10539)", updated December 23, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-12-23_IF10539_6350d102d50389060b69a6f04227781634b4232d.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[21] Congressional Research Service, "Defense Primer: Legal Authorities for the Use of Military Forces (In Focus IF10539)", updated December 23, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-12-23_IF10539_6350d102d50389060b69a6f04227781634b4232d.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[22] Congressional Research Service, "Understanding the War Powers Resolution (In Focus IF13134)", December 17, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-12-17_IF13134_27fac3b6efe508aea26aae3fca21e9462d73b6e7.html. Accessed November 18, 2026. Congressional Research Service, "Defense Primer: Legal Authorities for the Use of Military Forces (In Focus IF10539)", updated December 23, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-12-23_IF10539_6350d102d50389060b69a6f04227781634b4232d.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[23] Congressional Research Service, "Understanding the War Powers Resolution (In Focus IF13134)", December 17, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-12-17_IF13134_27fac3b6efe508aea26aae3fca21e9462d73b6e7.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

kind of "legislative veto" is unconstitutional.[24] In 1984, Congress added a procedure using a **joint resolution**, which does go to the President and can be vetoed.[25]

That difference matters. A concurrent resolution is easier to pass but may have no legal force. A joint resolution has legal force, but a President can veto it, and overriding a veto takes two-thirds of both chambers. In the 116th Congress (2019 to 2020), Congress passed a joint resolution on U.S. involvement in the war in Yemen, and the President vetoed it.[26]

Chapter 7: The 2026 Conflict With Iran

This chapter is based on news reports and analysis, because the events are recent. I give dates as the sources report them and note where they differ.

How it began

On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel attacked Iran.[27] Iran struck back, including at targets in Gulf states.[28] Congress had not declared war or passed a law authorizing force against Iran. Brookings reports that the administration filed the 48-hour notice required by the War Powers Resolution, and later a 60-day report that acknowledged hostilities had begun February 28.[29]

Early votes in Congress

In early March, Congress declined to act. The Senate rejected a war powers measure 47 to 53 on March 4, and the House voted 219 to 212 on March 5 to block consideration of another.[30]

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[24] Congressional Research Service, "War Powers Resolution: Expedited Procedures in the House and Senate (R47603)", updated June 24, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-06-24_R47603_d8f627637d1c95bd4b673ac736228d2f47d0a80e.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[25] Congressional Research Service, "Understanding the War Powers Resolution (In Focus IF13134)", December 17, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-12-17_IF13134_27fac3b6efe508aea26aae3fca21e9462d73b6e7.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[26] Congressional Research Service, "War Powers Resolution: Expedited Procedures in the House and Senate (R47603)", updated June 24, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-06-24_R47603_d8f627637d1c95bd4b673ac736228d2f47d0a80e.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[27] Kelsey Davenport, Arms Control Today, "Fighting Mars U.S.-Iranian Pledges to End War, Restart Nuclear Talks", July 6, 2026. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2026-07/news/fighting-mars-us-iranian-pledges-end-war-restart-nuclear-talks. Accessed November 18, 2026. Brookings Institution (summary of a Congressional Study Group session), "The Iran War and the War Powers Resolution", July 14, 2026. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-iran-war-and-the-war-powers-resolution/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[28] Kelsey Davenport, Arms Control Today, "Fighting Mars U.S.-Iranian Pledges to End War, Restart Nuclear Talks", July 6, 2026. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2026-07/news/fighting-mars-us-iranian-pledges-end-war-restart-nuclear-talks. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[29] Brookings Institution (summary of a Congressional Study Group session), "The Iran War and the War Powers Resolution", July 14, 2026. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-iran-war-and-the-war-powers-resolution/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[30] James M. Lindsay, Council on Foreign Relations, "Congress Declines to Demand a Say in the Iran War", March 6, 2026. https://www.cfr.org/article/congress-declines-to-demand-a-say-in-the-iran-war. Accessed November 18, 2026.

The 60-day clock and the ceasefire

A ceasefire brokered with help from Pakistan took hold in early April. Brookings gives the date as April 7 and Arms Control Today as April 8.[31] The administration argued that the ceasefire satisfied the War Powers Resolution's 60-day limit.[32] Experts at a Brookings session argued the clock never stopped.[33] That is a dispute over how to read the law, and no court has decided it.

The June votes and the peace memorandum

The House voted for a war powers resolution on June 4.[34] On June 23, the Senate voted 50 to 48 for a measure directing the President to remove forces, with four Republicans joining Democrats.[35] Because it passed as a concurrent resolution, it was not sent to the President and, as NPR reported, it "is not legally binding."[36]

Meanwhile, on June 14 Pakistan's prime minister announced a peace agreement, and on June 17 President Trump and Iran's President Pezeshkian signed a 14-paragraph memorandum. It called for a final nuclear agreement within 60 days, extendable by both sides. Iran reaffirmed that it would never develop nuclear weapons, and the United States committed to end sanctions.[37]

The fighting resumes

The ceasefire broke down within weeks. Arms Control Today reported the U.S. blamed Iran for drone attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz in late June and struck back; Al Jazeera put the breakdown in early July.[38] About a week before July 23, three U.S. personnel were killed in an Iranian attack on a base

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[31] Brookings Institution (summary of a Congressional Study Group session), "The Iran War and the War Powers Resolution", July 14, 2026. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-iran-war-and-the-war-powers-resolution/. Accessed November 18, 2026. Kelsey Davenport, Arms Control Today, "Fighting Mars U.S.-Iranian Pledges to End War, Restart Nuclear Talks", July 6, 2026. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2026-07/news/fighting-mars-us-iranian-pledges-end-war-restart-nuclear-talks. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[32] Brookings Institution (summary of a Congressional Study Group session), "The Iran War and the War Powers Resolution", July 14, 2026. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-iran-war-and-the-war-powers-resolution/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[33] Brookings Institution (summary of a Congressional Study Group session), "The Iran War and the War Powers Resolution", July 14, 2026. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-iran-war-and-the-war-powers-resolution/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[34] Patricia Zengerle, Reuters (republished by StreetInsider), "Explainer: Congress has backed Iran war powers resolutions. Now what?", June 9, 2026. https://www.streetinsider.com/Reuters/Explainer-Congress+has+backed+Iran+war+powers+resolutions.+Now+what/26624828.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[35] Eric McDaniel, NPR (republished by Texas Public Radio), "In symbolic vote, Congress directs Trump to remove forces from Iran war", June 23, 2026. https://www.tpr.org/government-politics/2026-06-23/in-symbolic-vote-congress-directs-trump-to-remove-forces-from-iran-war. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[36] Eric McDaniel, NPR (republished by Texas Public Radio), "In symbolic vote, Congress directs Trump to remove forces from Iran war", June 23, 2026. https://www.tpr.org/government-politics/2026-06-23/in-symbolic-vote-congress-directs-trump-to-remove-forces-from-iran-war. Accessed November 18, 2026. Al Jazeera, "US House votes to limit Iran war for first time since ceasefire breakdown", July 23, 2026. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/7/23/us-house-votes-to-limit-iran-war-for-first-time-since-ceasefire-breakdown. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[37] Kelsey Davenport, Arms Control Today, "Fighting Mars U.S.-Iranian Pledges to End War, Restart Nuclear Talks", July 6, 2026. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2026-07/news/fighting-mars-us-iranian-pledges-end-war-restart-nuclear-talks. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[38] Kelsey Davenport, Arms Control Today, "Fighting Mars U.S.-Iranian Pledges to End War, Restart Nuclear Talks", July 6, 2026. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2026-07/news/fighting-mars-us-iranian-pledges-end-war-restart-nuclear-talks. Accessed November

in Jordan.[39] On July 23, the House passed another war powers measure 214 to 208, while a Senate version failed 47 to 49.[40]

The 60-day negotiating period expired in mid-August with no permanent deal.[41] Scripps News reported that at least 18 U.S. service members had died as a result of the war as of August 17, 2026.[42]

Where things stood in November

On November 9, President Trump said the war was "effectively over" militarily, while U.S. forces remained ready to strike again. Qatar and Pakistan were mediating, and the two sides were still divided over what each would do first.[43] Whether a final agreement has been reached as of November 18, 2026, is **[Not verified]**.

What this shows about war powers

The 2026 conflict followed a pattern seen before. The President acted under his own authority, Congress was divided, and the measures that passed both chambers were concurrent resolutions that did not reach the President's desk. No binding war powers measure became law in the sources I read.[44]

18, 2026. Al Jazeera, "US House votes to limit Iran war for first time since ceasefire breakdown", July 23, 2026. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/7/23/us-house-votes-to-limit-iran-war-for-first-time-since-ceasefire-breakdown. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[39] Al Jazeera, "US House votes to limit Iran war for first time since ceasefire breakdown", July 23, 2026. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/7/23/us-house-votes-to-limit-iran-war-for-first-time-since-ceasefire-breakdown. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[40] Al Jazeera, "US House votes to limit Iran war for first time since ceasefire breakdown", July 23, 2026. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/7/23/us-house-votes-to-limit-iran-war-for-first-time-since-ceasefire-breakdown. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[41] Scripps News, "US-Iran 60-day ceasefire agreement expires with no permanent deal in sight", August 17, 2026. https://www.scrippsnews.com/us-news/iran-war/us-iran-60-day-ceasefire-agreement-expires-with-no-permanent-deal-in-sight. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[42] Scripps News, "US-Iran 60-day ceasefire agreement expires with no permanent deal in sight", August 17, 2026. https://www.scrippsnews.com/us-news/iran-war/us-iran-60-day-ceasefire-agreement-expires-with-no-permanent-deal-in-sight. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[43] Iran International (London-based outlet opposed to the Iranian government), "Trump says Iran war 'effectively over' militarily, but US ready to strike again", November 9, 2026. https://www.iranintl.com/en/202611102662. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[44] Al Jazeera, "US House votes to limit Iran war for first time since ceasefire breakdown", July 23, 2026. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/7/23/us-house-votes-to-limit-iran-war-for-first-time-since-ceasefire-breakdown. Accessed November 18, 2026. Eric McDaniel, NPR (republished by Texas Public Radio), "In symbolic vote, Congress directs Trump to remove forces from Iran war", June 23, 2026. https://www.tpr.org/government-politics/2026-06-23/in-symbolic-vote-congress-directs-trump-to-remove-forces-from-iran-war. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Part Four: Foreign Aid

Chapter 8: How Much the U.S. Spends on Foreign Aid

In FY2023, the most recent year with nearly complete data, the United States obligated about $99.9 billion in foreign assistance from all sources. CRS says that was about 1.5 percent of the total federal budget and 5.4 percent of discretionary spending, the part Congress sets each year.[45] The 10 largest recipients received about 62 percent of it.[46]

Foreign aid includes many things: grants, goods, technical help, building projects and direct support for other governments' budgets.[47] It also includes military aid to allies.

The end of USAID as an aid agency

The U.S. Agency for International Development was created in 1961 and had more than 10,000 workers in FY2023.[48] In 2025, the administration took it apart:

- On March 10, 2025, Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced "the cancellation of 83% of USAID-managed foreign aid programs."[49]
- Staff reportedly received layoff notices on March 28, 2025, with most to be separated by July 1 and the rest by September 2, 2025.[50]
- As of July 1, 2025, USAID stopped running foreign aid, and the State Department became the lead agency for foreign assistance. Some of USAID's functions moved to State.[51]

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[45] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Foreign Assistance (In Focus IF10183)", updated August 20, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-08-20_IF10183_1369013691cfa2f81e5a6c991b9e95ae234e9441.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[46] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Foreign Assistance (In Focus IF10183)", updated August 20, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-08-20_IF10183_1369013691cfa2f81e5a6c991b9e95ae234e9441.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[47] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Foreign Assistance (In Focus IF10183)", updated August 20, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-08-20_IF10183_1369013691cfa2f81e5a6c991b9e95ae234e9441.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[48] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Agency for International Development: An Overview (In Focus IF10261)", updated September 5, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-09-05_IF10261_675e6d431c41d3c7bcbda03dda2ee4dd857e4c3e.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[49] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Agency for International Development: An Overview (In Focus IF10261)", updated September 5, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-09-05_IF10261_675e6d431c41d3c7bcbda03dda2ee4dd857e4c3e.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[50] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Agency for International Development: An Overview (In Focus IF10261)", updated September 5, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-09-05_IF10261_675e6d431c41d3c7bcbda03dda2ee4dd857e4c3e.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[51] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Foreign Assistance (In Focus IF10183)", updated August 20, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-08-20_IF10183_1369013691cfa2f81e5a6c991b9e95ae234e9441.html. Accessed November 18, 2026. Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Agency for International Development: An Overview (In Focus IF10261)", updated September 5, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-09-05_IF10261_675e6d431c41d3c7bcbda03dda2ee4dd857e4c3e.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

- In July 2025, Congress rescinded, or canceled, $7.9 billion in previously approved foreign aid funding (Public Law 119-28).[52]
- For FY2026, the administration requested a cut of more than 40 percent in foreign aid funding compared with FY2025.[53]

Whether USAID still exists as a legal agency, and how much foreign aid Congress provided for FY2026, are **[Not verified]**.

Chapter 9: Aid to Ukraine

After Russia's full invasion in February 2022, Congress approved large amounts of aid for Ukraine.

CRS, citing the Special Inspector General for Operation Atlantic Resolve, reports that from February 2022 through June 2026 the United States committed more than $68.2 billion in weapons, equipment and military services to Ukraine.[54] That came through several channels that are counted in different ways:[55]

- **Presidential drawdown:** sending weapons from U.S. stocks, authorized up to $31.7 billion.
- **Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative:** $33.5 billion appropriated to buy new weapons. DOD estimated that items worth 57.3 percent of that had been delivered.
- **Foreign Military Financing:** $3.7 billion.

The value actually delivered overall "is not publicly available," CRS says.[56]

SIPRI counts $127 billion in U.S. military aid for Ukraine approved over the three years before 2025, and none approved in 2025.[57] The difference from the CRS figure comes from what each one counts. Total U.S. aid to Ukraine of all kinds, including economic and humanitarian aid, is **[Not verified]**; I did not open a current CRS total.

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[52] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Agency for International Development: An Overview (In Focus IF10261)", updated September 5, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-09-05_IF10261_675e6d431c41d3c7bcbda03dda2ee4dd857e4c3e.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[53] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Foreign Assistance (In Focus IF10183)", updated August 20, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-08-20_IF10183_1369013691cfa2f81e5a6c991b9e95ae234e9441.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[54] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine Since 2022 (In Focus IF12040)", updated August 31, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-08-31_IF12040_b732b458ee1fe7527c3424284c4b36137ae2ee3f.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[55] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine Since 2022 (In Focus IF12040)", updated August 31, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-08-31_IF12040_b732b458ee1fe7527c3424284c4b36137ae2ee3f.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[56] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine Since 2022 (In Focus IF12040)", updated August 31, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-08-31_IF12040_b732b458ee1fe7527c3424284c4b36137ae2ee3f.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[57] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Global military spending rise continues as European and Asian expenditures surge", April 27, 2026. https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2026/global-military-spending-rise-continues-european-and-asian-expenditures-surge. Accessed November 18, 2026.

What changed in 2025 and 2026

- The drawdown cap, which had been as high as $14.5 billion in FY2023, returned to $100 million for FY2025 and FY2026.[58]
- DOD twice briefly paused and resumed aid to Ukraine in 2025.[59]
- Under a new NATO arrangement, European allies buy U.S. weapons for Ukraine. About $6.3 billion had been announced as of June 2026, and about $4.8 billion received by the U.S. Treasury.[60]
- The House passed a Ukraine bill, H.R. 2913, 226 to 195 on June 4, 2026.[61] Senate action is **[Not verified]**.

[58] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine Since 2022 (In Focus IF12040)", updated August 31, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-08-31_IF12040_b732b458ee1fe7527c3424284c4b36137ae2ee3f.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[59] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine Since 2022 (In Focus IF12040)", updated August 31, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-08-31_IF12040_b732b458ee1fe7527c3424284c4b36137ae2ee3f.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[60] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine Since 2022 (In Focus IF12040)", updated August 31, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-08-31_IF12040_b732b458ee1fe7527c3424284c4b36137ae2ee3f.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[61] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine Since 2022 (In Focus IF12040)", updated August 31, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-08-31_IF12040_b732b458ee1fe7527c3424284c4b36137ae2ee3f.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Part Five: Testing the Claims

Chapter 10: Twelve Common Claims

Each claim below is stated the way it usually appears, followed by the verdict and the evidence.

Claim 1: "The U.S. spends more on defense than the next 10 countries combined."

Verdict: False for 2025.

SIPRI put U.S. military spending at $954 billion in 2025. By my calculation from SIPRI's figures, just eight other countries, China, Russia, Germany, India, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Saudi Arabia and France, spent a combined $1,056 billion.[62] U.S. spending fell 7.5 percent in 2025 while spending in Europe and Asia rose.[63] With the larger budgets Congress approved for 2026, the comparison may change again.

Claim 2: "America accounts for about a third of the world's military spending."

Verdict: True.

$954 billion out of $2,887 billion is about 33 percent, by my calculation from SIPRI's 2025 figures.[64]

Claim 3: "The defense budget is now over $1 trillion."

Verdict: Partly true.

The regular DOD appropriation for FY2026 was $839.2 billion.[65] Adding the 2025 budget law's extra defense money and other national defense programs, SIPRI says spending approved for 2026 came to over $1 trillion.[66] The FY2027 request is about $1.15 trillion before an extra $350 billion the

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[62] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Global military spending rise continues as European and Asian expenditures surge", April 27, 2026. https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2026/global-military-spending-rise-continues-european-and-asian-expenditures-surge. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[63] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Global military spending rise continues as European and Asian expenditures surge", April 27, 2026. https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2026/global-military-spending-rise-continues-european-and-asian-expenditures-surge. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[64] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Global military spending rise continues as European and Asian expenditures surge", April 27, 2026. https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2026/global-military-spending-rise-continues-european-and-asian-expenditures-surge. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[65] Congressional Research Service, "FY2026 Department of Defense Appropriations: In Brief (R48891)", April 2, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-04-02_R48891_d10ea9332fc2254298736b29a40ef149c04f62ac.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[66] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Global military spending rise continues as European and Asian expenditures surge", April 27, 2026. https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2026/global-military-spending-rise-continues-european-and-asian-expenditures-surge. Accessed November 18, 2026.

administration hoped to get through reconciliation.[67] Whether the claim is true depends on what you count.

Claim 4: "Foreign aid is a big part of the federal budget."

Verdict: False.

Foreign aid was about 1.5 percent of the total federal budget in FY2023, according to CRS.[68]

Claim 5: "USAID was shut down."

Verdict: Partly true.

USAID stopped running foreign aid on July 1, 2025. Most of its programs were canceled and most of its staff laid off, and some of its functions moved to the State Department.[69] Whether it has been abolished as a legal agency is **[Not verified]**.

Claim 6: "We've sent Ukraine hundreds of billions in weapons."

Verdict: False.

CRS reports more than $68.2 billion in U.S. weapons and military services committed from February 2022 through June 2026.[70] SIPRI counts $127 billion in military aid approved over three years.[71] Neither figure reaches hundreds of billions. Total aid of all kinds, including economic aid, is **[Not verified]**.

Claim 7: "The Pentagon has never passed an audit."

Verdict: True.

DOD failed its FY2025 audit, the eighth in a row, and is the only one of 24 major federal agencies never to pass.[72]

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[67] Congressional Research Service, "FY2027 NDAA: Summary of Funding Authorizations (Insight IN12703)", updated July 24, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-07-24_IN12703_5f452c92184ad86e4a4bef8ac0971a49109efb05.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[68] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Foreign Assistance (In Focus IF10183)", updated August 20, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-08-20_IF10183_1369013691cfa2f81e5a6c991b9e95ae234e9441.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[69] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Foreign Assistance (In Focus IF10183)", updated August 20, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-08-20_IF10183_1369013691cfa2f81e5a6c991b9e95ae234e9441.html. Accessed November 18, 2026. Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Agency for International Development: An Overview (In Focus IF10261)", updated September 5, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-09-05_IF10261_675e6d431c41d3c7bcbda03dda2ee4dd857e4c3e.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[70] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine Since 2022 (In Focus IF12040)", updated August 31, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-08-31_IF12040_b732b458ee1fe7527c3424284c4b36137ae2ee3f.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[71] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Global military spending rise continues as European and Asian expenditures surge", April 27, 2026. https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2026/global-military-spending-rise-continues-european-and-asian-expenditures-surge. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[72] Tanya Noury, Defense News, "Pentagon fails financial audit for 8th year in a row", December 19, 2025. https://www.defensenews.com/news/pentagon-congress/2025/12/19/pentagon-fails-financial-audit-for-8th-year-in-a-row/. Accessed

Claim 8: "The Pentagon lost trillions of dollars."

Verdict: Inconclusive.

The audit found 26 material weaknesses in an agency reporting $4.65 trillion in assets.[73] A failed audit means the books could not be verified. It does not measure how much money, if any, was lost. The sources I read do not put a dollar figure on missing money.

Claim 9: "Only Congress can declare war."

Verdict: True.

Article I gives Congress the power to declare war, and Congress has done so 11 times in five wars.[74] The President, as Commander in Chief, directs the forces once they are committed.[75]

Claim 10: "A President can't use the military without Congress's approval."

Verdict: False.

The War Powers Resolution itself assumes the President may send forces into hostilities and gives Congress 60 days, plus 30, to act.[76] In 2026, the United States fought Iran without a declaration or authorization from Congress.[77] Whether such action is constitutional is argued, but it happens.

Claim 11: "Congress voted to end the Iran war."

Verdict: Partly true.

November 18, 2026.

[73] Tanya Noury, Defense News, "Pentagon fails financial audit for 8th year in a row", December 19, 2025. https://www.defensenews.com/news/pentagon-congress/2025/12/19/pentagon-fails-financial-audit-for-8th-year-in-a-row/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[74] Congressional Research Service, "Defense Primer: Legal Authorities for the Use of Military Forces (In Focus IF10539)", updated December 23, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-12-23_IF10539_6350d102d50389060b69a6f04227781634b4232d.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[75] Congressional Research Service, "Defense Primer: Legal Authorities for the Use of Military Forces (In Focus IF10539)", updated December 23, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-12-23_IF10539_6350d102d50389060b69a6f04227781634b4232d.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[76] Congressional Research Service, "Understanding the War Powers Resolution (In Focus IF13134)", December 17, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-12-17_IF13134_27fac3b6efe508aea26aae3fca21e9462d73b6e7.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[77] Brookings Institution (summary of a Congressional Study Group session), "The Iran War and the War Powers Resolution", July 14, 2026. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-iran-war-and-the-war-powers-resolution/. Accessed November 18, 2026. Kelsey Davenport, Arms Control Today, "Fighting Mars U.S.-Iranian Pledges to End War, Restart Nuclear Talks", July 6, 2026. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2026-07/news/fighting-mars-us-iranian-pledges-end-war-restart-nuclear-talks. Accessed November 18, 2026.

The Senate voted 50 to 48 on June 23, 2026, and the House voted on June 4, for measures directing the President to remove forces.[78] But the measure that passed was a concurrent resolution, which was not sent to the President and is "not legally binding."[79] A July Senate measure failed 47 to 49.[80]

Claim 12: "Defense spending is set to jump sharply in 2027."

Verdict: Partly true.

The administration's request and both Armed Services Committee bills would authorize about 28 percent more for national defense than FY2026.[81] But an authorization is not money. Whether Congress appropriates that much is **[Not verified]**.

[78] Eric McDaniel, NPR (republished by Texas Public Radio), "In symbolic vote, Congress directs Trump to remove forces from Iran war", June 23, 2026. https://www.tpr.org/government-politics/2026-06-23/in-symbolic-vote-congress-directs-trump-to-remove-forces-from-iran-war. Accessed November 18, 2026. Patricia Zengerle, Reuters (republished by StreetInsider), "Explainer: Congress has backed Iran war powers resolutions. Now what?", June 9, 2026. https://www.streetinsider.com/Reuters/Explainer-Congress+has+backed+Iran+war+powers+resolutions.+Now+what/26624828.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[79] Eric McDaniel, NPR (republished by Texas Public Radio), "In symbolic vote, Congress directs Trump to remove forces from Iran war", June 23, 2026. https://www.tpr.org/government-politics/2026-06-23/in-symbolic-vote-congress-directs-trump-to-remove-forces-from-iran-war. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[80] Al Jazeera, "US House votes to limit Iran war for first time since ceasefire breakdown", July 23, 2026. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/7/23/us-house-votes-to-limit-iran-war-for-first-time-since-ceasefire-breakdown. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[81] Congressional Research Service, "FY2027 NDAA: Summary of Funding Authorizations (Insight IN12703)", updated July 24, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-07-24_IN12703_5f452c92184ad86e4a4bef8ac0971a49109efb05.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Part Six: Where Things Stand

Chapter 11: As of November 18, 2026

- **Budget:** DOD received $839.2 billion in FY2026 appropriations, plus money from the 2025 budget law available through 2029.[82]
- **2027:** the administration requested about $1.15 trillion for national defense.[83]
- **World:** the United States spent $954 billion in 2025, about a third of the world total.[84]
- **Audit:** DOD has failed eight audits in a row and aims to pass by 2028.[85]
- **Iran:** after fighting that began February 28, 2026, a June memorandum, and renewed attacks, the President said in November the war was "effectively over" militarily. Talks continued through mediators.[86]
- **War powers:** no binding war powers measure on Iran became law in the sources I read.[87]
- **Foreign aid:** USAID stopped running aid in July 2025, and State took the lead.[88]
- **Ukraine:** the United States committed more than $68.2 billion in military aid through June 2026; new aid now flows largely through allies buying U.S. weapons.[89]

What nobody knows yet

- Whether the United States and Iran will reach a final agreement.
- How much Congress will appropriate for defense in FY2027.

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[82] Congressional Research Service, "FY2026 Department of Defense Appropriations: In Brief (R48891)", April 2, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-04-02_R48891_d10ea9332fc2254298736b29a40ef149c04f62ac.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[83] Congressional Research Service, "FY2027 NDAA: Summary of Funding Authorizations (Insight IN12703)", updated July 24, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-07-24_IN12703_5f452c92184ad86e4a4bef8ac0971a49109efb05.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[84] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Global military spending rise continues as European and Asian expenditures surge", April 27, 2026. https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2026/global-military-spending-rise-continues-european-and-asian-expenditures-surge. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[85] Tanya Noury, Defense News, "Pentagon fails financial audit for 8th year in a row", December 19, 2025. https://www.defensenews.com/news/pentagon-congress/2025/12/19/pentagon-fails-financial-audit-for-8th-year-in-a-row/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[86] Kelsey Davenport, Arms Control Today, "Fighting Mars U.S.-Iranian Pledges to End War, Restart Nuclear Talks", July 6, 2026. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2026-07/news/fighting-mars-us-iranian-pledges-end-war-restart-nuclear-talks. Accessed November 18, 2026. Iran International (London-based outlet opposed to the Iranian government), "Trump says Iran war 'effectively over' militarily, but US ready to strike again", November 9, 2026. https://www.iranintl.com/en/202611102662. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[87] Al Jazeera, "US House votes to limit Iran war for first time since ceasefire breakdown", July 23, 2026. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/7/23/us-house-votes-to-limit-iran-war-for-first-time-since-ceasefire-breakdown. Accessed November 18, 2026.

[88] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Foreign Assistance (In Focus IF10183)", updated August 20, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-08-20_IF10183_1369013691cfa2f81e5a6c991b9e95ae234e9441.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

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- Whether DOD will pass an audit by its 2028 goal.
- Whether Congress will change the War Powers Resolution after the Iran conflict.

Plain steps for readers

1. When you hear a defense dollar figure, ask whether it is DOD alone or all national defense, and whether it is an authorization or an appropriation.
2. When you hear a world comparison, check the year. Rankings change.
3. When you hear that Congress "voted" on a war, ask whether it was a binding joint resolution or a concurrent resolution.
4. When you hear about lost Pentagon money, ask whether it comes from an audit finding or a guess.

Appendix A: Timeline

Date	Event
1961	USAID is created.[90]
November 7, 1973	War Powers Resolution enacted over President Nixon's veto.[91]
1983	Supreme Court decides INS v. Chadha.[92]
February 2022	U.S. security aid to Ukraine begins its current phase.[93]
March 10, 2025	Secretary Rubio announces cancellation of 83 percent of USAID programs.[94]
July 1, 2025	USAID stops running foreign aid.[95]
July 4, 2025	Public Law 119-21 adds $156.2 billion for defense.[96]
October 1 to November 12, 2025	Government funding lapses for 42 days.[97]
December 2025	DOD fails its eighth straight audit.[98]
February 3, 2026	FY2026 DOD appropriations signed.[99]

[90] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Agency for International Development: An Overview (In Focus IF10261)", updated September 5, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-09-05_IF10261_675e6d431c41d3c7bcbda03dda2ee4dd857e4c3e.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

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[92] Congressional Research Service, "War Powers Resolution: Expedited Procedures in the House and Senate (R47603)", updated June 24, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-06-24_R47603_d8f627637d1c95bd4b673ac736228d2f47d0a80e.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

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[95] Congressional Research Service, "U.S. Foreign Assistance (In Focus IF10183)", updated August 20, 2025. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2025-08-20_IF10183_1369013691cfa2f81e5a6c991b9e95ae234e9441.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

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[98] Tanya Noury, Defense News, "Pentagon fails financial audit for 8th year in a row", December 19, 2025. https://www.defensenews.com/news/pentagon-congress/2025/12/19/pentagon-fails-financial-audit-for-8th-year-in-a-row/. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Date	Event
February 28, 2026	The United States and Israel attack Iran.[100]
March 4 and 5, 2026	Senate and House decline to act on Iran war powers measures.[101]
April 7 or 8, 2026	Ceasefire with Iran.[102]
April 27, 2026	SIPRI reports world military spending for 2025.[103]
June 17, 2026	U.S.-Iran memorandum signed.[104]
June 23, 2026	Senate passes concurrent resolution 50 to 48.[105]
Late June to early July 2026	Ceasefire breaks down.[106]
July 23, 2026	House passes war powers measure 214 to 208; Senate version fails.[107]
Mid-August 2026	60-day negotiating period expires with no deal.[108]

[99] Congressional Research Service, "FY2026 Department of Defense Appropriations: In Brief (R48891)", April 2, 2026. https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/2026-04-02_R48891_d10ea9332fc2254298736b29a40ef149c04f62ac.html. Accessed November 18, 2026.

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[108] Scripps News, "US-Iran 60-day ceasefire agreement expires with no permanent deal in sight", August 17, 2026. https://www.scrippsnews.com/us-news/iran-war/us-iran-60-day-ceasefire-agreement-expires-with-no-permanent-deal-in-sight. Accessed November 18, 2026.

Date	Event
November 9, 2026	President says the war is "effectively over" militarily.[109]

Appendix B: Glossary

Appropriation: A law that provides money to spend.

Authorization: A law that sets policy and spending levels but does not itself provide money. The NDAA is an authorization.

Concurrent resolution: A measure passed by both chambers that does not go to the President and does not have the force of law.

Joint resolution: A measure passed by both chambers that goes to the President and becomes law if signed or if a veto is overridden.

Material weakness: A serious problem in an agency's financial controls found by auditors.

Presidential drawdown: Sending weapons and equipment from existing U.S. military stocks to another country.

Reconciliation: A special budget process that lets certain tax and spending bills pass the Senate with a simple majority.

War Powers Resolution: The 1973 law that requires the President to report to Congress on the use of force and sets a 60-day limit without congressional approval.

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Appendix C: Full Source List

Every source cited in this book is listed here once, grouped by the five tiers explained in the Introduction. Sources were read on November 18, 2026.

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