Veterans Affairs AC

We affirm the resolution: Resolved: In order to better respond to international conflicts, the United States should significantly increase its military spending.

**Merriam Webster defines significant as “having an effect”**

Thus, I advocate that the United States Federal Government should significantly increase its military spending specifically for the Department of Veteran Affairs

**Contention 1: Current Harms**

Reynaldo Leal of the Department of Veteran Affairs or “VA” writes in 2015 that recent budget cuts by Congress have resulted in more than 1.4 billion dollars being cut to help America’s veterans.

These recent budget cuts have led to extremely harmful consequences. Leal furthers in 2015 that as a result of the overall cut, 70,000 fewers veterans will receive the care that they need and there will be delays in medical research and less staff to improve care for America’s veterans. Furthermore, recent budget cuts have resulted in the VA not being able to provide outpatient services and would eliminate four major construction projects that would expand VA access to veterans across America.

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs is part of the military budget. Kimberly Amadeo in 2016 reports that military spending doesn’t just include the DoD, but also includes other agencies such as the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

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Also, according to US News there are currently almost 22 million veterans in America.

**Contention 2: Substance Abuse**

The Department of Veteran Affairs provides assistance to veterans struggling with substance abuse. The VA reports that 20% of veterans with PTSD have a substance abuse problem and around 10% of all veterans have a problem with drugs or alcohol. However, there are problems. The National Veterans Foundation writes that there is still a massive backlog for veterans seeking care with substance abuse issues.

The impacts of substance abuse are massive and are harmful.

Mark Illegen of Psychiatric Times writes in 2011 that a person with substance abuse problems are 6 times as likely to commit suicide than someone without one. Furthermore, substance abuse problems also affect one’s psychical health. The National Institute on Drug Abuse finds that substance abusers are more likely to have health problems such as heart disease or cancer. In addition, their chances of a stroke or heart attack also increases.

**Contention 3: Mental Health**

In addition to just helping veterans with substance abuse issues, the US Department of Veteran Affairs furthers that it provides services to veterans such as treating mental health conditions like PTSD, depression, anxiety, etc. However, current funding is lacking in providing veterans with mental health services. CBS News writes in 2014 that only 53% of veterans with PTSD are receiving adequate mental health care to treat their condition.

Furthermore, Craig Schneider of the Atlanta Journal reports in 2013 that one in five veterans never received any follow-up from the VA after being referred there. He furthers that many veterans either committed suicide or attempted suicide while waiting for treatment from the VA. Schneider concludes that the reason as to why these suicides happened is because of inadequate care coming from the VA due to the combination of surging demands and recent budget cuts.

This is not an isolated incident, but instead is happening all across America. Curt Devine of CNN in 2015 writes that more than 300,000 veterans have died in the past while waiting for medical care from the VA. The reason for their deaths was a massive backlog within the VA and the slow processing of records. In addition, Alex Zarembo of the LA Times writes in 2013 that across America, 22 veterans kill themselves each day from untreated mental health conditions.

In addition to these problems, the long-term effects of mental health problems are extremely harmful. Maurizio Pompili of the Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease finds in 2013 that veterans who have PTSD are more than 4 times as likely to commit suicide as compared to veterans without PTSD. Furthermore, veterans with PTSD were 5.4 times as likely to report suicidal thoughts and feelings.

In addition to just affecting mental health, PTSD also affects one’s physical well-being. Brian Cox of the American Psychosomatic Society in 2007 reports that PTSD doubled or even quadrupled one’s likelihood of having a chronic illness such as asthma, migraines, arthritis, or having a stroke or developing cancer.

Finally, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration finds that one with a mental health condition is more than twice as likely to have a substance abuse problem.

However, there is a solution to these problems which will allow the VA to improve not only the quality of care that veterans receive, but also allows the VA to treat more veterans. Tom Rogan of The Week in 2013 writes that the Department of Veterans Affairs is overburdened by a backlog of cases and the United States Federal Government should increase spending and take other measures such as hiring additional staff to help more of America’s veterans.