



The Ceasefire Campaign

A demilitarization campaign

Submission by the Ceasefire Campaign on the Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement, 2011

Executive summary

In this document it is argued that:

- military security should be replaced with demilitarised defence methods and improvements in human security;
- the SANDF should be mothballed;
- by fiscal year 2015, military spending should be reduced to 0,5% of gross domestic product;
- certain tasks that are currently undertaken by the SANDF should be demilitarised, partly by redefinition of the purpose and scope of those tasks and partly by transfer to other departments; and
- the net savings should be used to provide jobs in the delivery of human security.

Arising from these arguments it is proposed that appropriations to defence in terms of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) be amended as follows.

Fiscal year	Current proposal	Ceasefire proposal
2011-12	34 605	34 605
2012-13	41 800	34 605
2013-14	44 400	27 300
2014-15	47 000	20 000

It is envisaged that about 25% of the savings (i.e. of the excess of the current proposal over the Ceasefire proposal) would be offset by additional expenditure by other departments arising from transfers of functions from the SANDF. The remaining 75% of the savings can be used for increasing government jobs in human security.

Ceasefire Campaign

The Ceasefire Campaign is a non-governmental organisation advocating the demilitarisation of southern Africa in general and South Africa in particular. The name "Ceasefire" was motivated by Tokyo Sexwale's call at Chris Hani's funeral: "Ceasefire!" Established at the closing conference of the End Conscription Campaign in 1993, its first action was "Use the ballot, not the bullet" for the 1994 elections. Its mission is to promote a vision of human security that maximises human potential by conscientising society to the possibility of a world without wars and armaments so that the resources currently expended on militarisation can be utilized for social development.

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Human versus military security

In South Africa, people's experience of insecurity does not relate to military security, but to "human security", that is job security, housing, food security, and adequate policing education, healthcare, power and water services.

The usual response to this distinction is that South Africa needs both human and military security and the issue is formulated in terms of budgetary constraints. The economists tend to reduce the issue to a "guns versus butter debate". But economists generally measure outcomes—and quantify their debates—in terms of gross domestic product. In doing so they include military spending as a service, so that whether a rand of taxpayers' money is spent on human security or on military security, there is no primary difference: the "guns-versus-butter debate" rages around secondary effects on the GDP. But as far as the primary effect is concerned there is no debate: every rand spent on military security is a rand that could have been spent on human security. The guns-versus-butter debate is a red herring.

Modern warfare is not a "good"; it does not satisfy the requirements of a "just war" as developed by Cicero, St Augustine and numerous subsequent authors and theologians. Even a "just" war is an evil. Modern warfare is a totally unacceptable way of resolving conflict. During the past century civilian casualties frequently exceeded combatant casualties. In Africa, the displacement of people by war and the disruption of their lives and economic activities is particularly tragic. The military euphemism "collateral damage", like many other military euphemisms, is designed to relativise the evil of modern war.

When confronted with the evils of war, most militarists will concede that war is undesirable, but will quickly add the rider that it may be a necessary evil. To the purist, of course, no evil is necessary. But even to the strategist the quickness of the militarist to defend war is unjustifiable.

The defence of the nation need not rely on military defence. South Africans know how to make our country ungovernable. That is a sufficient deterrent to any external force or internal rebel movement against a military overthrow of our democracy. Nonviolent resistance against an aggressor is cheaper than the military option, it maintains the moral high ground both internally and internationally and it uses methods that will make peace possible afterwards: the means justify the ends. The idea that "If you want peace you should prepare for war" has not stood the test of 20th-century history and it deserves its place on the scrapheap of outmoded thinking. Instead, South African civil society needs to be trained to resist an aggressor by nonviolent means, including civil disobedience.

South Africa has no enemies anyway. It is said that, given our military supremacy over our neighbours and the logistic difficulties that face any other country in conducting conventional war at the southern tip of Africa, the only power that could invade South Africa successfully is the United States, and that country would not use conventional weapons in the first place. But if we have no enemies anyway then why arm ourselves against them?

Militarism is based on an outmoded mythology that rests on an undemocratic, hierarchical and gendered view of the world. Christianity has been guilty of spreading this world view, though the other monotheistic faiths must take their share of the blame for this too. But once again it is a dated view and deserves to be scrapped.

In order to make use of idle soldiers during peace time, they are invariably used for non-military purposes. So we have soldiers building bridges in the Eastern Cape, soldiers involved in search and rescue, soldiers involved in "peace missions" abroad, in police support, in hydrography, in ceremonial events and so on. In the process these activities become militarised. And the SANDF is not slow to use these opportunities to win hearts and minds into support for its existence and support for the militarisation of defence.

Because of the arms embargo against South Africa during the apartheid years, we developed a substantial military industry. Apart from selling unwanted weapons systems like the Rooivalk to the SANDF, Denel is now attempting unsuccessfully to engage in international war-profiteering. Because of the unquestioned place of the military in South Africa, Denel is treated as a national asset. The arms industry and Denel in particular have achieved an inside track in the corridors of South African power. The SANDF and the euphemistically self-named "defence-related industry" complement each others' interests in the continuance of their jobs, their powers and their access to taxpayers' money.

Military spending protects the power of the governing elite, though often it fails even to do that, and it protects the profits of the war profiteers. It does not protect the human security of the people of South Africa.

There are three options:

1. the Costa Rica option;
2. mothballing the SANDF; and
3. business as usual.

The Costa Rica option, as implemented under José Figueres Ferrer in 1948, is the abolition of the military. South African civil society is not ready for this option, nor is its leadership. In the light of the above comments, business as usual is an unmitigated waste of taxpayers' money in the face of massive human insecurity. It is proposed that the SANDF be mothballed. This will entail:

- the maintenance of weapons and equipment in working order;
- ensuring the security of weapons and equipment;
- the maintenance of systems for the re-establishment of a military defence force; and
- the reduction of the staff complement to the level required for maintenance and security.

The implications of this proposal on South African military spending, and in particular on appropriations to defence in terms of the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), are discussed below.

Defence budget

Ceasefire's major concern with the budget for defence and military veterans is that, after declining in absolute terms from the excessive levels incurred by the apartheid regime, the misguided "strategic" weapons purchase programme has had the effect of increasing military spending again, almost to the levels of the apartheid regime. This effect is shown in Figure 1, which is derived from data collected by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. This figure shows South African military spending in terms of US dollars, adjusted to allow for inflation to 2010.

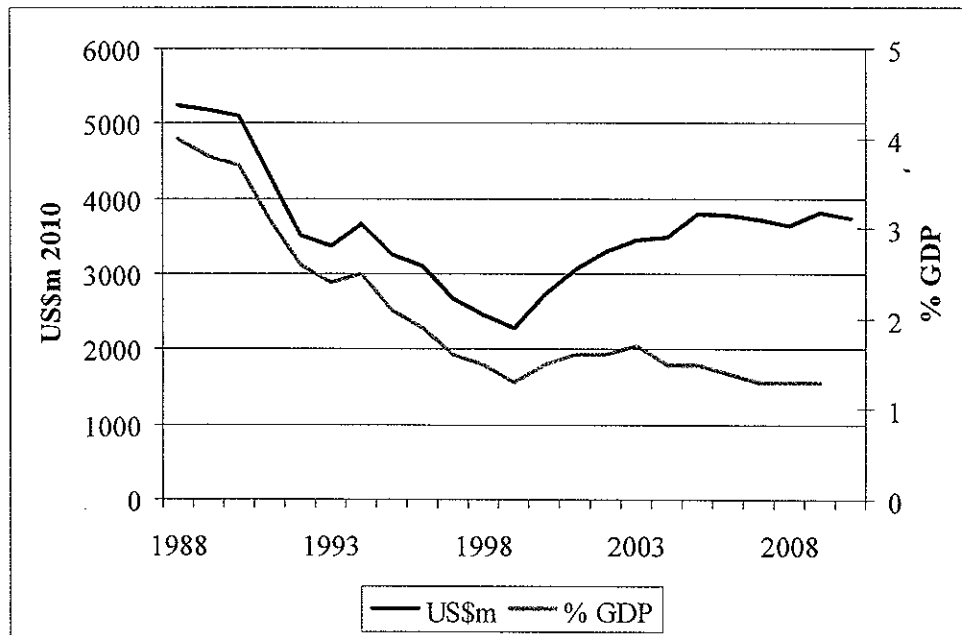


Figure 1. South African military spending, 1988–2010

The figure shows that, whilst military spending has decreased as a percentage of GDP since the height of the weapons-purchase programme in 2003, it has continued to increase in absolute terms, even after allowance for inflation.

It has become customary for spokespersons of the South African military-industrial complex to motivate increases in military spending in line with GDP. Figure 1 shows why: it appears from that graph that military spending is lagging. The interests of the military-industrial complex, and their power to promote military spending, are substantial. For this reason it is essential that those who control the appropriation of state revenue should be adequately equipped to counter the arguments of the military-industrial complex.

There is no reason why military spending should increase in line with GDP. The only argument in favour of such a benchmark is that if GDP increases then military spending becomes proportionally more affordable. But as mentioned above, every rand spent on the SANDF is a rand that could have been spent on human security. For example, at R72 000 a house, a saving of R10 billion a year in the Defence budget would buy nearly 140 000 houses a year.

In fact both the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans and Denel have referred, in statements to Parliament, to 2% of GDP as a “World Bank recommendation” or a “benchmark” or “standard”. Even the World Bank does not propose any such benchmark or standard. It is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) that promotes that standard amongst its members. NATO is notoriously militarist. Unlike South Africa, its members do from time to time face military threats because of its aggressive posture. By and large the members of NATO are industrialised countries with far lower human security gaps than South Africa’s. South Africa is not a member of NATO, and NATO’s military posture is not relevant to South Africa.

It is sometimes argued that military spending is like an insurance premium. But the analogy is poor. When the insured has been paying premiums and an insured event happens, the insurer pays out. But when the taxpayer has been paying for military spending in peacetime and war breaks out then military spending increases dramatically, people are killed and extensive damage is done to property.

Figure 2 shows more recent military spending in South Africa, as well as the MTEF for Defence and Military veterans for the period 2008–2015. It also shows Ceasefire’s proposal, which is discussed below.

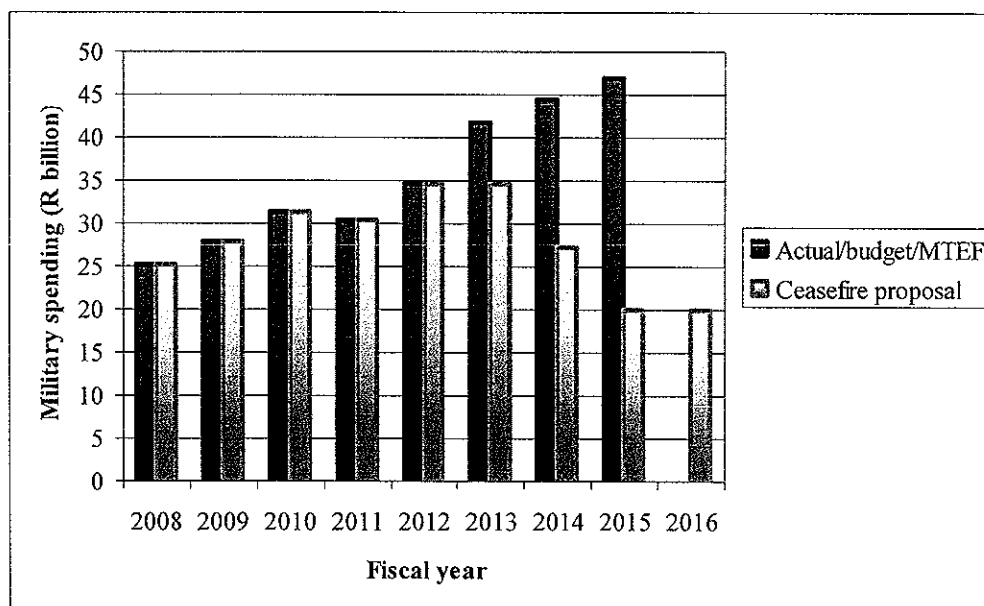


Figure 2. South African military spending 2008–2016

This figure shows that, apart from a small reduction in 2011 arising from the completion of the weapons-purchase programme, military spending is set to rise very substantially. This is the sort of increase one associates with a country that is starting to face substantial military threats, not with a country that has no enemies and no prospect of any conventional military threat. It is certainly not the sort of increase that one expects from a country with the sort of human-security threats that South Africa has.

Now that the misguided weapons-purchase programme is virtually complete, instead of substantial increases, we should expect at most a levelling-off of military spending. To budget for a substantial increase such as that projected is just as misguided as the weapons-purchase programme.

At present the Defence Review Committee appointed by the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans is under way. Ceasefire is making a submission to that Committee on a completely new approach to defence in South Africa; an approach that will reduce military spending substantially. In essence, the approach will involve the mothballing of the SANDF's weapons and systems and the demilitarisation of defence as outlined above.

On the other hand, Ceasefire is concerned that, in the light of her recent pronouncements, the Minister will be attempting to use the Defence Review process to justify even more military spending. Instead of anticipating (or following) the results of that Committee's deliberations by allowing the military-industrial complex to have its way, Parliament needs to hold it to a tight budget. Until we have a way forward that substantially reduces military spending, Ceasefire submits that military spending in South Africa be held constant. It is proposed that, as shown in the above figure, the allocation to defence in the MTEF be amended as follows.

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The details of how the proposed budget savings can be met should be addressed not as part of the MTEF but as part of the budget process. At this stage, however, two observations should be noted.

First, a substantial proportion of the savings will relate to compensation of employees. This can be met as far as possible by natural attrition and the retraining of soldiers for other government jobs, particularly for the improvement of human security. The practicalities of this process and the extent to which it will be possible need to be addressed as a separate exercise. The Defence Review Committee should commence that process.

Secondly, if Ceasefire's submission to the Defence Review Committee is accepted, certain tasks that are currently undertaken by the SANDF will be demilitarised partly by redefinition of the purpose and scope of those tasks and partly by transfer to other departments (notably peace missions, police support, coast guard, border policing, search and rescue, engineering works, medical services, hydrography, ceremonial events and VIP transport). Some of the savings in military spending will have to be offset by additional expenditure by other departments.

It is envisaged that about 25% of the savings (i.e. of the excess of the current proposal over the Ceasefire proposal) would be offset in this manner. The remaining 75% of the savings can be used for increasing government jobs in human security.

