



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on October 15, 2015

NDAA 2016: Almost \$1B to Arm and Train Syrian, Ukrainian Rebels

The Senate has approved a 2016 Defense Department spending bill that earmarks nearly \$1 billion to arm Syrian and Ukrainian rebels, including several battalions adopting neo-Nazi symbols and slogans. By a veto-proof 70-27 vote, the Senate voted on October 7 to approve the [\\$612 billion Pentagon appropriation bill](#) for 2016, known as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).



While most of the items in the bill would never be approved were our government to be bound by the enumerated powers of the Constitution, a few of the provisions are particularly pernicious.

First, Section 1255 of the NDAA sets aside \$531.5 million to be paid directly to the Syria Train and Equip program. An additional \$25.8 million and \$42.8 million will go to the U.S. Army and Air Force, respectively, to pay for their training of and participation with the various armed Syrian factions.

Subsection (a) (3) of Section 1255 mandates that the secretary of defense provide “a description of the actions to be taken by the Secretary to ensure that such support would not benefit The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Jabhat Al-Nusra Front, al-Qaeda, the Khorasan Group, or any other violent extremist organization, or The Syrian Arab Army or any group or organization supporting President Bashar Assad.”

Another \$715 million will be paid into the Iraq Train and Equip Fund, an effort aimed at arming and training the Iraqi military and Kurdish and tribal militias claiming to be combatting the Islamic State.

Section 1250 of the 2016 NDAA describes and funds the Pentagon’s Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative and dumps \$300 million to its maintenance.

This provision requires the State Department and the Pentagon to work together to “provide appropriate security assistance and intelligence support, including training, equipment, and logistics support, supplies and services, to military and other security forces of the Government of Ukraine.”

In other words, Congress is spending \$300 million to prop up a foreign government.

Another \$50 million will be sent to Ukrainian troops — many of whom proudly identify themselves with the symbols and ideologies of the [neo-Nazi movement](#) — to buy “lethal” weapons, including “anti-armor weapon systems, mortars, crew-served weapons and ammunition, grenade launchers and ammunition, and small arms and ammunition.”

Subsection 4 authorizes drones to be sent to the Ukrainian armed militias.

Obviously, not one of these expenditures is permitted by the powers granted to the federal government by the states in the Constitution. There is not a single syllable that could even be construed to demonstrate an intent by the Founders of that document to endow Congress with authority to arm or otherwise support foreign governments, armed rebels fighting other governments, or any other such



armed conflicts.

In fact, the president of the Constitutional Convention, George Washington, advised against such actions in his Farewell Address of 1796. The following excerpt from that famous letter is lengthy, but worth the read:

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop. Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none; or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.

Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people under an efficient government, the period is not far off when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon to be scrupulously respected; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel.

Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation? Why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice?

It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But, in my opinion, it is unnecessary and would be unwise to extend them.

Taking care always to keep ourselves by suitable establishments on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

Harmony, liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing and diversifying by gentle means the streams of commerce, but forcing nothing; establishing (with powers so disposed, in order to give trade a stable course, to define the rights of our merchants, and to enable the government to support them) conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinion will permit, but temporary, and liable to be from time to time abandoned or varied, as experience and circumstances shall dictate; constantly keeping in view that it is folly in one nation to look for disinterested favors from another; that it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept under that character; that, by such acceptance, it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favors, and yet of being reproached with ingratitude for not giving more. There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation. It is an illusion, which experience must



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cure, which a just pride ought to discard.

Beyond warning against building up these foreign entities which today pretend to be our friends, only later to use the advantages we once supplied them against our own troops (Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc.), Washington even warned against building up a huge military establishment.

It seems certain that a \$612 billion military spending budget would certainly qualify as one of those “overgrown military establishments” that Washington declared were “inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty.”

The mainstream media reports that President Obama has vowed to veto this bill, but he has made similar promises in the past, only to end up having a change of heart just in time to sign it. Besides, this time, 21 Senate Democrats have voted in favor of the NDAA, and that’s enough to give the green light to the growth of the U.S. military’s active engagement in so many foreign fights.



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