

THE TRUE COST OF DEFENSE

Discussion Questions

Human Cost & Veterans

1. How do stories like Travis Mills' shape your understanding of what military service really costs: physically, emotionally, and financially?
2. What responsibilities do we have, as citizens, to support veterans beyond what the government provides?
3. What does the rising rate of veteran disability and suicide say about the support systems currently in place?
4. How should we balance honoring veterans' sacrifices with questioning the broader systems that put them in harm's way?
5. Is it sustainable to rely on 45,000+ military nonprofits to fill the gaps in veteran care? Why or why not?

Economic Dimensions

6. Should military pensions and benefits be considered part of the overall defense budget in the public conversation?
7. How do military installations like Tobyhanna Army Depot influence local economies? Is this a positive or problematic dependency?
8. With so much defense money being reinvested in U.S. businesses (e.g., weapons manufacturing), how do we separate economic benefit from ethical cost?
9. What should be the economic limits, if any, on spending for new technology and military innovation?
10. What are the trade-offs between investing in future defense technologies and caring for the people who've already served?



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Global Footprint & Strategy

11. Should the U.S. maintain military bases in 80+ countries? Why or why not?
12. How do forward deployments in countries like Poland and South Korea influence global diplomacy and deterrence?
13. If countries like Japan and South Korea contribute financially to U.S. bases, does that justify the continued American presence there?
14. How do we weigh the deterrent value of alliances like NATO against the potential for unwanted entanglement?

Recruitment, Training, and Retention

15. With military recruiting facing challenges, should the U.S. reconsider a draft system or mandatory service?
16. What does the shift to an all-volunteer force say about national identity and civic responsibility?
17. If training one recruit costs over \$50,000 and retaining them costs \$140,000/year, are we investing wisely in personnel?
18. How can military recruiters ethically balance the promises of service with the risks involved?

Moral & Philosophical Considerations

19. Is it possible to maintain a strong defense while reducing the human toll of war? What would that look like?
20. What does the phrase “The true cost of defense is a people cost” mean to you?

