



## **Feinstein on the need to divert military spending to address the COVID-19 crisis**

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**Andrew Feinstein:** So how does the arms trade and the coronavirus crisis intersect? It's very simple. We are wasting hundreds of billions of dollars of public money on defense while neglecting public health and disease control.

The most expensive weapons system ever built is a jet fighter called the F-35, built by the United States of America and which has been sold around the world. This jet fighter didn't just fail its first couple of test flights, it failed its first 14. Leading one defense aerospace analyst to suggest that the only person who would be endangered by the F-35 are its test pilots. The American Government Accountability Office announced that the centerpiece, the brain if you will, of this jet fighter, has never functioned properly. The whole thing is going to have to be redesigned. The American taxpayer has spent one and a half trillion dollars on a jet fighter that its own government now admits doesn't work. The same government spends 11 billion dollars on combating disease.

In the case of the United Kingdom, we spend 141 million pounds, according to declassified UK, on our foreign military bases. That would double the amount of life saving equipment that the NHS could buy during this coronavirus crisis.

Our patterns of spending show that our defense industry, the arms trade, are actually making us far less safe. It's not just that people are being killed in pointless wars, be it in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, but now people are dying in their homes because we would rather invest in defense than in public health. And why are we doing that? Because of an out-of-control militarism that is promoted by our politicians and senior corporate executives. And the reason that they do that is because the arms trade keeps money circulating in the political process from which they all benefit. Think of the size of our armies, our navies, our air forces. Our governments spend around one 1.75 Trillion dollars every year on wars, on weapons, on conflict. And this industry of war is the most corrupt trade that we've ever come across in human history, accounting for around 40 percent of all corruption in world trade, wasting billions of dollars every year. If we could deploy that sort of resource to address the

coronavirus crisis that we are currently living through, imagine what else we could be doing. Imagine how we could be fighting the climate crisis? How we could be addressing global poverty? Inequality? Our priority should never be war. Our priorities need to be public health, the environment and human well-being. So as we give praise to our health workers and other public servants who are putting themselves on the front line of this health crisis, let us remember who are the truly important people. Perhaps this is an opportunity. Let's embrace our global humanity, which is how we are going to get through this crisis. Let's put aside our obsession with enemies, with conflict. This is an opportunity for peace. It is an opportunity to promote our common humanity.

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