

Facebook failed to flag false claims in Texas storm

Company says it cracked down on climate lies, but USA TODAY found otherwise. **In Money**

Golden Globes: What to know about Sunday's show

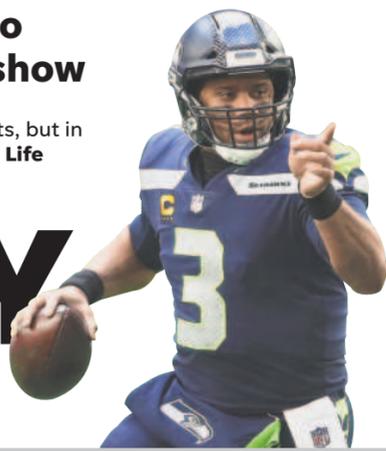
Tina Fey and Amy Poehler return as hosts, but in different cities for this hybrid format. **In Life**

Seahawks better let Russell Wilson cook

Smart teams don't trade quarterbacks like Wilson. They do everything to support him and his concerns, writes Mike Jones. **In Sports**

USA TODAY

THE NATION'S NEWS | \$2 | WEEKEND | FEBRUARY 26-28, 2021



MARK J. REBILAS/USA TODAY SPORTS

For many, a \$1,400 check is a lifeline

What stimulus means to ordinary Americans

Romina Ruiz-Goiriena
USA TODAY

It was supposed to be a two-week quarantine. Instead, it was a year of indescribable loss. Lost family. Lost jobs. Lost hope. COVID-19 ripped the country apart, killing more than 500,000 people and erasing years of economic gains. Months later, 10 million people remain unemployed. Nearly 40 million are being threatened with eviction as they brave the biggest housing crisis since the Great Depression. More than 79 million Americans say they can't pay for electricity, water or heat. And 50 million people are going hungry – up from 35 million before the outbreak. Families across the country, especially those of color, report a devastating reality: there isn't enough food on the table. The House of Representatives could vote as soon as Friday on President Joe Biden's proposed \$1.9 trillion relief package, which would include \$1,400

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Larry Thomas, 59, right, has escaped homelessness in Harlem, N.Y. With a little extra money, he hopes to put down roots. JASPER COLT/USA TODAY

In News

● Biden's \$1.9 trillion relief plan is likely to pass the House, but the divided Senate is likely to force a major reshaping of the package. The debate starts in earnest next week. **3A**

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USA TODAY Snapshots
Why employees love working from home
The top benefits remote workers have enjoyed while doing their jobs away from the office:

- Lack of commute **68%**
- More flexible hours **63%**
- Dressing casually **55%**
- Household multitasking **52%**
- Social-distancing ability **51%**

SOURCE YouGov poll
AMY BARNETTE, DAVID ANESTA/USA TODAY

AMERICA'S MILITARY MIGHT OVERSEAS
'A RECKONING IS NEAR'

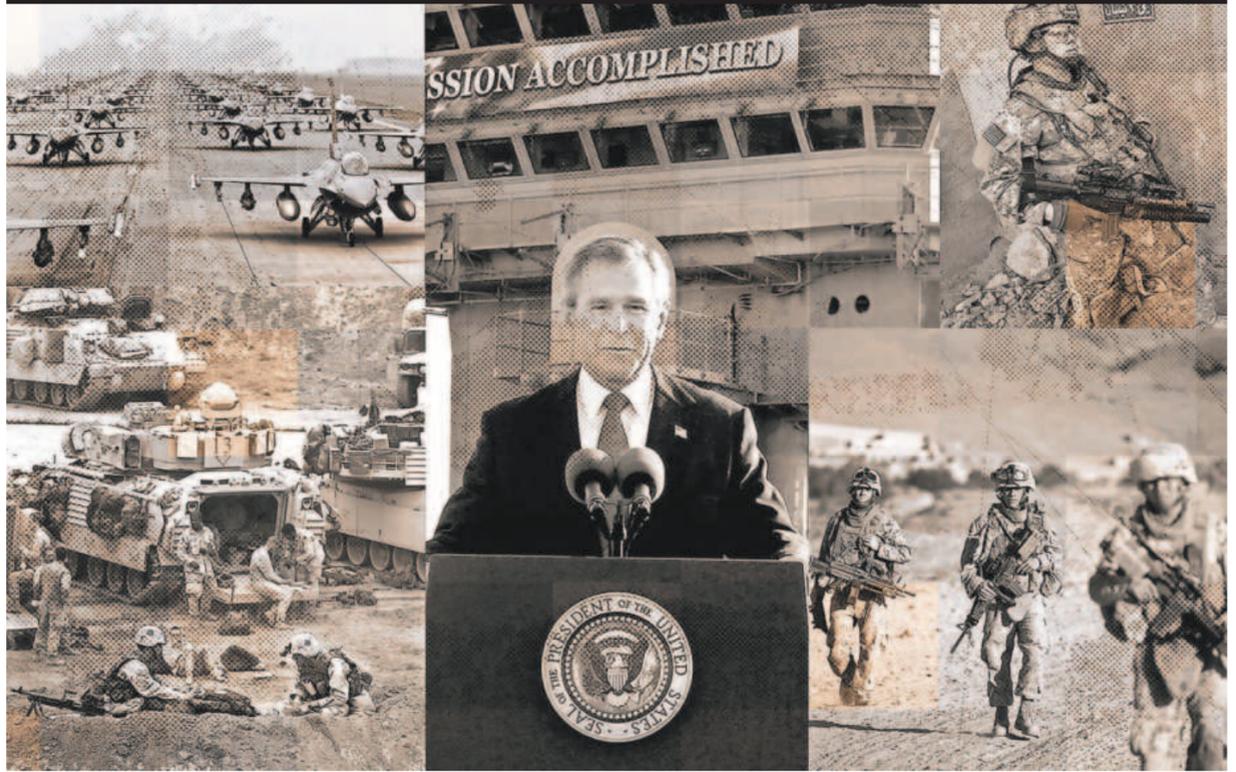


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY VERONICA BRAVO; AP, GETTY IMAGES

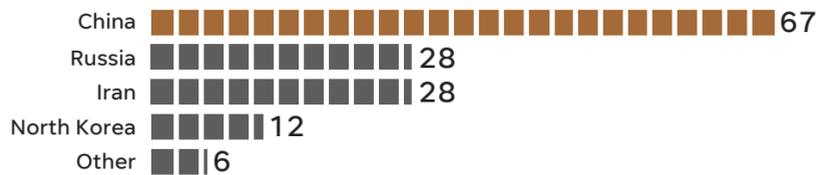
The US military is the dominant global force, but it may not be the best-positioned to respond to next-generation threats

Kim Hjelmgaard
USA TODAY

For decades, the United States has asserted global military dominance, an achievement that has underpinned its influence, national security and efforts at promoting democracy. The Department of Defense spends more than \$700 billion each year on weaponry and combat preparedness – more than the next 10 countries combined, according to economic think tank the Peter G. Peterson Foundation. Yet amid a sea change in security threats, America's military might overseas may be less relevant, according to some security analysts, defense officials and former and active U.S. service members. The most urgent threats to the USA, they said, are increasingly nonmilitary in nature. Among them: cyberattacks, disinformation, China's economic dominance, climate change and disease outbreaks such as COVID-19. Trita Parsi, co-founder of the Quin-

China, Russia, others target US in cyberattacks

Estimated number of attacks by nation of origin, 2005-2020:



SOURCE Council on Foreign Relations, Cyber Operations Tracker
GRAPHIC George Petras/USA TODAY

"A lot of our military presence around the world is now really just out of habit. If at one point, there was a strategic justification for it, often it no longer has it."

Benjamin Friedman
policy director of Defense Priorities

cy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, a Washington think tank that lobbies for U.S. military restraint, said maintaining a large fighting force thousands of miles from U.S. shores is expensive, unwieldy and anachronistic. "It was designed for a world that still faced another military hegemon," Parsi said. "Now, pandemics, climate chaos, artificial intelligence and 5G are far more important for American national

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One-dose vaccine may be days away

J&J candidate expected to get FDA authorization

Karen Weintraub
USA TODAY

A government advisory committee is likely to give a thumbs up Friday to a third COVID-19 vaccine, paving the way to increased supply of the much-in-demand vaccines. The new vaccine, from drugmaker Johnson & Johnson, offers a few advantages over the two that have been administered to 45 million Americans since mid-December, although it may be somewhat less effective. The J&J vaccine requires only one shot; the others, from Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, need two. It can be kept refrigerated rather than frozen for longer,



Johnson & Johnson's vaccine doesn't need freezer storage like others. AP

In Nation's Health

● Doctors describe "massive pandemic of mentally ill adolescents." **6D**

making it easier to distribute through doctors' offices and rural outposts. And it may cause fewer side effects.

The advisory panel, called the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee, is likely to recommend the shot for use in adults. An emergency use authorization from the acting commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration is anticipated to follow within days. Most people will not have a say in which vaccine they get. Allocation is decided by individual states, which have generally provided only one type of vaccine at a time to each vaccination center. Public health officials say it doesn't matter which vaccine someone receives. A third vaccine is "nothing but good news," Anthony Fauci, America's top infectious disease doctor, told NBC's "Today" show Thursday. "To have two is fine. To have three is absolutely better."

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Defense

Continued from Page 1A

security than having 15 bases in the Indian Ocean.”

At the end of World War II, the United States had fewer than 80 overseas military bases, the majority of them in the Allies' vanquished foes, Germany and Japan. Today, there are up to 800, according to the Pentagon and David Vine, an anthropology professor at American University.

About 220,000 U.S. military and civilian personnel serve in more than 150 countries, the Defense Department says.

China, the world's second-largest economy and the United States' biggest competitor, has just a single official overseas military base, in Djibouti. Britain, France and Russia have up to 60 overseas bases combined, according to Vine. At sea, the United States has 11 aircraft carriers. China has two. Russia has one.

The U.S. investment in defense and its international military footprint has been expanding for decades.

When the Korean War ended in 1953, eight years before President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned of a growing military-industrial complex, the Pentagon was spending about 11% of GDP, or \$300 billion, on the military, according to the Defense Department and a calculation by USA TODAY. Today, the Pentagon allocates more than twice as much on defense spending each year, adjusted for inflation, even if the overall budgetary figure represents a far lower percentage of U.S. GDP at just 3%.

Even as the United States has spent more on defense, some experts said, the U.S. military has operated under a national security strategy that is remarkably unchanged since World War II and ill-suited to newer, more dynamic threats.

“A lot of our military presence around the world is now really just out of habit,” said Benjamin Friedman, policy director of Defense Priorities, a Washington-based think tank that advocates for a smaller world role for the U.S. military.

“If at one point, there was a strategic justification for it, often it no longer has it,” he said.

One stark illustration of how U.S. national security priorities may be out of sync with the times: Since 9/11, wars and various American anti-terrorism raids and military activity around the world have taken the lives of more than 7,000 U.S. troops and cost the federal government \$6.4 trillion, according to Brown University's Costs of War project.

As bad as that is, in less than 5% of that time, the coronavirus pandemic has accounted for more than 70 times the human toll – the USA exceeded 500,000 dead – and has cost at least \$6 trillion, according to an analysis of congressional and Federal Reserve allocations. (The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that the pandemic has cost the country at least \$8 trillion.)

Thomas Spoeher, a retired Army lieutenant general and defense expert at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative Washington think tank, said it's important that the United States takes a wide view of national security that encompasses pandemics and climate change as well as conflict and terrorism.

“We don't have the luxury of just saying, OK, the military wasn't that useful last year, so we're going to turn it in and get an army of doctors instead,” Spoeher said.

The world is heading for death rates equivalent to the COVID-19 pandemic every year by the middle of this century because of climate change, warned Mark Carney, United Nations envoy for climate action and finance.

The World Health Organization estimates that climate change – ranging from heat to flooding – contributes to about 150,000 global deaths each year. Wildfires, hurricanes, droughts and other natural disasters destabilize countries, including the USA, by causing disease, food shortages, social and political instability and mass migration.

Brad Bowman, a former U.S. Army officer and West Point professor, noted that the U.S. military is not a “Swiss Army knife” that can address every single threat.

“It's a bit of a ‘straw man’ argument to criticize it for threats it was not designed to meet, said the former national security adviser to members of the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees.

“Just because the American military can't solve every problem, that doesn't mean that it isn't useful for some problems,” he said.

Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates said that while challenges such as climate change and pandemics “have arisen, the other ones have not abated.”



The USS Farragut patrols the Persian Gulf in 2019, part of the huge military presence the United States maintains around the world. Some analysts question the justification and effectiveness of the operations. KIM HJELMGAARD/USA TODAY

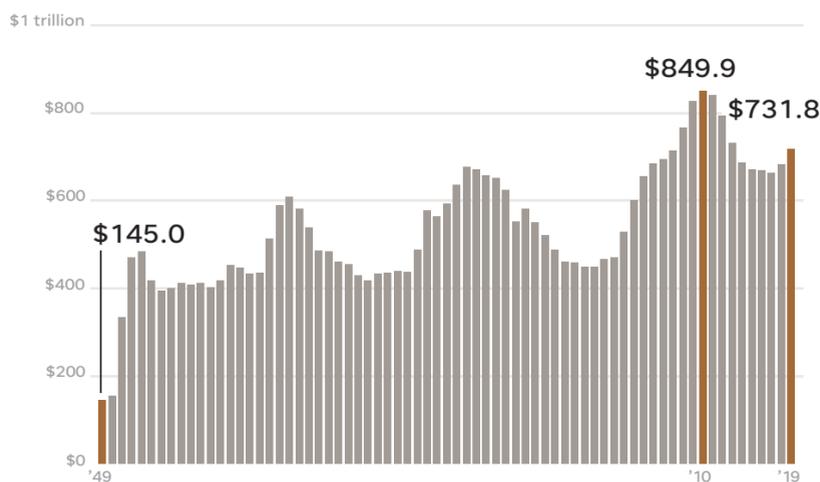
79 countries where the U.S. provided training and/or assisted in counterterrorism



SOURCE Research by Stephanie Savell for the Cost of War Project, Watson Institute, Brown University

US defense spending, 1949-2019, in billions

In U.S. dollars (constant, 2018):



SOURCE Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, April 2020
GRAPHIC George Petras/USA TODAY

He said Russia is working on “highly sophisticated weapons and has completely reformed its military and for the first time since the end of the Cold War is operating submarines off of our East Coast. Iran is developing highly precise missiles. North Korea's (nuclear) programs are ongoing. The Chinese are continuing their military buildup.”

China's overseas military posture is, on the whole, relatively small.

China's official defense budget for 2020 was \$178 billion, and Beijing has shown far less interest in matching the Pentagon's military arsenal and more concern about moving from an imitator to an innovator in biotechnologies, finance, advanced computing, robotics, artificial intelligence, aerospace, cybersecurity and other high-tech areas.

“China's playing a totally different game to the U.S.,” said William Hartung, director of the Arms and Security Project at the Center for International Policy in Washington. “The U.S. is relying on traditional military bases, global military reach and training local militaries, while China is forging ahead by cutting economic deals that appear to be buying them more influence than the U.S.'s military approach.”

The Defense Department conceded that it needs to adapt to a changing threat landscape.

President Joe Biden promised to make cybersecurity a priority for his White House after one of the most massive cyberattacks was revealed in December.

For months, Russian government hackers known by the nicknames APT29 or Cozy Bear were able to breach the Treasury and Commerce Departments, along with other U.S. government agencies.

From 2005 to 2020, the U.S. government, public networks and private companies were targeted in cyberattacks 135 times by Chinese, Russian and other state actors, according to the Council on Foreign Relations think tank.

To be sure, the United States faces major traditional military threats as well as intense competition from authoritarian foes in China and Russia.

There is the potential for American adversaries in Iran and North Korea to develop nuclear weapons and target the USA, or for foreign militant groups to attempt a terrorist attack on U.S. soil reminiscent of 9/11.

“Physics is physics. That's not

changed,” said Philip Breedlove, a retired four-star general in the U.S. Air Force who served as NATO's supreme allied commander for Europe.

“A U.S. fighter aircraft, even stationed in Italy, takes many hours and aerial refueling to fly to most places in Africa. They don't magic from one point to another,” he said, referring to U.S.-led anti-terrorism activity in Africa, the Middle East and beyond.

For some, the benefits of a large foreign military presence easily outweigh the costs.

“If the price of preventing another 9/11 is keeping some troops in Afghanistan or elsewhere indefinitely, I'd say that's a good investment for the American people,” Bowman said.

The death toll in all major post-9/11 war zones over the past two decades is more than 800,000 people – allied troops, opposition fighters, civilians, contractors, journalists, humanitarian aid workers – and 37 million people displaced, according to the Costs of War project.

“In all these wars, the U.S. has expended so much in terms of blood and treasure with actually very little to show for it,” Hartung said. “A reckoning is near.”

It's difficult to point to a single location where a post-9/11 U.S. military intervention has led to either a thriving democracy or measurably reduced terrorism, he said.

According to a report from the think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies, domestic right-wing extremists were responsible for almost 70% of terrorist attacks and plots in the USA in 2020.

The Defense Department referred USA TODAY's questions on national security to the White House. A national security official in the Biden administration said the White House had nothing new to share about overseas troop posture. White House officials in the former Trump administration did not respond to a request for comment.

President Donald Trump cut U.S. troops levels in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria but added at least 14,000 troops to the Middle East as tensions rose with Iran.

The Trump administration instructed the Pentagon to shift emphasis from counterterrorism, but U.S. military activity from 2018 to 2020 shows there has not been a corresponding drawdown, according to research by Stephanie Savell, a defense and security researcher with the Costs of War project.

From 2018 to 2020, the U.S. military was active in counterterrorism operations in 85 countries, either directly or via surrogates, training exercises, drone strikes or low-profile U.S. special operations forces missions, according to Savell.

In 2019, the U.S.-led coalition backing the Afghan government against Taliban insurgents dropped more bombs and missiles from warplanes and drones than in any other year of the war dating to 2001. Warplanes fired 7,423 weapons in 2019, according to Air Force data.

Foreign engagements have become less accountable, Savell said.

Critics said the Pentagon uses force in places beyond the intent of the 2001 Authorization of Military Force (AUMF), the law that sprung from President George W. Bush's “global war on terror” and the invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11.

Savell said the United States should consider whether there are “more effective, nonmilitary alternatives that cost fewer lives and less taxpayer dollars to address this security challenge.”