



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on March 31, 2011

Libya: The \$600 Million War

ABC News, citing “figures provided by the Pentagon,” [details](#) just some of these costs. For example, at roughly \$1.4 million apiece, the 191 (or more) Tomahawk cruise missiles fired into Libya have set taxpayers back a cool \$268.8 million. Precision-guided bombs cost “tens of thousands of dollars each,” says the report, and the U.S. military has dropped 455 of them thus far, soaking Americans for tens of millions of dollars. Hardworking folks across the country will have to shell out \$60 million to replace a fighter jet that went down. The bill for ships and aircraft maintaining their positions near or above Libya “could reach millions of dollars a week, experts say,” ABC News writes, adding that actual bombing runs are even more expensive:



The three B-2 stealth bombers that flew from Missouri to Libya and back on an early bombing mission each cost an estimated \$10,000 per hour to fly, a defense official said.

That means the planes, each on a 25-hour round-trip flight, ran up a bill of \$750,000, and the 45 Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) they dropped added at least \$1.3 million more.

That all adds up to one pricey proposition — one that, unfortunately, Americans’ representatives in the Capitol had no opportunity to consider prior to Obama’s decision to intervene.

“So far,” says ABC News, “the Pentagon has financed the mission ... using money in its existing budget.... But experts say the administration may have to submit an emergency supplemental budget request for Libya later this year, assuming U.S. involvement in the international military operation does not end swiftly.”

That is a pretty safe assumption, despite the President’s [assurances](#) to Congress that the United States would only be heavily involved in the mission for “days, not weeks” before taking a back seat to other countries. Wars are seldom swift and sure. Who, in 2001, would have predicted the U.S. military would still be bogged down in Afghanistan a decade later with so little to show for its efforts?

Not everyone in Congress is buying Obama’s bill of goods. Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), in a March 22 letter to colleagues, wrote: “While the Administration assures us that that the U.S. will hand-off its lead role to coalition partners within days, we have not been notified of long-term plans or goals following initial air strikes in the country. The timeline the President gave to Congress was summarized with one word: ‘limited.’”

In addition to his concerns about the constitutionality of the war — Kucinich has [called](#) it “an impeachable offense” — the congressman is worried about the cost to taxpayers. Having “already spent trillions of dollars on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan,” he explained, it might be imprudent to commit



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to paying for yet another potentially long-term, unwinnable conflict. To prevent that, he, along with Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), will be introducing an amendment to the next funding bill to [prohibit the spending of taxpayer dollars on the Libyan offensive](#). (Paul, too, has deemed the war cause for impeachment of the President.)

Many Republicans, writes ABC News, “say regardless of the president’s intentions, the costs to taxpayers — and potentially in American lives — coupled with an uncertain outcome make the military intervention unwise.”

For instance, Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, remarked on the contradiction between Obama’s stated concern for the deficit and the expense of his war: “It’s a strange time in which almost all of our congressional days are spent talking about budget, deficits, outrageous problems. And yet same time, all of this passes — which is a very expensive operation even in a limited way, always is.”

Obama, however, was very careful when talking about a spending freeze, as he did in his State of the Union address, to speak only of freezing domestic discretionary spending, “thereby leaving open the possibility of increased outlays for foolhardy, unconstitutional foreign interventions,” as this writer [noted](#) in January. Now Obama is taking advantage of that opening to dig the government into a deeper debt hole, putting the lie to his expressed commitment to fiscal responsibility.

Whether or not the Libya mission is a success — however one defines that — it is costing money the federal government simply doesn’t have. Even if it is funded solely by the already-approved Defense Department budget, that in itself is deficit spending. If it ends up requiring funding above and beyond that — at \$600 million a week, it almost surely will — it will only pile on additional debt. The federal government will then have to go, hat in hand, to the Chinese and other foreign governments for loans or have the Federal Reserve fire up the printing presses yet again. Either way, the outlook is not favorable.

The only way to prevent this eventuality is to bring Obama’s war to a screeching halt. That will require at least defunding the war and perhaps impeaching the President. Paul, Kucinich, and like-minded legislators had better gird their loins for battle. The war to stop Obama’s war is worth fighting, but it is likely to get very ugly before it’s over.

Photo of cruise missile: AP Images

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