

PM: Top of the Charts

By Polly Mann

The United States has been home to six of the top 10 weapons manufacturing companies in the world, according to figures available from 2014. The biggest of all is Lockheed Martin with a 2014 revenue of \$45.6 billion, equaling nearly 10 percent of the Pentagon's budget. It employs 116,000 people worldwide and is notable for its fighter airplanes, the Aegis combat system, and advanced ballistic missile defense shields.

The second largest American firm is Boeing with a 2014 revenue of \$30.7 billion. It's known for its commercial jetliners, such as the 747, 777, and 787, but is probably best known for its Apache attack helicopters. (With its billions in revenue, the average federal tax paid by Boeing was minus 2 percent from 2008 to 2013, according to Citizens for Tax Justice.)

The No. 4 U.S. firm is Raytheon, best known worldwide for its guided missiles, especially the Patriot surface-to-air missile, which costs \$2.3 million per unit. Its 2014 revenue was \$21.95 billion.

The fifth largest firm is Northrop Grumman, which had a revenue of \$20.22 billion in 2014, best known for its B-2 Stealth bomber, which can deploy both conventional and thermonuclear weapons.

The sixth largest firm is General Dynamics, with a revenue of \$18.66 billion in 2014. It manufactures computer systems, Stinger missiles, and Tomahawk cruise missiles. One of the company's best known weapons is the M1 Abrams tank--the primary tank of the U.S. Army and Marine Corps.

The eighth largest firm is United Technologies Corps (UTC), with a 2014 revenue of \$11.9 billion. It manufactures the Black Hawk helicopter and civilian aircraft. UTC components are currently used in 27 companies from all over the world.

The 2014 figures come from a highly reputable source, the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, sipiri. Another source following the money is Marcus Weisgerber, who delivers a Global Business Brief reporting regularly on the industry for Defense One. An updated glimpse on August 4, 2016, reveals that the weapons industry is thriving and more profitable than ever:

How have the five largest U.S. defense firms fared over the past five years? Their stock is up an average of 220 percent. Northrop Grumman's rose 327 percent; Lockheed Martin's, 272 percent; and Raytheon's, 252 percent. Compare that to the stock market as a whole. It's in a much better place (as of Wednesday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average is up about 60 percent from August 2011), but defense firms have clearly performed much better than that.

So, when somebody complains about the lack of low-income housing or school systems so short of cash that teachers have to furnish supplies for their students, or the low wages paid health care workers, refer them to the above. This country can perform at the top of the charts if you need a cruise missile, not food on the table.

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