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 **TODAY'S "QUICK HIT":**  
**WELFARE VS.**  
**MILITARY SPENDING:**  
**PLEASE CHECK**  
**YOUR MATH!**

By Stephen L. Bakke  May 19, 2017



*Here's what provoked me:*

*The beat goes on! False facts pervade the editorial and opinion pages of our newspapers. That's why I spend so much time searching for the worst offenders. My old opinion adversary Ron Smiley is a champion when it comes to spin, partial information, and far-fetched conclusions. His biggest personal characteristic is that he truly despises conservative opinions and programs – so much so that he's willing to believe even the most absurd assertions of facts.*

*Here's my response:*

**Welfare vs. Military Spending: Please Check Your Math!**

Welfare spending has been given short shrift relative to defense spending, or so goes Ron Smiley's argument on 5/19, "Providing common welfare." He wrote: "Many Republicans believe we should just keep spending and enriching the military industrial complex while telling us to stop funding for the common welfare...our Constitution gives Congress equal weight to provide for our Common Welfare as it does for providing for our Common Defense." He's requesting welfare/entitlement spending be equal to defense spending.

Let's look at the numbers. Military spending has been reduced to a fraction of that for the welfare/entitlement category. Compared to 1957, welfare is the only area of federal spending that has grown significantly relative to GDP. In 1957 welfare spending was just under 4% of GDP compared to almost 10% for military spending. In 2015, welfare/entitlement spending was 15.2% of GDP, compared to 3.3% for the military.

In GDP terms, military spending is about a third of the late 1950s levels, compared to about a four-fold increase for welfare/entitlements. While not a majority of the entitlement total, we should note that Social Security is now the largest single program thereof.

Wise policy assessments require accurate facts.