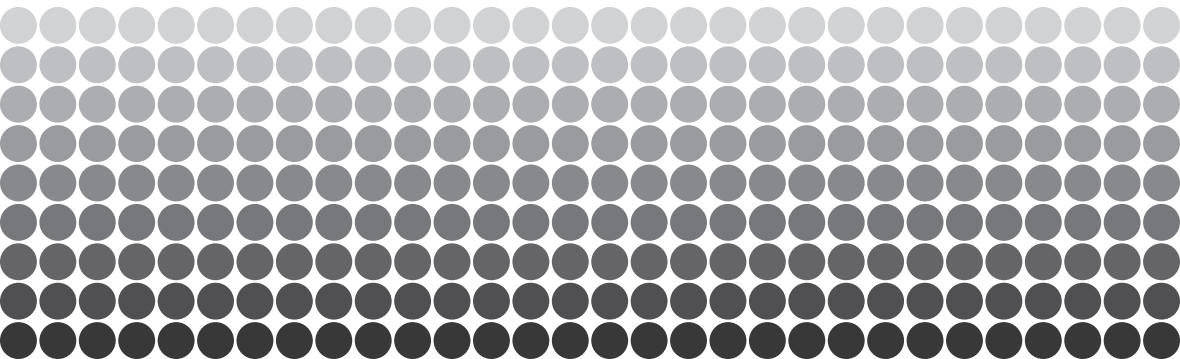


SIPRI YEARBOOK 2013

Armaments, Disarmament and International Security

The reporting of military expenditure data to the
United Nations

CHRISTINA BUCHHOLD



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This is an offprint of section VI of chapter 3 of

SIPRI Yearbook 2013: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security

Oxford University Press, 2013, ISBN 978-0-19-967843-3, hardback, xxii+574 pp., £100/\$185

The SIPRI Yearbook is published and distributed in print and online by Oxford University Press—more information is available at <<http://www.sipriyearbook.org>>

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.sipriyearbook.org

VI. The reporting of military expenditure data to the United Nations

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The United Nations Report on Military Expenditures is an important source of official data on military expenditure.¹ The original purpose of the system was to provide a baseline for reductions in military spending, as proposed by some UN member states. The purpose subsequently changed to building confidence and trust among states through increased transparency.²

Since its inception three decades ago, rates of reporting military expenditure to the United Nations have fluctuated from a low of 12 per cent of all UN member states in its first year of operation in 1981 to a high of 42 per cent in 2002.³ In the 1980s on average 15 per cent of all UN member states reported. Reports from newly independent states in Eastern Europe and Asia as well as increased reporting from Latin American and Caribbean states raised average reporting rates in the 1990s to 17 per cent.⁴ In the period 2002–2008 average reporting rates reached 40 per cent. This increase has been attributed to ‘efforts undertaken by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs [UNODA], with the support of interested Member States, and to the introduction in 2002 of the simplified reporting form’.⁵

Since 2008, however, there has been a noticeable fall in the reporting rate (see table 3.8). By 2010 it had fallen to 60 states, the lowest level since 2000. Initial reporting rates in 2011 indicated a further decline, due to a large number of late reports and UNODA publication delays, but the final figures showed that the number of reports increased to 68 states.⁶

¹ Until 2012 the UN Report on Military Expenditures was known as the UN Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures. UN General Assembly Resolution 66/20, 2 Dec. 2011.

² For details of the UN reporting instrument see e.g. Kelly, N., ‘The reporting of military expenditure data to the United Nations, 2002–11’, *SIPRI Yearbook 2012*.

³ See United Nations, General Assembly, ‘Group of Governmental Experts on the Operation and Further Development of the United Nations Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures’, Note by the Secretary-General, A/66/89, 14 June 2011, p. 25.

⁴ United Nations, A/66/89 (note 3), p. 13.

⁵ United Nations, A/66/89 (note 3), p. 14.

⁶ The initial report to the General Assembly and its 1st addendum list only 51 states as reporting in 2011. A list including a further 17 states was published on the UNODA website in Jan. 2013. A 2nd addendum including the reports of these 17 states is expected to be published in 2013. United Nations, General Assembly, ‘Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures’, Report of the Secretary-General, A/66/117, 29 June 2011; A/66/117/Add.1, 28 Sep. 2011; and UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, ‘United Nations Report on Military Expenditures: participation by member states (2011)’, [n.d.], <<http://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/Milex/>>.

Table 3.8. Number of countries reporting their military expenditure to the United Nations, 2002, 2007–12^a

	2002	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 ^b	2012 ^c
No. of UN member states	191	192	192	192	192	193	193
Total no. of reports^d	81	78	77	58	60	68	49
Standardized reports	70	48	53	42	41	47	31
Simplified reports ^e	..	18	16	10	12	10	12
Nil reports ^f	11	12	8	6	7	10	5
Response rate (%)	42	41	40	30	31	35	25
Reports from non-UN member states ^g	1	1	–	–	–	–	–

^a Years are the year of the Secretary-General's request (the deadline of which is 30 Apr. of the following year). The reports relate to spending in the most recently completed financial year.

^b The figures for 2011 are higher than those presented in *SIPRI Yearbook 2012* since they include late submissions of data to the UN. Panama is included in the total although, according to the UNODA, it submitted neither a standardized, simplified or nil report in 2011 but 'provided its views on the operation of the United Nations Report on Military Expenditure'.

^c Figures for 2012 only include submissions up to 24 Jan. 2013. Some countries may report after this date. Madagascar is included in the total, although the UNODA provides no information on the form of submission.

^d Total figures include nil reports.

^e Countries reporting to the UN with both standardized and simplified reports are listed as standardized reports to avoid double counting.

^f A nil report is a questionnaire returned to the UN with no data entered, usually submitted by a country that does not maintain regular armed forces.

^g Reports from non-UN member states are not included in other totals.

Sources: United Nations, General Assembly, 'Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures', Reports of the Secretary-General, Various dates, 2003–12; *The United Nations Disarmament Yearbook*, vol. 36 (2011), Part II, pp. 116–18; and UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), 'Military spending', <<http://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/Milex/>>.

It is too early to say whether participation in the reporting system has been affected by the report of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) that reviewed the military expenditure reporting system in 2010–11.⁷ Provisional figures for 2012 temper hopes for a general upward trend following the GGE review. As of January 2013, the UNODA listed 49 of the 193 UN member states as having submitted reports: a drop to 25 per cent from 35 per cent in 2011, although late submissions may increase the total (see table 3.8).⁸

⁷ United Nations, A/66/89 (note 3). On the GGE report see Kelly (note 2), pp. 185–86. The GGE Report was endorsed by UN General Assembly Resolution 66/20 (note 1).

⁸ UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, 'United Nations Report on Military Expenditures: participation by member states (2012)', [n.d.], <<http://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/Milex/>>.

This overall decrease reflects a decline in reporting in all regions (see table 3.9). Participation by European states has dropped most significantly: from 81 per cent in 2011 to 56 per cent in 2012. Participation in the Americas dropped from 40 per cent to 31 per cent; and in Asia and Oceania it dropped from 26 per cent to 21 per cent. Only two African countries reported in 2012 (down from three in 2011) and no Middle Eastern state provided information (down from one in 2011). Of the 49 countries that submitted reports to the UN, 31 submitted standardized reports, 12 submitted only simplified reports and 5 reported through a 'nil report' (i.e. a report with no data entered).

Table 3.9. Reporting of military expenditure data to the United Nations, by region and subregion, 2012

Region/ subregion	No. of countries	Countries reporting	Total	Response rate (%)
<i>Africa</i>	54		2	4
North Africa	4	-	-	
Sub-Saharan Africa	50	Burkina Faso ^d , Madagascar ^d	2	
<i>Americas</i>	35		11	31
Central America and the Caribbean	21	Costa Rica ^c , El Salvador ^d , Guatemala, Honduras ^d , Jamaica ^d , Mexico	6	
North America	2	Canada, USA	2	
South America	12	Argentina, Colombia ^b , Uruguay	3	
<i>Asia and Oceania</i>	42		9	21
Central and South Asia	12	Kazakhstan, Nepal	2	
East Asia	5	China ^d , Japan, Mongolia	3	
Oceania	14	Australia, Samoa ^e	2	
South East Asia	11	Malaysia ^d , Thailand ^d	2	
<i>Europe</i>	48		27	56
Eastern Europe	7	Armenia ^d , Russia, Ukraine ^b	3	
Western and Central Europe	41	Albania, Austria, Bulgaria ^d , Croatia ^b , Czech Republic ^b , Denmark ^b , Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein ^c , Luxembourg ^c , FYR Macedonia ^b , Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino ^c , Serbia ^d , Slovenia ^d , Spain, Switzerland ^d , UK	24	
<i>Middle East</i>	14	-	-	-
Total	193		49	25

^a These countries reported with the simplified UN form. ^b These countries reported with both simplified and standardized forms. ^c These countries submitted nil reports. ^d No information is available on the form of submission by this country.

Sources: United Nations, General Assembly, 'Objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures', Report of the Secretary-General, A/67/128, 9 July 2012; Addendum A/67/128/Add.1, 18 Sep. 2012; and United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, 'Participation by member states (2012)', <<http://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/Milex/>>.