

America's Real Contribution to U.N. Is Unknown

May 26, 2013

News Max

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How much money does the United States currently contribute to the United Nations and its various agencies? Surprisingly, no one knows for sure.

The State Department does report on its spending at the United Nations, but it is only one of several federal agencies that give money to the world body each year.

In its fiscal 2014 State and Foreign Operations budget proposal released in April, the Obama administration asked for \$1.57 billion for contributions to international organizations, including \$617.6 million for the U.N. operating budget — up from \$568.8 million in fiscal 2012.

But other agencies giving to the U.N. include the Departments of Labor, Energy, Agriculture, Defense, and Health and Human Services, CNS News reported.

Fiscal 2007 legislation stipulated that the Office of Budget and Management (OMB) report all federal agencies' contributions, but the requirement expired in 2011.

Now Republican Sens. Mike Enzi of Wyoming and Mike Lee of Utah, and others, are submitting legislation that would reinstate the requirement.

"It's disturbing that no one, including our ambassador to the United Nations, knows exactly how much money we send the U.N. every year," Enzi said in a statement.

"With a national debt exceeding \$17 trillion, we need to be able to account for every dime we spend, including what we send to the U.N."

The last OMB report to Congress on U.N. contributions was issued in June 2011 and covered fiscal 2010. It showed that State was just one of 17 government agencies giving money to U.N. organizations, funds, affiliates and other bodies, and the total expenditure that year was \$7.69 billion — more than 10 times the amount requested for State in fiscal 2014.

In addition to the billions being contributed to various bodies within the U.N. system, the United States provides 22 percent of the U.N.'s operating budget, more than twice as much as the No. 2 contributor, Japan (10.8 percent).

Other legislation likely to be introduced in Congress would change the way the United Nations is funded, allowing the United States to fund only those activities and agencies that are "efficient and in the national interest," according to CNS News.

As the Insider Report disclosed earlier, the United States did cut off funding for the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) after it voted in October 2011 to approve the Palestinian Authority's full membership in the agency. But that move was required by U.S. laws.