

Biden budget plan calls for record military spending directed against China

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On Friday, the Biden administration released its budget proposal for fiscal year 2022, which begins on October 1 of this year. At its center is the call for a record military budget of \$753 billion, including a massive allocation of \$24.7 billion for nuclear weapons modernization, a major expansion of US air and nuclear-capable naval forces, and the largest ever request for research and development—\$112 billion.

The budget proposal is openly directed against China, in the first instance, followed by Russia, Iran and North Korea. Coming in the midst of the orchestrated revival of the scientifically baseless Wuhan lab conspiracy theory on the origins of the coronavirus by the Biden administration and the entire political and media establishment, aimed at creating a *casus belli* for war with China, the Pentagon budget is a stark warning to the American and international working class. US imperialism is seeking to extricate itself from its intractable global and domestic contradictions by preparing for military conflict against what it deems to be its most dangerous rival.

Since coming to office four months ago, Biden has stepped up the drumbeat of anti-China propaganda and military provocation against Beijing initiated by the Obama administration and escalated by Trump. He has gone further than any previous president in undermining the “One China” policy and related policy of “strategic ambiguity” toward Taiwan inaugurated under the Carter administration in 1978. He has opened discussions with Taiwan, Japan and South Korea on stationing offensive missiles on their territory directed against the Chinese mainland, a move that China has warned it would consider an act of war.

The budget released yesterday allocates \$5.4 billion toward the development of these plans, under the rubric of the “Pacific Deterrence Initiative.”

The Biden administration and media outlets aligned with the Democratic Party are presenting the \$6 trillion budget proposal as a turn toward liberal social reform, with total discretionary spending for fiscal year 2022 of \$1.52 trillion. However, in the midst of an ongoing pandemic and social devastation for tens of millions of workers, the war budget accounts for half of the discretionary spending, and even the “domestic” half is geared to rebuilding America’s crumbling infrastructure and insourcing production of hi-tech components critical to a future

war against a rising power such as China. The actual social reforms are at best half-measures that do not challenge the ever-rising fortunes or economic domination of the financial oligarchs.

The budget announcement released Friday by the Defense Department bristles with anti-Chinese militarism. It begins with a statement by Biden’s secretary of defense, Retired Gen. Lloyd Austin, which declares:

The budget provides us the mix of capabilities we need most and stays true to our focus on the pacing challenge from the People’s Republic of China, combating the damaging effects of climate change on our military installations, and modernizing our capabilities to meet the advanced threats of tomorrow.

In testimony Thursday before the House Appropriations Committee Defense Subcommittee, Secretary of Defense Austin and Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made chilling remarks on the need for the US to upgrade and modernize its military to prepare for war against its “strategic competitors,” first and foremost, China.

Austin declared: “We must maintain and improve this advantage on land, at sea, in the air, and in emerging domains, including space and cyberspace. I am confident that the President’s budget request helps us do that. The request is driven by our recognition that our competitors—especially China—continue to advance their capabilities. We must outpace those advances to remain a credible deterrent to conflict around the world.”

Austin stressed that the US military had to modernize its forces in line with technological advances in order to maintain “the rules-based world order that we have helped foster for the past seven decades,” (i.e., the rules determined by US imperialism after World War II).

Expressing the increasingly desperate position of the US ruling class after decades of economic decline and financial parasitism, he warned: “China has invested heavily in new technologies, with a stated intent to complete the modernization

of its forces by 2035 and to field a ‘world-class military’ by 2049. Russia has shown that it is not afraid to target the United States in contested domains like cyberspace and still shows a continued interest in regional hegemony. Iran continues to advance its nuclear and ballistic missile programs and to support destabilizing proxy groups in the Middle East in an effort to threaten its regional neighbors. We also face challenges from North Korea, a country with the ambition to be capable of striking the U.S. homeland.”

On the topic of “regional challenges,” Austin began with China and the Indo-Pacific region (focusing on North Korea and Iran), then moved to Europe (targeting Russia), the Western Hemisphere (alluding to China’s growing economic influence in Latin America), and the US mainland. In that connection he noted positively the continued deployment of troops on the US-Mexico border and their role in imprisoning migrant children.

He touched on virtually every inch of the global landmass as places that must be “defended” by the US military, including the Arctic. The remit also includes US military domination of outer space and cyberspace.

Austin concluded by presenting as part of the necessary preparation for military conflict against “strategic competitors” the Biden Defense Department’s efforts to root out sexual harassers and extremist elements and boasted of his guidance aimed at removing barriers to transgender people in the military. This reflects both serious concerns within the military brass over the potentially disruptive impact of far-right elements under pre-war conditions and the political need to offer a sop to the upper-middle class identity-obsessed constituency within the Democratic Party.

Milley was, if anything, even more blunt in his remarks to the committee.

“China,” he said, “is our #1 geostrategic security challenge...China is challenging the peaceful status quo in the Pacific, and is intent on revising the global international order by mid-century. China is conducting large-scale exercises in the region with an emphasis on amphibious landing, joint fires, and maritime strike scenarios. These actions threaten our allies and partners’ autonomy, jeopardize freedom of navigation, overflight and other lawful uses of the sea, and compromise regional peace and stability. In short, China has and continues to develop significant nuclear, space, cyber, land, air, and maritime military capabilities.”

Milley stressed the vast changes in warfare since the end of World War II, stressing the need for the US military to intervene with massive forces far more quickly than in the past.

“The United States as a nation has always had the advantage and time to conduct a long build up prior to the beginning of hostilities. The operating environment of the future will likely not afford us the luxury of time to project force so having modernized forces in sufficient size and readiness will be the key to sustaining deterrence and maintaining the peace and if

deterrence fails then fight and win,” he stated.

He concluded by blustering that “the United States Joint Force is a flexible and adaptable force ready to deter, fight, and win our Nation’s wars. The PB22 budget request increases the readiness of the force by developing the Joint Force of the future... Many enemies have grossly underestimated the United States and the American people in the past. They’ve underestimated our national resolve. They’ve underestimated our capability, our skill and our combat power, and each made a fatal choice which ended with their enrollment in the dustbin of history.”

New or expanded weapons systems listed in the Pentagon budget announcement include:

- B-21 Long Range Strike Bomber—\$3 billion
- Columbia Class Ballistic Missile Submarine—\$5 billion
- Long-Range Stand-Off (LRSO) Missile—\$609 million
- Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD)—\$2.6 billion
 - Sea-Based Ballistic Missile Defense System (AEGIS BMD)—\$1 billion
 - Ground-Based Midcourse (GMD) and Improved Homeland Defense/Next Generation Interceptors (NGI)—\$1.7 billion
- 85 F-35 Joint Strike Fighters—\$12 billion
- 14 KC-46 Tanker Replacements—\$2.5 billion
- 30 AH-64E Apache Attack Helicopters—\$825 million
- CVN-78 FORD Class Aircraft Carrier—\$2.9 billion
- 2 Virginia Class Submarines—\$6.9 billion
- 1 DDG-51 Arleigh Burke Destroyer—\$2.4 billion

To partly offset the increased spending and shift the strategic orientation to more hi-tech weapons and communications systems, the budget calls for certain cuts in existing “legacy” military programs. This will undoubtedly provoke opposition from lawmakers who are on the take from defense contractors in their districts whose profit could be impacted.

The immense danger of a war launched by the US against a nuclear-armed rival such as China or Russia can and must be averted by the only social force capable of disarming the imperialist war criminals: the international working class. The same crisis of world capitalism, intensified by the pandemic, that drives imperialism toward the madness of nuclear war also creates the conditions for its progressive resolution by means of world socialist revolution.



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