

Senate Democrats endorse Republican proposal for increased military budget

Kevin Reed
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Democrats on the Senate Armed Services Committee have endorsed a Republican plan for an additional \$25 billion in military spending above the amount proposed by the Biden administration for 2022 in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The 23–3 bipartisan committee vote for a \$778 billion defense budget—a direct repudiation of President Biden’s \$753 billion proposal—was announced by Senator Tim Kaine, Democrat from Virginia, during a call with news media on Thursday.

According to a report by the *Hill*, “The funding boost would go entirely to the Pentagon, giving the department \$740.3 billion compared to the Biden administration’s request for \$715 billion. The remainder of the budget goes to non-Pentagon defense programs, such as the Energy Department’s nuclear weapons programs.”

While the Democrats are in the White House and have a majority in both houses of Congress, the new spending proposed for the US war machine is greater than that enacted during the Trump administration which stood at \$741 billion, with \$704 billion for the Pentagon, and the highest spending since World War II.

The new increase was proposed by Republicans as an amendment to the NDAA and then endorsed by Democrats during a closed-door session of the Armed Services Committee on Wednesday evening.

During his call with reporters, Kaine welcomed the budget increase and called it “very positive,” although he said military housing “remains a problem.” He also said that the NDAA will likely be voted on by the full Senate when the annual legislation is decided on in September.

Committee Chairman Jack Reed, Democratic Senator from Rhode Island, followed Kaine’s announcement with a statement that got down to the real military

matters at hand. Reed said that Congress “must work on a bipartisan basis” to ensure “the policies and resources to deter America’s adversaries,” and reassure US allies that American military forces “have the right tools and capabilities to combat threats around the globe.”

Although Democrats have said very little about where the additional \$25 billion will be spent, it has been reported that much of the extra resources will go toward programs that top generals and admirals had identified as priorities and were left out of Biden’s original budget request.

According to the *Military Times*, the Army’s unfunded priorities include, “\$1.1 billion for tactical training, soldier quality of life and strategic power projection capabilities, and another \$1.9 billion for aviation platforms, wheeled and tracked combat vehicles and cyber security upgrades.” The Navy request includes, “\$1.7 billion for a second DDG [missile guided destroyer] and \$280 million for additional flying hours for Navy pilots,” and the Air Force wants to spend “\$1.4 billion on 12 additional F-15EXs and \$825 million for weapon system sustainment efforts.” Marine Corps leaders demanded “more than \$150 million additional Naval Strike Missiles and Tactical Tomahawk missiles.”

In policy terms, the vote by the bipartisan Senate committee is for a continued guarantee that the Pentagon will maintain overwhelming military superiority over every other country on the planet such that it can invade and launch wars against enemies and adversaries as it sees fit. Meanwhile, the committee is making a clear statement that Biden’s proposal was unacceptable and that the so-called “progressive” congressional Democrats will have absolutely no say-so over the hegemonic global military strategy of US

imperialism.

As pointed out by *Stars and Stripes*, Republicans have “argued for months at congressional hearings and recent news conferences that Biden’s budget is insufficient to counter the rising threat of China and Russia. They have repeatedly called for a 3-5% increase in funding and criticized Biden for his effectively flat budget.”

With their support for the Republican plan, Senate Democrats are making it clear that they agree with the foreign policy of the party of Donald Trump. Among the Democrats to vote for the Republican proposal were Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire and Mark Kelly of Arizona and so-called progressive Kirsten Gillibrand of New York.

The only Democrat on the committee who opposed the increase was Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts. Significantly, the other two votes against the proposal came from extreme right-wing Republicans Tom Cotton of Arkansas and Josh Hawley of Missouri who opposed the provision in the bill that will require women to register for the draft for the first time. Other Republicans who voted for the bipartisan plan also criticized it for being not substantial enough, such as Senator Dan Sullivan of Alaska who said during a press conference, “We are not prioritizing the military at all with this budget. We’re gonna continue to press to make this much stronger budget for our military.”

Also revealing the pro-war stance of the Democrats as a whole, Senator Kelly said that the bipartisan increase, “was necessary to support a number of unfunded requirements from the military branches and combatant commanders critical to getting our servicemembers the tools, training, and resources they need,” and that it also funds “the development of new technologies to maintain our competitive edge, while also addressing a broader scope of national security priorities.”

The bipartisan increase in military funding by the Senate Armed Services Committee stands in stark contrast to the cutbacks in federal dollars to assist working class families who face unemployment, homelessness and poverty arising from the criminal policies of the government in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Meanwhile, the Democrats have no problem whatsoever voting for Pentagon funding alongside Republicans who opposed the certification of

Biden as President following the assault on the Capitol by a mob of right-wing and fascist elements on January 6. Among the major Trump backers in the Senate Armed Services Committee are Republicans Tommy Tuberville from Alabama and Rick Scott of Florida.

While the two parties are unable to move forward on an infrastructure spending plan and claim that “fiscal responsibility” prevents the government from providing desperately-needed resources to impoverished cities and rural areas of the country, they set aside their bickering and stage managed disagreements to provide massive funding for the US military-intelligence state.

Significantly, neither the *New York Times* nor the *Washington Post* published a report on the vote by the Senate committee, with the endorsement of the leading Democrats, to increase the 2022 military budget.



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