

Biden unveils 2023 budget with massive spending on the military and police

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President Joe Biden revealed his administration's 2023 budget proposal Monday afternoon, featuring the largest ever US military spending and a substantial increase for domestic police repression.

While Biden gave lip service to increasing spending on domestic social programs and taxing billionaires, this was for show, given the narrow margin of Democratic Party control in both the House and Senate. More significant was his declaration that "fiscal responsibility" would be the priority of his administration.

In his brief address as he stood alongside budget director Shalanda Young, Biden outlined his priorities as "First, fiscal responsibility. Second, safety and security. And thirdly, investments needed to build a better America."

He then reiterated, "The first value is fiscal responsibility. The previous administration as you all know, ran record budget deficits. In fact, it went up every year under my predecessor. My administration is turning that around. Last year, we cut the deficit by more than \$350 billion. This year, we're on track to cut the deficit by more than \$1,300,000,000,000. That would be the largest one-year reduction in the deficit in US history."

This means that when the proposed tax increase on the billionaires and other revenue-raising measures are blocked by Republicans and the right wing of his own Democratic Party, Biden will insist that there can be no cuts in the military, given the ongoing confrontation with Russia and the supposed threat of China. Social spending will inevitably bear the brunt.

And whatever the outcome of the horse-trading and infighting in Congress, the budget is based on the rosiest of assumptions: no resurgence of COVID-19, substantial economic growth, and a cooling of inflation

from the present rate of nearly 8 percent. Biden said that he was calling for an end to pandemic-driven fiscal assistance to state and local governments and subsidies to large corporations. Pandemic spending "will be dramatically less than last year," even though the actual number of people infected and in need of care has increased.

Biden said that a new tax on billionaires would raise \$360 billion over the next ten years. This is the latest iteration of a long-time Democratic Party con game, claiming that it supports higher taxes on the wealthy, and enacting changes in the tax code that the multi-millionaires then easily evade. The Democrats never propose any measures that would actually redistribute wealth away from the super-rich, because, as Biden said Monday, "I'm a capitalist."

He also proposed an increase in the corporate income tax rate from 21 percent to 28 percent. A similar plan went nowhere last year because of opposition by two right-wing Democrats, Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona. Neither has changed their position, so that proposal is purely to support a bit of populist demagoguery in the 2022 election campaign.

The Democratic president went through a litany of promises on social spending, including child care, universal preschool, health care, expanding research into fighting cancer and climate change, and alleviating poverty and homelessness. Biden is well aware that none of these proposals will pass Congress unless watered down to virtually nothing.

The heart of his domestic program was law and order. "The answer is not to defund our police departments," he declared, "It's to fund our police and give them all the tools they need... The budget puts more police on the streets for community policing so they get to know the community they are policing." There would be more

funding for federal police agencies as well, including the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF).

The various domestic items pale by comparison with the massive outlays for the military, which will receive a record \$813 billion, more than \$2 billion a day. The bulk of this spending is for the acquisition of more and more weaponry—planes, ships, tanks, armored cars, advanced artillery, as well as \$40 billion for the Department of Energy to build new and more destructive nuclear weapons.

There will also be a pay raise of 4.6 percent for military and civilian federal employees. The uniformed military and the employees of the Pentagon, CIA and departments primarily concerned with national security and domestic policing, such as Homeland Security, Justice, State, Veterans Affairs, Energy and Transportation, comprise the vast majority of federal employees.

The budget includes, for example, \$42 billion for the Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and expansion and maintenance of border fencing. Another \$30 billion will go to various programs to beef up local and state police forces.

The reactionary Russian invasion of Ukraine, in response to the intransigent insistence of the US government and the European imperialist powers on the expansion of NATO right up to Russia's borders, has become an all-purpose excuse for giving the Pentagon every dollar it seeks, and then more.

Biden cited the war in Ukraine repeatedly, and called for a “bipartisan unity agenda” in response to the supposed global threats of Russia and China.

The budget document spells this out: “We are at the beginning of a decisive decade that will determine the future of strategic competition with China, the trajectory of the climate crisis and whether the rules governing technology, trade and international economics enshrine or violate our democratic values.”

The *New York Times* cited this passage and then declared bluntly that the core of Biden's message was not “an urgent appeal to address racial and income inequality, climate change and the struggles of the middle class, but to reassert American dominance in a dangerous and competitive world.”

Combined with the 2022 budget just given final passage by Congress six months late, the Pentagon will

receive a whopping increase of 10 percent over the first two years of the Biden administration. And that assumes that the US and NATO do not become more directly involved in the war between Russia and Ukraine, in which case an additional huge increase can be expected.

Some of the more significant budget items include \$6.9 billion for the European Deterrence Initiative, which supports NATO operations mainly in Eastern Europe, targeting Russia. This is nearly double the figure of \$3.6 billion from 2022. Some \$692 million will go to Ukraine to sustain its military operations against Russia.

A record \$130 billion will be devoted to military research and development, including hypersonic weapons, biotechnology and microelectronics.

Another \$40 billion in the Air Force budget will go to other agencies on a classified basis. This is known as the “black budget” and finances operations which the national-security state does not report even to Congress, let alone the American people.



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