

Amid mass domestic social hardship

# With vote for war, Ocasio-Cortez, Sanders and DSA give over \$17 billion to weapons manufacturers

**Eric London**

**31 May 2022**

In mid-May, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) congressional slate voted unanimously for a \$40 billion bill endorsing the US-led proxy war against Russia. No member of the DSA delegation issued a public statement explaining their vote, and none even so much as tweeted to defend their actions. The DSA evidently hoped that nobody would notice: an article in the DSA-affiliated *Jacobin Magazine* reported on the passage of the bill but did not mention the votes cast by the DSA's own members.

On Monday, *Jacobin* magazine republished a 1916 article by American socialist Eugene Debs opposing the First World War and attacking those who attempt to reconcile “socialism” with support for imperialism. In a written introduction, *Jacobin* presents itself as the inheritor of Debs’ socialist, anti-war tradition: “This Memorial Day, we should rededicate ourselves to fighting the horrors of war. So here’s a 1916 Eugene Debs piece about why internationalism is at the heart of socialist politics.”

The DSA is not fighting the horrors of war, it is funding them, and Debs’ article is a devastating exposure of the DSA itself.

Debs denounces “self-called socialists who are nationalists first and who set the ‘fatherland’ of their masters above the whole earth and above all the workers of the world.” He excoriates the parties of the Second International for voting for imperialist war credits. Such parties and politicians are “not socialists at all” but “traitors to the cause.”

“When the tocsin sounded,” Debs continues, “international obligation was swept away, or forgotten, and in the frenzy aroused by the military clackers,

thousands of socialist party members became the intensest of nationalists and ‘patriots,’ utterly denying their international principles and obligations and turning traitors to the movement.”

Debs, who would be jailed the following year for opposing US imperialism’s entry into World War I, writes: “True socialists cannot at the same time be nationalists, militarists, and capitalist ‘patriots.’ They are either one or the other; they cannot be both.”

The DSA’s vote for the \$40 billion military aid bill is an endorsement of the US-led imperialist war which has brought the world to the brink of nuclear catastrophe. The DSA acted unanimously, with every DSA member voting for the bill, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Jamaal Bowman, Cori Bush and Rashida Tlaib. DSA-endorsed Ilhan Omar and Bernie Sanders also voted “yes.”

Details of the bill are now emerging which make clear that the DSA and its congressional delegation have endorsed the massive re-armament of the American imperialist war machine and signed a blank check to the weapons manufacturers and the military-industrial complex. The missiles, tanks, bullets, artillery shells, drones and attack helicopters stamped “Made by the DSA” will be used not only in Ukraine, but against the victims of American war all over the world.

The first weapons contracts made possible by the bill are now coming to light. On May 27, the Pentagon announced it had awarded Raytheon Technologies a \$624 million contract to replenish the US military’s stock of Stinger missiles, 1,400 of which the US has already sent to the US’s far-right proxy forces in Ukraine. Citing a Raytheon press release announcing the deal, *Axios* wrote that “the contract is being funded through the \$40 billion

military and humanitarian aid package that Congress passed for Ukraine this month,” and that it will allow Raytheon to build 1,300 Stinger missiles. Each missile costs \$450,000, enough to pay the yearly salary of ten teachers.

The DSA has also voted to fund the production of Javelin missiles, which are produced through a joint venture by Raytheon and Lockheed Martin. Lockheed Martin describes the Javelin as “the world’s premier shoulder-fired anti-armor system,” which “takes the fight to the enemy.” Each missile costs an estimated \$250,000, enough to feed 6,250 malnourished children for a year.

In the coming weeks, new contracts will be announced for the production of advanced munitions such as laser- and satellite-guided weapons. An Army spokesperson told *Defense News* last week, “The army is working on a proposal to use advanced procurement dollars to buy long-lead parts and materials for advanced munitions.”

According to an analysis by the think-tank CSIS, the bill also provides \$6 billion in a special transfer account to provide “training, equipment, weapons, logistic support, supplies and services, salaries and stipends, sustainment, and intelligence support to the military and national security forces of Ukraine—i.e., just about anything Ukraine might need.” CSIS notes that “Congress has typically not liked transfer accounts because they look like ‘slush funds.’” In this case, the DSA is voting to arm fascist organizations like the Azov Battalion, which hail from the Ukrainian collaborators with the Nazi Holocaust.

Furthermore, the bill sends \$4 billion to arm the 10,500 US troops in Eastern Europe, including through the procurement of an additional Patriot surface-to-air missile battery, an element of the bill which CSIS noted was a “surprise.” Each Patriot system costs roughly \$1 billion, enough to house 30,000 homeless people for a year. Patriot batteries are also produced by Raytheon and Lockheed Martin.

The bill also includes \$364 million in spending for research and development, so that the military and weapons manufacturers can develop even more effective ways to kill and destroy.

The weapons manufacturers are celebrating the vote. A *Los Angeles Times* headline on May 27 reads, “Buoyed by Ukraine war, defense stocks escape worst of market slump.”

The article begins, “Lockheed Martin Corp., Northrop Grumman Corp. and other makers of military gear have avoided the worst of the broader stock market’s recent seven-week rout, beating the S&P 500 amid a pullback in

consumer spending, tightening monetary policy and concern about a potential recession.”

Speaking at a conference at Bank of America shortly after the bill passed the House, Lockheed Martin CFO Jay Malave said he was “pleased” with the bill and expected Congress to increase military spending in the near future. Since the bill was signed by Biden on May 21, Lockheed Martin’s stock has increased four percent and Raytheon and General Dynamics’ shares have risen six percent, generating millions of dollars for wealthy shareholders who have the DSA, Ocasio-Cortez and Sanders to thank.

Every dollar the DSA has voted to give to these Merchants of Death is a dollar it has taken out of the hands of American workers struggling to confront inflation, poverty and the rising cost of living. The vote will drastically prolong the war and drive prices up even further in the working class districts that the DSA congresspersons represent.

The average per capita income in Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s New York congressional district is \$29,356, and 20 percent of children in the district live below the official poverty line. Average income in Jamaal Bowman’s New York congressional district is \$46,866 and a sixth of children live below the poverty line. In Cori Bush’s Missouri district, the per capita income is \$31,086 and 26 percent of children live below the poverty level. The residents of Rashida Tlaib’s district in Michigan make an average of \$21,642 while a staggering 41 percent of the district’s children live below the poverty line. Each politician’s vote for war is a vote to deprive hundreds of thousands of the workers in their own districts of basic social necessities.

The DSA’s subordination of the interests of working people to the Pentagon and weapons manufacturers is not a mistake, it is an expression of its pro-imperialist, capitalist character. This is the role the DSA has played for 40 years. As Debs wrote, “True socialists cannot at the same time be nationalists, militarists, and capitalist ‘patriots.’ They are either one or the other; they cannot be both.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**wsws.org/contact**