

Strike called at General Dynamics Mission Systems plant in Marion, Virginia after workers vote down tentative agreement

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Are you a General Dynamics Mission Systems worker in Marion, Virginia? Fill out the form at the end of the article and tell us what you think about the UAW's role in the strike, the tentative agreement and what your working conditions are like. We will protect your anonymity.

Late Friday night, July 1, members of United Auto Workers 2850 went on strike after they rejected a tentative agreement between General Dynamics Mission Systems in Marion, Virginia and Local 2850. The action was called after a month of negotiations with the defense systems manufacturer.

Though the unions' official demands are not public, according to UAW Local 2850 president Alan Keesee, a cost-of-living adjustment is a central demand by workers. The last contract was agreed five years ago. Now with surging inflation, workers pay is being sharply eroded.

There are over 250 employed at the Marion plant. According to the company website, General Dynamics Mission Systems "provides mission-critical solutions to the challenges facing defense, intelligence and cyber security customers across all domains."

Additionally, the website states, "We build products and deliver technology for platforms like combat vehicles, submarines, aircraft, satellites and advanced systems that can sense danger, quickly act on threats and share lifesaving information."

As the United States ramps up its war machine as it takes aim at Russia and China, profits in companies like General Dynamics are soaring.

In January of this year, General Dynamics reported "Record-high revenue and operating earnings from the collective defense segments for the year." The

company garnered net earnings of \$3.3 billion on revenue of \$38.5 billion.

Workers at the Marion plant correctly surmise that there is plenty of money to fairly compensate employees generating those profits from the factory floor.

In preparation for the strike, a special meeting was called of the Marion Town Council at which Police Chief John Clair informed elected leaders that his department was prepared for the strike. The Marion Police are in force on the picket lines where 100 workers are gathering under portable sun shelters.

Strikers do not rule out tensions erupting in the July heat. They recalled the last strike, in 2008, when workers walked out against cuts to benefits and in particular, their pensions. Union officials were arrested and charged with identity theft after names, salaries and Social Security numbers of management employees were displayed on structures and signs of the strikers.

However, General Dynamics workers should beware. The UAW sabotaged a series militant struggles by workers at Volvo, John Deere and Dana in 2021, and this year, at parts maker Ventra Evart. Despite massive rank-and-file rejection of the companies' "best and final" offers, the UAW forced votes on the concessionary contracts under dubious circumstances, which resulted in ratification, sometimes by hair-thin margins.

In opposition to the pro-corporate unions, workers in these companies have formed rank-and-file committees to organize their demands independently of the union bureaucracy and to unify their struggles to break the isolation and information blackout of the UAW.

The direct election of the UAW's president and

executive board this year is itself only taking place because the revelations of the federal investigation confirmed what workers had already long suspected: The UAW is bought off by the corporations.

Because of the failure of the UAW bureaucracy to fight for its members, rank-and-file worker Will Lehman, employed at Mack Trucks in Macungie, Pennsylvania, has submitted his declaration of candidacy to run for president of the United Auto Workers.

Will outlines his plan to abolish the pro-corporate union bureaucracy which has abandoned the workers whose dues they gladly collect. In its place Will calls for “??Full rank-and-file control and oversight, including over all bargaining, vote-counting and safety.”

General Dynamics Mission Systems workers should take their cue from workers at Ventra, Volvo, John Deere, and Dana who have organized rank-and-file committees to demand the wage and benefits increases to make up for decades of concessions handed over by the unions while the corporations who continue to rake in record profits.



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