

Biden's demand for \$105 billion in military spending: A declaration of war against the working class

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In his national address Thursday, US President Joe Biden demanded Congress allocate an additional \$105 billion to fund the US military, escalate the US/NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and arm the Israeli military with bullets, bombs and shells for its genocidal campaign against the people of occupied Palestine.

This massive tranche of money is greater than the GDP of two-thirds of the countries on Earth and would cause unimaginable levels of death and destruction in the months ahead.

The latest demand includes \$14 billion for Israel on top of the \$260 billion the US has provided in military aid since 1948, and \$61 billion for Ukraine, nearly doubling the \$75 billion spent on the war against nuclear-armed Russia so far. Biden is also demanding \$3 billion for military submarines, \$2 billion for the military encirclement of China, and \$14 billion to further militarize the US-Mexico border and criminalize immigration, as a sop to Trump and the far-right wing of the political establishment.

Biden said the \$105 billion is necessary to make sure those who “cause chaos and death and destruction” are made to “pay a price for their aggression.”

Over 20 years ago, then-president George W. Bush used the same language to justify launching imperialist wars in Afghanistan and Iraq which were to last 20 years, kill more than one million people, and cost more than \$8 trillion, according to Brown University's Costs of War project. A 2022 report published by the Pentagon admitted that each taxpayer paid \$8,278 for the wars in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021, though the true figure is likely an order of magnitude higher.

In concluding his speech, Biden called for shared sacrifice to fund the escalation of war on a global scale: “In moments like these, we have to remember who we

are. We are the United States of America. The United States of America. And there is nothing, nothing beyond our capacity, if we do it together.”

Make no mistake, the US population will not pay for these wars “together.” The cost will be borne entirely by the working class, while the spoils will go to the rich. Biden's demand is a declaration of war against the working class, and all talk about “shared sacrifice” to “defend democracy” is nothing but lies.

In reality, the US-led wars for which this money has been earmarked are wars of imperialist conquest, fought to enrich the ruling elite and secure the world's resources and markets for Wall Street and corporate America, no matter the cost in lives or dollars.

The allocation of \$105 billion for war comes at the direct expense of the working class, the vast majority of whom live paycheck to paycheck and nearly half of whom could not cover a \$400 expense with cash on hand. Every dollar spent on the wars will come at the expense of social programs and entitlements like Medicare and Social Security.

According to a 2023 study from the National Priorities Project, \$100 billion is more than the federal government will spend all year on education (\$84 billion), transportation (\$67 billion), or energy and the environment (\$94 billion). It equals the total budget for healthcare (\$100 billion). Total military-related spending this year will exceed \$1.1 trillion.

The Biden administration's demand comes as workers have been told “there is no money” to address the world population's most urgent needs. For \$100 billion, Biden could house every homeless person in America (\$20 billion, per Globalgiving.org), feed every person facing starvation or acute malnutrition across the world (\$23 billion, per Oxfam), forgive \$30,000 in student loans for

two million people (\$60 billion), and still have almost \$10 billion left over.

The same corporations braying for war and profiting from it will not be asked to share in the sacrifice. Earlier this year, a report from the Congressional Budget Office explained that tax revenue fell 9 percent in 2022 alone as a result of decades of tax cuts for the wealthy. According to the CBO, revenue on corporate taxes fell \$5 billion from 2022 to 2023. A 2023 study from the Government Accountability Office reported that 34 percent of large corporations now pay zero in federal taxes.

As a result of the systematic slashing of corporate taxes, endless Wall Street bailouts and record military spending, the US budget deficit doubled in 2023, jumping from \$1 trillion to \$2 trillion, the *New York Times* reported Friday.

Biden's demand exposes the totally anti-democratic character of the political system, where popular pro-Palestinian and anti-war sentiment finds no reflection whatsoever. On Friday, CBS released a poll showing that 57 percent of Americans support sending humanitarian aid to Palestine versus only 48 percent who support sending weapons to Israel. Regardless, the Senate passed a resolution supporting Israel on Thursday by a 97-0 margin. Pseudo-left figures like Democratic Socialists of America member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez are enthusiastic supporters of the Biden administration and have openly endorsed arming Israel even as it engages in horrific war crimes.

Biden's demand for \$105 billion will be deeply unpopular, and his incoherent speech will convince no one. Substantial demonstrations have taken place in almost every major American city denouncing Israeli war crimes, and protests have only grown in the aftermath of the horrific bombing of the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City by Israeli forces, which killed nearly 500 people. Given the barrage of pro-war propaganda in the corporate media, such opposition marks a significant breakdown of the media-military-industrial complex.

In the face of growing opposition from below, Biden is demanding the total subordination of the economy to the needs of US imperialism. In his speech, he called for a transition to war production, saying that "just as in World War II, today patriotic American workers are building the arsenal of democracy and serving the cause of freedom." His demand for "replenishing our stockpiles" with an endless flow of weapons will require the suppression of the class struggle, dangerous speed-ups and the illegalization of strikes.

In this effort, Biden has a willing partner in the trade

union bureaucracies, which have become inseparable from the Democratic Party and the imperialist state and have worked for decades to prevent strikes, maintain production and enable record corporate profits. Earlier this month, UAW President Shawn Fain appeared with Biden at the Willow Run plant in Michigan, noted that the plant formerly produced bombers, and referred to the union's membership as part of the "arsenal of democracy."

This is a direct signal that the bureaucracy is collaborating with the Biden administration to keep the flow of deadly weapons moving to all of US imperialism's expanding theaters of war. War against American imperialism's rivals and targets abroad means war against the working class at home.

Already the bureaucracies are struggling to contain the growing strike movement in the US, which has spread in recent days from Big Three workers and Mack Trucks workers to casino workers in Detroit. In all cases, workers are told by the corporations that wage increases are unaffordable. In reality, it would cost only \$15 billion to pay all 150,000 Big Three workers \$100,000 per year, and this represents just 15 percent of what Biden claims is urgently needed for war.

The stage is set for the next phase of the development of the global class struggle, in which strikes and protests are increasingly coinciding with a growing *political* awakening of workers and young people across the world. This raises the decisive need for political leadership, to prevent the imperialist governments and their pseudo-left cheerleaders from diverting and suppressing opposition as they have done in the past, and to fight for the development of an independent revolutionary movement against imperialist war and the capitalist system. That is the perspective of the Socialist Equality Party.



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