Biden demands “immediate” passage of $118 billion World War III/anti-immigrant package

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On Sunday evening, senators from both parties unveiled the $118 billion “Emergency National Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2024.” The 370-page war package has the support of the White House and leading senators of both parties in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

It combines billions in funding for the US imperialist-led proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, the US/Israel genocide in Gaza and Washington’s widening Middle East war targeting Iran, and US preparations for war in the South China Sea, while greatly expanding the US border police and gutting migrants’ right to asylum.

Despite the right-wing character of the bill, it is unclear if it will become law, as likely Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump and Speaker of the House Mike Johnson have repeatedly stated their opposition. Johnson called the bill “dead on arrival,” while Trump denounced it as a “highly sophisticated trap” on his social media network Monday morning.

The bill concretely outlines the top priorities of the Biden White House, the Democratic Party and large sections of the Republican Party. The dominant concern of the White House is expressed in the $60 billion-plus the bill earmarks for military equipment to Ukraine to continue the US-NATO war against Russia.

In a bid to secure Republican support for the war package, Biden and the Democrats have agreed to greatly expand the federal border police, including Customs and Border Protection (CPB), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the US Citizens and Immigration Services (USCIS), to the tune of $20 billion.

Since last October, fascistic Republicans have refused to consider funding for Ukraine unless it is paired with savage attacks on immigrants that would all but eliminate the right to claim asylum in the US.

After the text of the bill began to leak, President Joe Biden released a statement demanding its immediate passage by Congress. Adapting to the Republicans’ fascistic “invasion” narrative, Biden hailed the bill as the “toughest and fairest set of border reforms in decades,” which would grant him, and whoever comes after him, “a new emergency authority to shut down the border when it becomes overwhelmed.”

The proposed bill requires the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to declare an “emergency” if the number of people attempting to cross into the US exceeds 5,000 per day averaged over seven days, or 8,500 on a single day. Once a “shutdown” was declared, border police could turn away virtually anyone without even processing him or her. Immigrants who attempted to cross twice during a “shutdown” would be subject to a yearlong ban from the US. During a “shutdown” only 1,400 asylum seekers would be processed a day.

In his statement, Biden noted that the bill provided funding for more “border patrol agents, immigration judges, asylum officers, and cutting-edge inspection machines…” This includes $170 million for “autonomous surveillance tower systems” and $47.5 million for “mobile video surveillance systems and counter-unmanned aerial systems.”

The bill does not include a “pathway to citizenship” for “Dreamers”—the nearly 3 million undocumented migrants who were brought to the US as children. For over a decade, dreamers have been forced to pay a fee and submit personal information to the immigration agencies every two years in order to stay in the US,

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despite the fact many of them have no memory of anything outside the US.

Instead of expanding citizenship, the bill greatly expands the surveillance and detention of migrants within the country as their claims are processed. At least $3.2 billion is earmarked just to ICE for detaining immigrants.

Campaigning in Las Vegas, Nevada on Monday, Biden implored Republicans to seriously consider the bill. “We don’t have enough agents, we don’t have enough folks, judges… We need help, why won’t they give me the help?”

The anti-immigrant provisions in the bill are so draconian that even Brandon Judd, the fascistic head of the Border Patrol union, who has already endorsed Trump for president, released a statement in support of the bill.

“The Border Act of 2024 will give U.S. Border Patrol agents authorities, codified in law, that we have not had in the past,” Judd wrote. “This will allow us to remove single adults expeditiously and without a lengthy judicial review.”

“While not perfect,” Judd added, “the Border Act of 2024 is a step in the right direction and is far better than the current status quo. This is why the National Border Patrol Council endorses this bill and hopes for its quick passage,” Judd concluded.

While Trump-loving border police are hailing the bill, Kica Matos, president of the National Immigration Law Center, wrote, “This bill is not worth the incredible price it would exact—more families separated, more children detained, and more people sent back to face persecution, torture, and even death.”

Similarly, Angelica Salas, executive director of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, wrote in a statement that lawmakers had crafted a “giveaway to the most extreme, anti-immigrant and racist members of Congress.”

Salas added that the bill would “severely diminish asylum rights, assign billions of dollars to an already robust deportation machine, and deny due process to people fleeing harm. The irony is that a proposal that aims to gut asylum law is embedded in a bill to fund armed conflicts.”

In furtherance of the genocide in Gaza, the bill provides $14 billion to Israel, including over $5 billion for the Iron Dome, David’s Sling and Iron Beam missile systems.

Even as hundreds of thousands of people, mostly children, are starving in Gaza, as the WSWS reported yesterday, the bill explicitly prohibits any funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which provides aid to some 5.9 million Palestinians not only in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, but in Jordan and Lebanon as well. The US, followed by nearly a dozen of its allies, cut funding to the agency based on unverified Israeli “intelligence” claims that as many as 10 workers with the organization were involved in Hamas’ October 7 incursion into Israel.

While the text of the bill contains strict limits on any “humanitarian” funding that does trickle into Gaza, it has no provisions that would require enhanced scrutiny of military aid to Israel, even as the Zionist regime uses the bombs, artillery shells and missiles provided by the US to slaughter civilians by the thousands.

The targets of US imperialism are not limited to the slaughterhouse battlefields of Ukraine or the bombed-out streets of Gaza. In a section headlined, “Deterring the Chinese government,” the bill outlines $1.9 billion for replenishing US weapons that have already been transferred to Taiwan. Over a half-billion is set to go to the “Commander of the Indo-Pacific Command” for “unfunded requirements,” while another $133 million is slated for “critical cruise missile components.”

In furtherance of US-led war drive against China, which includes Britain and Australia under the auspices of the Australia, UK and US (AUKUS) trilateral security partnership, the bill includes a staggering $3.3 billion towards the construction of, and enhancements to, dry docks for the production of nuclear submarines.

Nearly $3 billion is slated for the Department of Energy, the vast majority of which is allocated for supporting and bolstering “domestic uranium production” for “civil” and “advanced nuclear fuel.” Ominously, $149 million is earmarked for the National Nuclear Security Administration “to respond to the security situation in Ukraine.”

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