

In bipartisan vote, US Senate backs \$95 billion for war in Ukraine, genocide in Gaza

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In a bipartisan 70-29 vote Tuesday morning, the US Senate advanced a \$95.3 billion military funding package centered on expanding the proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, continuing the genocide in Gaza and preparing for war with China. Working through the night, the vast majority of Democrats voted to approve the bill, with only two voting against, while a near-majority of Republicans, 22 out of the 48 voting, gave their support.

Following the bill's passage in the Senate, President Biden delivered an afternoon address demanding that Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson "bring it to the floor immediately." Johnson had said that he would not allow a vote unless it was paired with the anti-immigrant "Secure Our Border Act," which was passed by Republicans in the House last summer.

Biden's speech was a full-throated call for global military escalation to defend the geopolitical imperatives of American imperialism.

It focused first of all on the situation in Ukraine, for which the bill provides more than \$60 billion in funding. The US-backed Zelensky government is mired in crisis following the failure of the "spring offensive" last year, combined with the disastrous consequences of the two-year-long war that has killed hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians.

Describing the situation, Biden declared, "Ukrainian soldiers out of artillery shells, Ukrainian units rationing rounds of ammunition to defend themselves, Ukrainian families worried that the next Russian strike will permanently plunge them into darkness or worse."

Biden's professed concern for "Ukrainian families" and soldiers is the height of imperialist hypocrisy. After it instigated the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Biden administration has repeatedly rejected any negotiated settlement to the conflict, which continues to this day. Yesterday, Reuters reported, citing Russian sources, "Russian President Vladimir Putin's suggestion

of a ceasefire in Ukraine to freeze the war was rejected by the United States after contacts between intermediaries."

The US and NATO imperialist powers have bled the country white in their determination to impose a military defeat on Russia. The death toll is so great that the Zelensky government is attempting to lower the draft age to dragoon more youth into the battle, under conditions of growing opposition within Ukraine itself.

An article in the *New York Times* published earlier this week declared that lowering the draft age "would bring more lithe, healthy soldiers to the fight but would pose long-term risks for sustaining Ukraine's population, given the country's demographics." In language that reeks of the romanticization of slaughter, the *Times* acknowledged that "sustaining Ukraine's population" is an open question. In other words, imperialism is fighting to the last Ukrainian—literally.

Biden then turned to the Middle East, where he focused on the military buildup in the Red Sea, targeting Iran. He only briefly referred to the second largest component of the bill—another \$14 billion for Israel and the continuation of the genocide against the Palestinian people.

With consummate cynicism and imperialist hypocrisy, Biden claimed that the bill included measures to "provide life-saving humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people, who desperately need food, water and shelter." Millions of Palestinians are in desperate need, and more than 35,000 are dead, because of a slaughter and bombardment carried out with the full financial and military resources of the United States.

In fact, unlike initial iterations of the bill, this war package strictly prohibits any funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. UNRWA is the main humanitarian aid agency for Palestinian refugees in Gaza, Jordan and Lebanon, upon which millions rely.

The pittance of "aid" provided to suffering Palestinians in the bill through the Department of State and the United

States Agency for International Development contains several onerous oversight and reporting requirements. These include a requirement that procedures for delivering aid be developed “in coordination with other bilateral and multilateral donors and the Government of Israel, as appropriate.”

It is as if an arsonist set fire to a neighborhood, murdered many of its residents, and then provided a broom to assist in the clean-up, so long as this was done under the watchful eye of the arsonist himself—and as he goes on to destroy the rest of the city.

Finally, Biden said that the bill “includes critical funding for our national security priorities in Asia, because even as we focus on the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine, we must not take our eye off our national security challenges in the Pacific.” That is, the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, the genocide in Gaza and the military buildup in the Middle East are seen as preparatory and part of the developing conflict with China.

The bill provides another \$5 billion to this end, including nearly \$2 billion for the procurement of Columbia class ballistic missile submarines as part of the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) military arrangement. The Columbia class is capable of carrying up to 16 Trident D5 ballistic missiles, each of which can be equipped with a W88 thermonuclear warhead. The estimated yield of a W88 is 475 kilotons, which is more than 23 times as powerful as the bomb that was dropped on Nagasaki.

What happens with the bill now remains uncertain. While Trump and his most fervent supporters in the Republican caucus in the House of Representatives are opposing it, sections of the Republican Party are calling for it to be brought to a vote and passed.

The Republican Party-aligned *Wall Street Journal* editorialized after the Senate vote, calling it “a victory for American security that would buttress US defenses and hold the line against compounding dangers abroad.” Rejection of the bill, it wrote, “heralds weakness against China and Iran as much as it does Russia. Anyone who thinks a fight over Taiwan is coming should be rushing to pass \$2 billion in weapons sales and training for [our] Pacific partners.”

For their part, several Democrats, including former Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, have raised the possibility of a “discharge petition.” This parliamentary maneuver would allow

Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, with the support of even a handful of Republicans, to bring the bill to the floor without Johnson’s approval.

Whatever the immediate outcome, the process has starkly revealed the political dynamic in the United States.

The Democratic Party is a party of war and genocide. Its differences with the Trump faction of the Republican Party center primarily on issues of foreign policy, particularly in relation to Russia. Toward the end of his speech, Biden denounced Trump for accommodating to Putin, declaring, in reference to earlier remarks by Trump, “As long as I’m president, if Putin attacks a NATO ally, the United States will defend every inch of NATO territory.”

As for Trump and the other fascists in the Republican Party, they are no less ardent supporters of American imperialism than the Democrats. If Trump were to return to office, he would proceed with absolute viciousness to advance US imperialist interests abroad. The conflict over the bill reflects certain divisions within the ruling class over the orientation of war policy, and Trump also sees it as an opportunity to escalate his fascistic campaign against immigrants.

Biden declared in his remarks that “an inflection point in history” has been reached. This is indeed true, though in two very different senses. For Biden, it means that the American ruling elite, confronting a desperate crisis, must use military violence on an unprecedented scale to defeat its rivals, suppress popular opposition, maintain its global hegemony and thereby defend its profits and wealth.

For the working class of the United States and the entire world, however, the matter is posed differently. For the working class, it is a question of opposing the relentless escalation of imperialist brutality, including the normalization of genocide and nuclear war, which threatens all of humanity, through the development of a working class movement against the capitalist system and for socialism.



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