

Biden budget promotes war in Ukraine, Middle East, China and at US-Mexico border

Patrick Martin
11 March 2024

The White House released a draft budget outline Monday afternoon that has two entirely separate audiences: working people, who get false promises, and the financial oligarchy, who get money, money, money.

For the mass of the American population, the Biden administration makes demagogic promises of social spending to be financed by tax increases on the wealthy, pledges that will be discarded as soon as the election campaign is over.

For the financial aristocracy and the military-intelligence apparatus, Biden proposes record spending on the military and on domestic and border police repression, together with trillions in interest payments—nearly \$5 trillion over the next ten years—going straight into the coffers of Wall Street and the billionaires.

Naturally, the corporate-controlled media devotes virtually all its coverage to the pie-in-the-sky promises of social benefits that have no purpose except to try and fool the population in an election year, while saying very little about the ongoing military build-up and nothing at all about rising interest payments, which will soon be one of the largest components of the federal budget.

The social spending components can be detailed briefly. Biden proposes to restore the Child Tax Credit, enact a new tax credit for first-time home buyers, establish universal prekindergarten, 12 weeks of paid family leave, substantial forgiveness of college student loan debt and subsidies for an array of other social services.

All this is to be paid for by raising the corporate income tax to 28 percent (restoring only half the cut from 35 percent to 21 percent enacted under Trump in 2017), and increasing various other taxes on the wealthy.

This is, to put it politely, a political fairy tale. Biden made no serious attempt to push through such policies in 2021–22, when the Democrats controlled the House and Senate, allowing a handful of right-wing Democrats in the Senate to block most of it. With Republicans in control of the House, and potentially in control of the Senate after the next election, there is no prospect of any of this being passed.

In any case, the Democratic Party would not enact these measures if it had total control, because the vast bulk of spending is earmarked for wars in Ukraine, the Middle East and, further down the road, against China in the Indo-Pacific. The promises of social spending are brazen lies that will be discarded on November 6, if not sooner.

The heart of the budget is what it provides for the Pentagon, a record \$850 billion in discretionary budget authority for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, which begins on October 2024. This represents a 4.1 percent increase of the budget for FY 2024, which has still not yet been approved by Congress.

To this must be added supplemental funding for the war in Ukraine and other so-called emergency spending that will inevitably be brought forward during the next year and a half, as well as the military spending that is incorporated into the budgets of other departments. This includes particularly the Department of Energy, which oversees the US nuclear weapons stockpile, including both production and maintenance, and secret amounts awarded to the Central Intelligence Agency and other agencies involved in surveillance and provocation around the world.

Total US military spending will once again top the \$1 trillion mark, far more than the 10 largest military budgets of other countries, combined.

The White House budget document proposes a

“robust 4.5 percent pay increase” for the uniformed military, on top of the 5.2 percent increase in the current fiscal year. That means, compounded over a two-year period, the troops and their officers would receive a 10 percent pay raise, substantially more than anything available to most workers.

The document emphasizes investment in “key technologies and sectors of the U.S. industrial base such as microelectronics, submarine construction, munitions production, and biomanufacturing.” The budget “modernizes and expands the production capacity of the industrial base to ensure the Army can meet strategic demands for critical munitions,” the document states.

There is a particular emphasis on “the development and testing of hypersonic strike capabilities while enhancing existing long-range strike capabilities to bolster deterrence and improve survivability.” These are open preparations for wars with what are called “peer competitors” in Pentagon jargon, i.e., Russia and China.

Some \$20 billion goes to building nuclear weapons, an increase of \$4.5 billion compared to 2021, a rise of 29 percent in three years. The call for “a resilient, responsive nuclear security enterprise” underscores the active planning for nuclear war, when weapons systems must be “resilient” to survive the global holocaust.

The budget is based on the strategic outlook first articulated by the national security strategy document prepared under Trump’s Pentagon chief, General James Mattis, which shifted the main focus from the supposed threat of terrorism to the prospect of “great power” wars with Russia and China. The goal of the military budget, the document declares, is to “confront global threats and strengthening America’s military, advance U.S. national security to out-compete China and counter Russian aggression, and address pressing global challenges.”

Other elements include supporting the integration of Britain and Australia into US military operations through the AUKUS alliance, and expanding US military spending in Latin America, particularly Central America.

The latter is linked to the vast increase in spending on border security, including not only the \$13.6 billion in the supplemental spending bill now tied up in the House of Representatives and tens of billions more for

the Department of Homeland Security. The additional spending will include hiring 1,300 more Border Patrol officers, 1,600 officers to manage refugee detentions and deportations, hundreds of new immigration judges and courts and nearly \$1 billion for new technology for surveillance on the border.

Barely mentioned in the budget press releases—you have to look in the tables at the end—is the ever-rising cost of interest payments on the federal debt, now rising rapidly because of rising interest rates. This year the projected interest payments come to \$349 billion, nearly half the size of the Pentagon budget. This mounts to nearly \$600 billion by the end of the 10-year period projected in the budget estimates. The accumulated interest payments would amount to \$4.7 trillion.

The lion’s share of this debt is held by wealthy investors, in the United States and worldwide, and they will reap the bulk of the interest payments. At the same time, they can rest comfortably, knowing that their political servants in the Democratic and Republican parties will ensure that their interest tribute is paid regularly, as the number one priority of the Treasury, and that no tax increases of the type frequently promised by Biden, Bernie Sanders and other charlatans will ever occur.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact