

War profiteer Boeing selected to build latest US fighter jet

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On March 21, the US Air Force announced it has awarded the contract for its Next-Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) fighter jet, the F-47, to Boeing, a longstanding client of the US Department of Defense.

The press release came as US President Donald Trump asserted that Yemen, an impoverished country of 34.7 million people, will be “completely annihilated” by the US military. Trump has also made clear his administration’s intent to expel the people of Gaza from their land through massacres and starvation, completing the genocide begun by Israel in 2023 with the complicity of the Biden administration.

During the announcement from the Oval Office, Trump attempted to assert that the jet was named after him, in honor of being the 47th president of the United States. He claimed, “It’s a beautiful number.” In reality, the jet’s designation had been decided beforehand as a grotesque celebration of the head of the American state and would have applied to Democrat Kamala Harris had she won the 2024 election.

The announcement also came three days before the *Atlantic* magazine began publishing a detailed account of how the March 15 attack on Yemen was to be carried out. The details were acquired by Jeffrey Goldberg, who was mistakenly included in the text messages organizing the attack. They make clear that the bombing of the country was carried out as part of a “war of choice” against the poor, defenseless country as part of the broader strategy to support the Gaza genocide and the broader war plans in the Middle East, particularly against Iran.

The F-47, when it is deployed, will play a critical role in these plans. Its very existence, which began as demonstration flights of new technologies in 2019, is a stark indication of the advanced nature of US war plans. The project was actually paused in 2024 when

the projected cost soared to more than three times the infamously expensive F-35 developed by Lockheed Martin.

It was revived after several internal studies from the Air Force warned that the widely deployed F-22, which entered into service in 2005, was not sufficient against modern air defense and electronic warfare systems, specifically those developed by China. The same reports also warned that older generations of fighters would not stand up to the latest sixth-generation aircraft being developed by the Chinese military.

In other words, in addition to war against Iran, as well as Russia, the development of the F-47 is another clear sign that one of the strategic aims of American imperialism is war against nuclear-armed China.

The new contract is a major windfall worth more than \$20 billion for Boeing. The company has been suffering billions in losses ever since the two 737 MAX 8 crashes in October 2018 and March 2019, which killed a total of 346 passengers and crew, as well as the blowout of a door during the takeoff of a 737 MAX 9 in January 2024.

Boeing is also considering selling off its Starliner space program after the attempt to return its capsule from the International Space Station with astronauts aboard was aborted, as technical issues and safety concerns mounted before and after the craft’s launch and docking with ISS. Astronauts Sunita Williams and Barry Wilmore were forced to stay on the ISS for an unplanned additional nine months before finally returning to Earth aboard a SpaceX Dragon spacecraft last week.

Boeing’s stock also trended downward during last year’s strike of 33,000 machinists in Washington, Oregon and California who were fighting for an inflation-busting wage increase and the restoration of

company pensions. Share prices largely recovered after a sellout contract was rammed through by the International Association of Machinists (IAM) bureaucracy after workers had been worn down by seven weeks on the picket line with next to nothing in strike pay.

Boeing is a longstanding fixture in the military-industrial complex of American imperialism. It has made military aircraft for more than a century, including the B-52 bomber, which has been in active service since 1955. The aerospace giant has made dozens more military planes, at least 20 unmanned aerial vehicles and 11 different types of missiles.

The F-47 will be the latest of these. In addition to the jet itself, there will be a swarm of numerous unmanned aircraft to act as decoys, provide further sensor data and carry additional munitions.

While it is not clear just how much each fighter will cost, if the previously mentioned projection holds true, each jet will be on the order of \$300 million. Given that it is designed to replace both the F-22 and F-35, which account for more than 1,300 jets combined, the program could cost a colossal \$390 billion.

To put such sums into perspective, it would cost just \$50 billion a year to end world hunger. Various estimates indicate that it would cost about \$60 billion a year to end the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and prevent new ones from emerging. It would be a one-time expense of \$20 billion (66 F-47s) to end homelessness in the US. The Department of Education, which the Trump administration is seeking to eliminate, had a budget of \$268 billion in fiscal year 2024.

The new fighter is also no doubt one of the reasons the Biden administration played such a major role in crushing last year's Boeing machinists' strike. As noted by the WSWS at the time, even though the strike was at Boeing plants largely devoted to commercial aircraft, there were still significant impacts to the delivery of war materiel viewed as critical for the genocide in Gaza.

At the same time, there was concern that the strike would expand to the workers in St. Louis, which is the center of Boeing's production for Boeing Defense, Space & Security. The IAM played a critical role in ensuring that production there was not impacted, isolating the workers on the West Coast and preparing for a betrayal of the St. Louis workers when their

contract expires in 2026.

Boeing's new CEO, Kelly Ortberg, is another way the company is being tied more closely to the US military. While Ortberg is hailed in the corporate press for being an engineer, his actual background is as CEO of Rockwell Collins from 2013 to 2021. The company has developed military equipment for the US as far back as World War II and was purchased by RTX (formerly Raytheon) in 2018 under Ortberg's leadership.

Rockwell Collins has since been critical for the Gaza genocide and the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. No doubt Ortberg is looking to make Boeing just as critical, and thus profitable, for future wars.



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