

Connecticut Pratt & Whitney workers join Lockheed Martin strikers as walkouts spread in US weapons industry

Shannon Jones
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A walkout involving almost 3,000 Pratt & Whitney jet engine workers in Connecticut began Monday morning following an overwhelming vote to reject the company's contract offer. The workers, members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), join another 900 workers at Pentagon contractor Lockheed Martin in Denver, Colorado, and Orlando, Florida, who struck last week after decisively rejecting a contract brought back by the United Auto Workers.

The workers at Pratt & Whitney build both commercial and military jet engines, including the GTF line for Airbus commercial jets and the F135 for military F-35 Lightning II fighter aircraft. The IAM reported 77 percent of workers voted in favor of strike action.

Pratt & Whitney said its most recent contract offer included an upfront 4 percent wage increase, 3.5 percent in 2026 and a 3 percent increase in 2027, as well as a \$5,000 signing bonus.

Management issued a statement declaring its intention to operate during the strike. A management press release stated:

Our local workforce is among the highest compensated in the region and the industry—our offer built on that foundation. We have no immediate plans to resume negotiations at this time and we have contingency plans in place to maintain operations and to meet our customer commitments.

Meanwhile, the UAW has announced a May 18 strike deadline for 2,500 workers at General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut, who design submarines for the US Navy. They have been working under an expired contract since April 4. The strike deadline announcement came one day after the US Navy awarded General Dynamics a \$12.4 billion contract for the construction of two Virginia class nuclear-powered attack submarines armed with cruise missiles. According to reports, the Navy's contract already incorporates the wages and benefits to be granted to workers.

Responding to the Pratt & Whitney offer, one angry worker posted on Reddit:

They keep mentioning \$5,000 [bonus] like it means something! It's trash, blood money used as a carrot. After taxes be lucky to take home 3k. 1k a year bonus for a Company bragging over 41% increase in q1 profits!! I'd rather

see that 5k distributed into the General Wage Increases!!

Another pointed to management's enrichment of Pratt & Whitney shareholders.

UTC and RTX (Pratt & Whitney's parent companies) have bought back over \$22 billion dollars worth of their own stock over the last 10 years. If they spent all of that money on their employees it would come out to \$100,000 per employee (worldwide) regardless if they're union or salary. That's \$10,000 a year.

Instead they just want to increase shareholder value, which includes the executives.

Rather than unite the struggles of Pratt & Whitney, Lockheed and General Dynamics workers and mobilize broader support in the working class in the US and globally, the UAW and IAM bureaucracies are seeking to keep workers isolated and divided. This strategy cannot win against multi-billion dollar global defense contractors that operate all over the world and have the backing of the US government. Lockheed Martin alone accounts for 40 percent of US defense contracts and has operations in 50 different countries.

The pro-company union bureaucracies, who are in alignment with the extreme America First nationalism of the Trump administration, have repeatedly demonstrated they are hostile to workers' interests. Last November, the IAM called off a powerful strike by 33,000 Boeing machinists, who voted down two sellout contracts before the union succeeded in ramming through a deal that met none of workers' demands. Following the strike, workers were hit with mass layoffs, which the IAW did nothing to oppose.

The struggles being waged against critical defense contractors objectively involve not just a fight against individual corporations but a direct conflict with the Trump administration. The would-be dictator in the White House wants to massively increase military production in the US to wage expanding wars around the world. To accomplish this, the wages and benefits of defense industry workers must be sharply reduced and their exploitation greatly increased.

The Trump administration, with the support of Congressional Democrats, is pushing forward with plans for further record increases in military spending. This follows a rise under the Biden

administration to record military outlays of \$997 million in 2024, the highest spending in human history.

Despite this massive waste of financial and human resources, US war planners are demanding more. An article in the May-June edition of *Foreign Affairs* points to the depletion of US military stocks due to the ongoing US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and the Gaza genocide under conditions of an eroded US manufacturing base

Titled “The Empty Arsenal of Democracy,” the article states:

The American military suffers from munitions shortages across almost every weapons category. It lacks short- and medium-range missiles. Most important for a conflict in the Pacific, it has insufficient long-range precision missiles—such as the navy’s long-range antiship missiles, joint air-to-surface standoff missiles, and the army’s precision-strike missiles.

It adds:

In fact, the situation is so dire that the White House should invoke the Defense Production Act to develop new and more powerful energetics, expand munitions production, and create strategic reserves of both.

Trump in his first term invoked the Defense Production Act, in the face of wildcat job actions by workers, to force meatpacking and poultry plants to stay in operation during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. If the union bureaucracy is unable to strangle these strikes, the Trump administration will deploy similar and even more anti-democratic measures against defense industry workers, who will be denounced as the “enemy within.”

To fund expanding wars the Trump administration is carrying out a direct attack on healthcare and education and other vital social programs that workers depend on. Elon Musk’s Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is carrying out the wholesale destruction of social spending, gutting entire departments critical to the functioning of a modern society. Social Security and Medicare will be next.

A central aspect of the war plans of the Trump administration is its expanding tariff war aimed at “reshoring” defense production in preparation for military conflict with China. This will be paid for by workers through huge increases in prices for basic goods and intensified exploitation, the evisceration of wages and benefits and the suppression of basic democratic rights, including the right to strike.

Through its support for the Trump administration’s tariffs and trade war policies, UAW President Shawn Fain and the entire UAW bureaucracy have lined up behind the White House program of war overseas and austerity and police state repression at home. As for the Machinists, they have publicly opposed tariffs on Canada—where the union also has members—but has called on Trump to bring together “government, business and labor” to forge a protectionist strategy to “grow critical manufacturing” in the US and Canada” while “punishing the bad actors across the globe,” i.e., China.

The union bureaucracy is looking to integrate itself even further into the structure of corporate management and the US government in preparation for war. Fain often speaks of the Arsenal of Democracy,

the World War II reference to US military production, where the UAW enforced “patriotic” support for the war effort by suppressing strikes, enforcing speed-up and persecuting anti-war socialists.

For his part, Biden saw the unions as so critical to US war planning that he spoke of them as “My domestic NATO.”

Will Lehman, the socialist Mack Trucks autoworker who ran for UAW president against Fain and incumbent Ray Curry in 2022, has called for the international unity of the working class against capitalist exploitation and war. In his remarks to the online May Day rally on May 3, he said:

If we are to win in the struggles ahead, we cannot be divided from our coworkers in or from any country. Instead we need to build a unity that transcends national borders. Furthermore, war with China would lead to a brutal bloody disaster for the working class forced to fight it. More than 80 million died as a result of World War II. A Third World War, with all the major powers possessing nuclear bombs, would lead to the destruction of humanity. The same ruling class that promotes nationalism is assaulting immigrant workers and students in the US.

To successfully wage their struggle, workers need to build organs of shop floor power, rank-and-file committees independent of the pro company labor bureaucracies. These committees must map out a program to expand and spread the struggles to break the isolation imposed by the UAW and IAM bureaucracies.

These strikes take place as mass protests are mounting against the Trump administration’s attacks on jobs, social programs and assault on democratic rights, including the mass illegal deportation of immigrants. In opposition to the fascist program of the bankers and billionaires, the working class must assert its own interests in defense of healthcare, decent pay, access to education and a secure retirement.

This requires a political struggle by the working class to place the giant corporations under the democratic public ownership of the working class. In this way, instead of trillions being sucked up by the super rich or being spent on war and mass destruction, the resources produced by the collective labor of the working class can be directed toward meeting human needs.

For more information about building rank-and-file committees, fill out the form below.



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