

# Pratt & Whitney strikers remain firm as walkout enters Week 2: “It’s capitalism run amok—We get pinched so it all stays on top”

Robert Milkowski, Steve Light  
11 May 2025

Three thousand jet engine workers at two Pratt & Whitney plants in Connecticut are remaining firm on the picket lines as negotiations between the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and the company have reportedly reached an impasse. In their first strike since 2001, workers walked out May 5 over wages, pensions and job security.

The week-long strike is part of an expanding wave of struggles by workers in the defense industry. Another 900 workers at Pentagon contractor Lockheed Martin in Denver, Colorado, and Orlando, Florida, also remain on the picket line after two weeks, having decisively rejected a contract brought back by the United Auto Workers (UAW). UAW workers at the General Dynamics–Electric Boat submarine-making facility in Groton, Connecticut, have set a May 18 midnight deadline to strike.

Pratt & Whitney is the world’s second largest commercial jet engine manufacturer behind GE Aviation and ahead of Rolls-Royce. It controls 26 percent of the market and produces engines for several lines of Airbus passenger jets. In addition, it produces engines for military aircraft, including the F-35 Lightning II, and gas turbine engines for industrial use, marine propulsion and power generation.

WSWS reporters visited the picket lines on Saturday and spoke with workers, who voted by 77 percent to strike, about their struggle. At the largest picket, located at an intersection near the main entrance to the East Hartford plant, strikers with bullhorns appealed to drivers passing by, warning about company threats to move production from the city to a non-union facility in Asheville, North Carolina. These pleas were met with positive shouts and horn blasts as area residents understand how the closure of the plant and loss of jobs would devastate the region.

“It’s about Letter #22, we have to keep the work here in Hartford, or what does it matter how much we make in salary?” an Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)-certified worker, who has been at the plant for three years, told our reporters.

“Letter 22” is a provision in the previous labor agreement between the IAM and Pratt & Whitney, outlining the conditions under which the company can close or relocate facilities. Specifically, it stipulates that such actions are permissible only if there is a demonstrable reduction in work, a loophole the company is seeking to exploit.

The IAM says Pratt & Whitney’s recent decisions to shift operations to other states do not meet the criteria outlined in Letter #22, as there has not been a significant decrease in workload. This contention has become a central point in the strike, with IAM asserting that the company is violating the agreed-upon terms.

Another East Hartford picket said:

They tried to weaken the language in this last negotiation and changed the words around to make it better for them. We want it to

stay the original way or make it even stronger.

When asked about linking up with striking Lockheed Martin workers in Denver and Orlando, he replied:

That would send a message to the aerospace industry as a whole, especially for the safety of the flying public. Right now, we hear there are salaried people doing our work inside these plants, so that’s suspect.

He continued:

Last time, we came back in 2001, there were so many scrapped out engine parts due to the managers and salaried people trying to do the work they’re not trained for—millions of dollars in scrap.

When the WSWS asked him about strike deadline of submarine workers in nearby Groton, Connecticut, he said:

A strike there would be helpful for us too. There’s strength in numbers, and the unity counts for a lot.

Another aerospace worker said:

We’ve got 3,000 workers here in Connecticut, and we all provide for this community. We want it to stay here.

An older plant carpenter with one and a half years said:

I am striking because the younger ones need their jobs. The company is acting out of greed. They are looking out for their shareholders. Things are worse now because the IAM used to deal with Pratt, but now they deal with the bigger giant RTX [Pratt & Whitney’s parent company since 2020]. We are okay only as long as there is a collective bargaining agreement, and it is enforced.

At another one of the East Hartford pickets, a machinist stated:

They want to take our job security away. The more they take away, the angrier we get about it. They want us to work now but for far less pay. They are trying to get rid of jobs. They get cheaper, and the government doesn't want us to have Social Security. Once you lose it, you can't get it back. The executives on top don't lose anything. We are numbers in the system. We want to be more than numbers.

When our reporter spoke about the role of the Machinists union in accepting decades of sellout contracts, including most recently at Boeing, he replied, "I agree that is a problem, but I am just a number in the union, too."

The WSWS reporting team also traveled to the picket lines in Middletown, Connecticut. A third-generation machinist, who started in 2005, said:

Letter 22 is our bread and butter. That is what keeps us employed. We have a lot of other work that comes in and out of the shop, which is not covered by Letter 22. Fine, but you have to have steady employment when it comes down to the brass tacks and stuff. You have to have a steady environment. You must have a steady flow of parts, which we don't. It's very much hit or miss. Since RTX took over, it's been feast or famine.

He continued:

When RTX came in and took over, they decided to start taking things away from us, like pensions, vacation time and wages. Now we're back at the table, and they want to take job security away from us as well. That's not going to happen!

They're trying to screw our brothers and sisters out of the pensions that they worked all their lives for, and the ones who came in later aren't even offered a pension! They offered a 401K that gets thrown into the stock market. We see what the stock market is doing right now—People are losing their goddamn shirts. It's disgusting.

Regarding healthcare and workplace safety, he said:

They want to raise the cost of our healthcare 8 percent, but that would be negotiated separately only next October. They have a private insurance company. We had people here who died of COVID. I was in favor of getting a vaccination. I had a friend who died of COVID. Now, if you have COVID, you can come to work!

Our reporters asked about strike pay, and he replied, "Our strike pay is \$250 a week, enough for food but not enough for the mortgage."

When the WSWS asked about the potential effects of the Trump tariffs on the flow of parts, he replied, "Tariffs are going to cause a problem. It is going to hit us with raw materials and metals."

Another worker, an inspector and fourth-generation worker with 8 years

experience, interjected:

It will also hit us on the small components side, like the gearboxes and stuff like that. It's not this plant specifically, but it will affect the rest of the corporation.

He then pointed to Pratt & Whitney's profits:

Their profits—after they pay off electric bills, pay off their shareholders—on average is between \$15 billion and \$21 billion. That's how much they make, and they will sit here and lay off 10 percent of their salaried workers this year, trying to cut us out, saying, "We don't have money." You just posted a 156 percent increase in your profits over last year for your profit margin. I'm sorry, where's your money? They are taking away money from this facility, trying to move the work—That's what they are trying to do to us now.

Discussing Trump, the machinist continued:

I should be 150 percent Republican because of the job [for major military production], but I am not. Trump is the greatest grifter of all time. But the Democrats are not standing up to that. Democrats have this perceived moral view. Bernie Sanders has all this good stuff but does not back it up.

He added:

If they want to take away my Social Security, give me every penny I paid in. The Republicans would use it for their play money. Their attitude is "Good luck to you!," as they make us slave labor. Florida is short on labor now. If they want to get rid of immigrant labor, they have to turn to slave labor.

The inspector rejoined the discussion:

This is your standard corporate greed. They want to take more and more out and put the screws to us. They will move the work out of here, and we are left here holding the bag. For what? To go somewhere else where they don't have the resources or workforce in place?

This company has a history of moving the work out of Connecticut—moving it down South—and they're suffering for it because they don't have the skills. It ends up coming back anyway. We've seen this time and time again, because they don't want to listen.

We are the nuts and bolts guys. This shop puts the stamp on it at the end and says it's good to fly. This is why you are not seeing crap leaving this facility right now. They shipped out an engine yesterday that we had completed and finished. It was on some Defense Department hold. The company decided, in their great wisdom, to send it out. It took them a week to get it on the trailer. Well, guess what? It just got called back.

Asked by our reporters about the workers forced out on strike at Lockheed and the strike vote at Electric Boat, the inspector declared:

It is capitalism run amok—We get pinched harder and harder, just so it all stays on top!

The ongoing struggles at Pratt & Whitney, Lockheed Martin and General Dynamics demonstrate that workers are not just fighting individual employers but the Trump administration, which intends to make the working class pay for its broader war agenda. As military production ramps up for potential war against China, the government seeks to slash wages, gut social programs like healthcare and education and suppress worker resistance.

Rather than unite the struggles of aerospace and defense workers, the IAM and UAW bureaucracies are isolating these struggles, echoing Trump's economic nationalism and militarism. Corporate-controlled Democrats are paraded around as "friends of labor," even as they sanction the fascist president's attacks on immigrants, international students, the US Constitution and essential social programs.

Last year, 33,000 workers at Boeing revolted against the IAM bureaucracy's corporatist alliance with big business. But the IAM isolated their fight, starved workers on poverty-level strike benefits and then rammed through a contract that paved the way for mass layoffs.

That is why the WSWS is urging Pratt & Whitney, Lockheed Martin and Electric Boat workers to form independent rank-and-file committees, made up of the most militant and class-conscious workers, to outline their non-negotiable demands, including inflation-busting raises, the restoration of full pensions and healthcare benefits.

At the same time workers should demand \$1,000 a week in strike pay to sustain themselves in this critical battle, end all backroom "talks" and rank-and-file oversight of all negotiations and contract ratification processes.

Through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) workers in the US can unite with their brothers and sisters throughout the world. Only by uniting across borders and rejecting the union bureaucracy's nationalist alliance with corporate and military power can workers fight for decent living standards, peace and democratic control over the economy.

*Workers at Pratt & Whitney and other defense contractors who are interested in forming a rank-and-file committee should fill out the form below.*



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**