

Boeing strike erupts at the heart of the US war machine

Jerry White
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More than 3,200 Boeing workers in Missouri and Illinois walked out Monday morning in a powerful strike against the weapons manufacturer and decades of union-backed concessions. The strike has shut down production at three factories in the St. Louis area that build critical components for American imperialism's global war machine, including F-15 warplanes and the next-generation F-47 stealth fighter.

Workers voted by a two-to-one margin on Sunday to reject Boeing's "best and final" offer, which was backed by the International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local 837. Under mounting pressure from rank-and-file workers, who had already rejected a previous IAM-backed deal on July 27, the union was forced to call the strike, the first strike at the plants since 1996.

Workers want to overturn decades of IAM concessions, including the elimination of company-paid pensions and the establishment of hated two-tier wage and pay scales. Under the deal brought back by the IAM bureaucracy, it would still take at least 12 years for new employees to make top pay. Workers also debunked the company's claims about wage increases; the 20 percent raise over four years would hardly put a dent in what they have lost due to inflation and would in any case affect only a small number of workers.

"We're calling for getting to the top of the scale faster," one striker said, "to get more vacation time faster, have more time off for our families, also, to help us increase our 401(k)s since a lot of companies will not give pensions anymore." Another added: "This is about more than 837 and Boeing. This is about achieving a quality standard of living for the entire working class."

The strike is not simply about wages or benefits, however. It is an eruption of class conflict at the heart of the US military-industrial complex. Boeing workers

are demanding an end to eroding real wages, intolerable work schedules, and exploitation from a corporation that profits from mass murder around the world.

The strike has immediate implications for US militarism. The St. Louis-area plants are being retooled for the production of the F-47, which President Donald Trump has designated as the Air Force's "next-generation air superiority fighter." The Air Force already has 98 F-15EX fighters on order, and Boeing is accelerating output for Trump's expanding war against Russia and preparations for war against China and other countries.

These factories also produce weapons for Israel, which is carrying out a genocidal assault on the population of Gaza and escalating war preparations against Iran. In November 2024, Israel's Ministry of Defense announced a \$20 billion deal for 25 new F-15s and upgrade kits for its existing fleet by Boeing.

The Trump administration and its media allies have already begun signaling intervention, framing the strike as a threat to "national defense priorities." Fox News warned that a prolonged strike could disrupt production timelines for weapons "critical to future air combat capabilities."

But Boeing workers must reject with contempt any appeal to national unity, security, or "defense." These are lies used to justify war profiteering and suppress resistance from the working class.

In reality, Boeing executives are salivating over the financial prospects of global war. On a recent earnings call, CEO Kelly Ortberg bragged that a newly passed reconciliation bill would add \$150 billion to defense spending through 2029. He also pointed to multi-billion-dollar contracts for Boeing "nuclear command and control" satellites and the planned "Golden Dome" anti-missile system as lucrative future revenue streams.

“Our portfolio is well positioned to meet the priorities of our customers and the current global threat environment,” Ortberg told investors.

Who are these customers? They are the Pentagon, the Israel Defense Forces, and other regimes buying Boeing’s weapons with public money.

To bankroll this war machine, the Trump administration—backed by the Democrats—has launched a historic campaign of social counterrevolution. Trillions are to be slashed from Medicaid, food stamps, public education, and ultimately Social Security.

The greatest obstacle to the development of the strike is not Boeing management but the IAM bureaucracy, which operates not to defend workers but as an extension of the state and corporate management. While president, Biden boasted that the AFL-CIO unions function as “America’s domestic NATO,” critical to suppressing opposition from the working class to war abroad and class war at home.

This same IAM bureaucracy sabotaged last year’s strike by 30,000 machinists in the Pacific Northwest, paving the way for thousands of layoffs. It is now working behind the scenes to isolate and starve out the current strike.

Boeing management is counting on this. “I wouldn’t worry too much about the implications of the strike,” Ortberg told Wall Street last week. “We’ll manage our way through that.”

To wage a real fight, Boeing workers must break the grip of the IAM apparatus and form independent, democratically controlled rank-and-file strike committees. These committees must outline workers’ demands—an end to tiered wages, immediate top pay, cost-of-living adjustments, expanded paid leave, full retirement—and mobilize support across the working class.

The Boeing strike is part of a growing wave of resistance across the American and international working class. Thousands of GE Aerospace workers face expiring contracts later this month. Postal workers face privatization and job cuts. Teachers from Philadelphia to Los Angeles face school closures and layoffs. Autoworkers face mass firings and unsafe conditions.

Workers in every industry are being told to sacrifice for Wall Street profits and military escalation. The answer must be a coordinated industrial and political

counteroffensive, uniting workers across sectors and borders to defend jobs, living standards, and democratic rights.

This requires organizing outside and against the corrupt union bureaucracies through the building of rank-and-file committees in every workplace, linked together through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). These committees must take up the fight not just against individual employers but against the entire capitalist system.

Mass demonstrations against the genocide and expanding wars are absolutely necessary, but they cannot stop the warmongers on their own. The Boeing strike reveals what social force is capable of shutting down the war machine and preventing a nuclear holocaust: the international working class. This includes the 300,000 workers involved directly in the production of arms and other military equipment in the US.

Instead of squandering society’s resources on destruction, the working class must fight to convert the military-industrial complex into a socially useful industry, producing housing, public transit, medical equipment, and renewable energy infrastructure.

This requires taking Boeing and all major defense contractors into public ownership under workers’ control, as part of the socialist reorganization of society on an international scale.

The class struggle at Boeing is a key front in the battle between war and socialism, between capitalist barbarism and human progress. The way forward is the path of international working class unity, political independence, and socialist revolution.



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