

# GE Aerospace workers walk out as defense industry strikes spread

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*Are you a striking GE Aerospace worker? Fill out the form at the end of this article to join the fight to build rank-and-file committees.*

More than 600 GE Aerospace workers walked out on a strike Thursday morning at the company's giant engine manufacturing plant in Evendale, Ohio and a key parts distribution center in nearby Erlanger, Kentucky. Workers at the Cincinnati area facilities are opposing the company's demands for a sharp increase in out-of-pocket healthcare costs and are fighting to recoup lost wages and benefits.

Picket lines were set up shortly after midnight. United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain was forced to announce the walkout during a livestream event with the UAW Local 647 Bargaining Committee late Wednesday night. If Fain and the UAW bureaucracy had to call the strike it was only because they knew they would not be able to push through another sellout contract on workers fed up with decades of UAW-backed givebacks.

"We're not going to take concessions, we've said that all along," Donald Luknis, who has been employed with GE Aerospace for 31 years, told WLWT5 in Cincinnati. "When they asked us for concessions, we gave it to them. When they were hurting for money, we gave it to them. We said, 'Well, when you make money, we'll square up.' But now they've reneged on everything they've ever said with us. And we're done."

While the UAW and the other unions claimed these concessions would "save" jobs, GE has eliminated more than 3,300 jobs at the Evendale facility alone over the last 30 years.

Coming on top of the month-long strike by 3,200 Boeing workers at jet fighter factories in Missouri and Illinois, the GE Aerospace walkout is a further blow to the US military-industrial complex.

About 460 workers at Evendale build marine and industrial engines for the US Navy. GE's LM2500

turbine engines are described as the "backbone of US naval turbine propulsion," powering 95 percent of the Navy and Coast Guard ships that use gas-turbine propulsion. These include destroyers, frigates, amphibious ships, fast combat support vessels, fleet oilers and others.

Workers at the plant also produce commercial aircraft engines for Boeing and Airbus.

At the Erlanger distribution center, another 165 UAW workers handle 73 percent of GE Aerospace's global parts flow. The strike could lead to supply shortages and production slowdowns of many other GE plants. Nearly two-thirds of US military aircraft are powered by GE engines, including F-15 and F-16 fighters, B-1 and B-2 bombers, and Blackhawk and Apache helicopters.

GE Aerospace is also one of the major suppliers of engines and servicing to the Israel Defense Forces.

In a statement to striking workers, Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker who ran as a socialist candidate for UAW president in 2022, said:

The strike by GE Aerospace workers in Ohio and Kentucky are taking a stand for the whole working class. Millions of workers are working longer and harder than ever but can barely afford health care, housing and other living expenses. Far from opposing the relentless attacks on the working class, Fain and the other bureaucrats who run the UAW and other unions have collaborated in the destruction of our jobs and living standards.

Walking out is only the first step. If GE Aerospace workers are not to suffer the same sellout as workers in the Big Three, Mack Trucks and other companies, you must take the conduct of this struggle into your own hands by establishing a rank-and-file committee, which will outline your non-negotiable demands and a strategy to win

them. The strike must be expanded throughout all of GE Aerospace's operations, and workers must link up with striking Boeing workers to expand the strike throughout the defense industry.

We must reject demands that we sacrifice for "national security." These lies are used to force workers to pay for the endless wars that only benefit the same oligarchs that are waging war against workers at home. We must link up the fight for our economic security with the fight against war and against the dictatorship Trump wants as part of the plan to destroy every gain the working class has achieved in over a century of struggle.

On July 1, the International Association of Machinists (IAM) and International Union of Electrical Workers-Communications Workers of America (IUE-CWA) pushed through a four-year deal covering 2,200 unionized workers at plants in Lynn, Massachusetts; Madisonville, Kentucky; Arkansas City, Kansas; and Niskayuna, New York.

On August 20, IAM Lodge 912 officials announced they had pushed through a five-year deal for 550 skilled trades workers at the Evendale plant. However, the workers are reportedly honoring the picket lines of striking UAW members. "There's a contractual obligation for IAM to sympathy strike for up to 30 days," a retired GE worker posted on Reddit. "So, it'll be all union employees at the site."

GE, like Boeing and other defense contractors, has greatly benefited from the expanding wars and massive expansion of the US military budget. Earlier this year, the company announced a \$5 billion contract with the US Air Force to build engines for F-15 and F-16 fighters and provide spare parts and services to "partner" countries. "This strategic partnership," it continues, "highlights GE Aerospace's pivotal role in supporting global military aviation readiness and underscores its commitment to delivering cutting edge technology to meet evolving defense needs."

GE Aerospace completed its spinoff from General Electric in 2024. Between 2022 and 2024, the company made \$17 billion. Last month, executives told investors they expect to make \$8.2 billion in 2025. At least \$16 billion in previous profits have been handed over to top investors through stock buybacks and other handouts.

For his part, CEO Larry Culp has been given a 985

percent raise over the last three years, pocketing \$89 million last year alone. Culp makes nearly 1,300 times the median worker wage at the company.

But this transfer of wealth has only been accelerated due to the endless concessions imposed by the UAW bureaucracy. In 2017, the UAW, IAM and IUE-CWA agreed to the elimination of company-paid pensions for workers hired after 2012, along with reductions in vacation time and other benefits.

In 2019, the UAW was barely able to ram through a contract that reduced overtime premiums, gave up Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) and sharply increased premiums on dental, vision and other healthcare coverage. In 2023, after workers voted to split off from bargaining with the other unions, the UAW accepted another concessionary contract that left them well behind record high inflation.

Far from leading a struggle against social inequality, war and dictatorship, the union apparatus is aligned with Trump's trade war policies and is offering its services to suppress opposition on the home front, so American imperialism can expand its wars for global domination.

Underscoring its role as the enforcers of Trump's dictatorial policies, last week IAM President Brian Bryant called on the president to intervene to end the Boeing strike. "I would request the president of the United States get involved in these negotiations and get this company back to the table since they are the ones who are building the military planes for his military," Bryant said.

Such an intervention would only be to crush the strike and impose the dictates of the oligarchy.

The outcome of the GE Aerospace and Boeing strikes depends entirely on the independent initiative of rank-and-file workers themselves. This means building rank-and-file committees, affiliated to the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), to transfer power from the union apparatus to the workers on the shop floor. These strikes must become the spearhead for an industrial and political counter-offensive of the working class against the whole capitalist system.



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