

Boeing strike at the crossroads: IAM officials appeal for Trump intervention while starving workers out on the picket line

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Contract negotiations for 3,200 striking Boeing machinists in St. Louis, St. Charles, Missouri and Mascoutah, Illinois between US defense contractor Boeing and the International Association of Machinists (IAM) bureaucracy have been stalled until after Labor Day, on September 5.

A clear strategy is emerging to defeat the militancy of the rank-and-file, who have been striking since August 5. With the assistance of the IAM leadership, which is providing a meager \$200 a week in strike pay, Boeing is trying to starve workers into submission.

At the same time, the aerospace giant has received the clear backing of Wall Street and the American state. Just as talks were being tabled, Boeing on Monday was able to secure a \$36.2 billion deal with Korean Air, which has been looking to update its fleet, including the purchase of 103 of the company's latest aircraft. The airline also made an engine maintenance agreement with General Electric to last for 20 years worth \$13.7 billion.

Boeing announced the deal with South Korea's flagship air carrier amid the summit between South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and US President Donald Trump. Press reports indicate the Boeing deal was one of the many discussed, with Trump using the 15 percent tariff he imposed on South Korea in July, and the threat of more, to secure other favorable trade agreements for American companies.

In other words, just as with the \$10 billion loan Boeing received last year to weather the strike of the 33,000 commercial workers in Seattle, Oregon and California, the company is again getting the financial backing of the entire ruling class.

The role of the Trump administration is all the more significant considering the growing war drive and Boeing's central role in producing war materiel. Both capitalist parties, the Democrats as well as the Republicans, are

determined to shore up the "domestic front," especially at critical defense plants such as Boeing's St. Louis facility. The ongoing strike directly threatens the administrations war plans against Iran, Venezuela and China.

Under these conditions, the International Association of Machinists has openly called for Trump to intervene in the 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," IAM President Bryan Bryant told reporters on the picket line last week. Earlier, the IAM had issued a letter to fascist senator and January 6 co-conspirator Josh Hawley to similarly "intervene."

The claim that Trump, who is threatening to flood US cities with the National Guard, might intervene on behalf of workers in order to restart military production is false to the course. What this really amounts to is a call for the Trump to intervene to forcibly shut down the strike and put workers under military discipline.

The strike exposes the rottenness of the "America First" policies embraced by the IAM and the union officials as a whole. The line is that "American" corporations and workers are bound together by a common national interest in keeping American business competitive. In reality what is called the "national interest" is the interests of American capitalism, which is waging a war on working people at home as well as abroad. Defense workers are heavily exploited building weapons of war which are being used in defense of profits, to conquer resources, markets and supply chains.

These wars are criminal catastrophes which have already cost millions of lives over the past 30 years and now threaten billions, with the ruling class now risking nuclear war with China and Russia.

This drive has been accompanied by the wholesale militarization of American society, one in which the trade unions are offering up their services in helping to establish a

war economy. Tom Boelling, IAM District 837 Directing Business Representative, recently characterized the need for a contract among the striking workers as “critical ... in our nation’s defense.” During the Pratt & Whitney strike, David Sullivan, IAM Eastern Territory General Vice President, asserted the company is a “powerhouse in military and commercial aerospace products.”

Workers may feel that the greater demand for military hardware gives them greater leverage against Boeing. But there is more involved than the basic dynamics of “supply and demand.”

War production is being resourced *at the expense* of the working class, both through the elimination of social programs, school funding, healthcare and cultural institutions which has massively accelerated under Trump, and by reducing workers in plants to virtual slave labor.

No opposition within the plants can be allowed. Workers should take the occupations of Los Angeles and Washington D.C. as dire warnings that not just cities, but also individual factories, can and will be placed under military rule if needed to ensure US military violence abroad can continue.

The centrality of Boeing’s role is also a key factor in why the White House under both Republican and Democratic administrations has shielded Boeing from criminal prosecution for its colossal safety failings, including the deaths of 346 passengers and crew on the 737 MAX 8 crashes in October 2018 and March 2019, as well as the door blowout on a 737 MAX 9 in January 2024.

Instead, the US government has essentially bailed out the corporation by awarding them the \$20 billion contract for the new F-47 fighter jet, which will be built at the St. Louis plant.

Such high level and in depth coordination to prop up Boeing by the bourgeois makes it all the more necessary for the striking workers to formulate a strategy for themselves to win their demands. The eruption of a strike at GE Aerospace in Cincinnati shows that it is possible for workers to break through the isolation imposed on them by the IAM bureaucracy.

Workers everywhere are looking for a fight, and both strikes are part of a growing wave of opposition in the working class as a whole driven by the impossible cost of living, dangerous working conditions, the full scale attacks on democratic and social rights, and now, the invasion of major cities on the orders of the fascist president.

Other struggles in the industry in 2025 include:

- A strike authorization from 2,500 marine drafters at General Dynamics in April.
- 900 UAW workers at Lockheed Martin from May 1 to June 2.
- 3,000 IAM jet engine workers and Pratt & Whitney from

May 5 to 27.

- 3,000 Unite aircraft fitters and engineers at Airbus UK, scheduled for September 2.

But for Boeing workers to unite with these sections of the working class and others, a new strategy and a new organization is required. Last year’s strike by tens of thousands of Boeing workers was a semi-rebellion against the IAM officialdom, which had presented and supported an initial contract which provided for only a 20 percent pay raise over four years.

That struggle showed, as have so many others, that opposition to company dictates can only be organized through a fight against the trade union bureaucracies, which enjoy a symbiotic relationship with management. Boeing workers have to combine their immediate economic struggle with a much broader fight against war, dictatorship and in defense of the rights of workers both at home and abroad.

This requires a new leadership, rank-and-file strike committees, democratically controlled by workers themselves.

A committee would take up key demands that workers need to win the strike. This includes: a quadrupling of strike pay, full transparency and workers’ control over negotiations, including the publication of all backdoor discussions with Trump; flying pickets across the region to appeal for support from the entire working class; and a fight against the American war machine.

This must develop into a political struggle against the capitalist profit motive itself, the source of these social ills. The oligarchs and the massive corporations must be expropriated and placed under social ownership. The defense plants must be retooled towards producing civilian hardware to improve people’s lives, not end them.



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