

Battle lines harden in US defense industry strikes at Boeing and GE Aerospace

Jerry White
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The strikes at Boeing and GE Aerospace are entering a decisive phase as defense workers in the St. Louis, Missouri, and Cincinnati, Ohio, area plants seek to overturn decades of union-backed concessions and win substantial improvements in wages, benefits and time off.

On Monday, GE Aerospace announced it had already delivered its “last, best, and final” offer to more than 620 striking UAW workers at its facilities in Evendale, Ohio and Erlanger, Kentucky. The company boasted of a so-called “record offer” that would raise wages by just 12 percent over three years, hand out paltry bonuses and add 82 jobs. This would be contingent on union leaders ending the strike and forcing workers to ratify the entire package, which would include sharp increases in already unaffordable out-of-pocket healthcare costs.

“We explained to the [UAW bargaining] committee that this was our best offer and that we did not contemplate any additional large moves,” GE Aerospace management declared. The company publicly urged workers to demand a vote before the offer expired.

It is clear UAW President Shawn Fain and the UAW Local 647 officials were compelled to call the strike on August 28 because workers would have voted down any deal they brought back that included higher healthcare costs and wages that barely keep up with inflation.

As one veteran Evendale worker told local reporters, “I’ve been here almost 15 years, and with the healthcare increases, I feel like my wages are about the same as when I started.”

By isolating the strike and forcing workers to live on \$500 a week in strike pay, the UAW bureaucracy hopes to wear down the resistance of the rank and file and ram through another sellout deal. Lowering expectations, UAW L. 647 President Brian Strunk told local media, “We would just like to sustain our healthcare where we’re at now, because it’s a high deductible plan, and our members are already struggling to take their kids to a

doctor and things like that.”

The promise of 82 new jobs is a cynical fraud. Over the last three decades, GE Aerospace—with the full complicity of the UAW and IAM bureaucracies—has eliminated more than 3,000 jobs at the Evendale facility alone. Each round of layoffs, outsourcing and wage concessions was justified by the unions as necessary to “save jobs” or “stay competitive.” The result has been the decimation of the workforce.

Meanwhile, GE Aerospace has handed \$16 billion to shareholders in just two years, while its CEO Larry Culp pocketed \$89 million in 2024 alone. Workers are determined to stop the corporate blackmail.

Boeing: “No rush to settle”—but war preparations under threat

At the same time, 3,200 Boeing workers at plants in St. Louis and St. Charles, Missouri and Mascoutah, Illinois, have been on strike since August 5. Talks were suspended until Tuesday, with Boeing openly signaling it has “no rush to settle” since the strike affects only its defense division, not its much larger and more profitable commercial aircraft business.

A report in Bloomberg noted: “Defense work doesn’t make or break Boeing’s finances like the commercial unit does. ... The last time District 837 machinists went on strike, in 1996, the walkout lasted 99 days. If the company ends up sweetening its offer, it won’t be by much.”

But this claim requires an important qualification. While Boeing has no intention of retreating on its demands for wage caps and concessions, a prolonged strike threatens to disrupt the rollout of the new F-47 fighter jet and other key military projects.

Both Boeing and GE Aerospace are linchpins of the US military-industrial complex, supplying not only the Pentagon but also the Israel Defense Forces and other US allies. The St. Louis area plants build the F-15, precision bomb kits and are preparing to build the new F-47 fighter, while GE Aerospace produces the engines for America's fighter jets, helicopters and drones, many of which are deployed in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and the Asia-Pacific theater.

The Trump administration is undoubtedly monitoring both strikes closely. The White House will not hesitate to use the full powers of the state to break these strikes if the UAW and IAM bureaucracies fail to shut them down quickly enough to protect military production and corporate profits.

In the face of this, the IAM leadership at Boeing has openly appealed to Trump to end 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 last month.

Any intervention by the fascist president, who is deploying military troops to occupy major American cities, would only be to crush the strike and impose terms that are acceptable to the corporate-financial oligarchy and military establishment.

Parading Democrats and begging Republicans: A strategy to neuter the strike

At GE Aerospace, the UAW bureaucracy has spent the last week parading one Democratic politician after another onto the picket lines—including Senator Sherrod Brown, who has made a career as a war hawk and advocate of trade war with China, and Congressman Greg Landsman, who has never opposed a single US military intervention or war budget.

Far from mobilizing the strength of the working class, the parading of Democrats at GE Aerospace and begging Republicans at Boeing reveals the real aim of the union bureaucracy: not to mobilize workers, but to neuter the strike and force workers to accept concessions in the name of the "national interest."

Workers must reject this entire framework. Both the Democrats and Republicans defend the wealth and power

of Wall Street, the arms industry and the military machine. Neither party represents the interests of workers in Evendale, St. Louis or anywhere else.

The real power of workers lies not in appeals to capitalist politicians but in the independent mobilization of the working class itself—in the factories, schools, logistics hubs and neighborhoods across the country.

Workers at Boeing and GE Aerospace face not just two corporations but the entire political establishment, the Pentagon, Wall Street and the union bureaucracies allied against them. To win, workers must:

- **Build rank-and-file strike committees to transfer power from the union bureaucracies to the workers on the shop floor.**

- **Unite the strikes at Boeing, GE Aerospace and beyond into a common struggle against corporate dictatorship and war.**

- **Demand full strike pay and open the books of the unions to expose their backroom deals with the companies and the government.**

- **Link the fight for wages and conditions to a political struggle against militarism, austerity and dictatorship.**

The military-industrial complex must be taken out of the hands of the corporate-financial oligarchy and converted to socially necessary production. Only in this way can society's resources be used to meet human needs—healthcare, education, housing—rather than to enrich CEOs and wage war abroad.

The courage shown by workers at Boeing and GE Aerospace must become the starting point for a broader movement of the working class, armed with a socialist program to end the dictatorship of profit over society.



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