

Federal mediator intervenes in bid to break Boeing defense strike, as Trump demands “quadrupling” missile production for war with China

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Talks restarted under a federal mediator Monday between Boeing management and the International Association of Machinists (IAM) to end a nearly two-month-long strike. Around 3,200 workers at Boeing defense plants in the St. Louis area have been on strike against inadequate pay increases, extended wage progression and other issues.

The involvement of the government to shut down the strike comes as the Trump administration is calling for a doubling or even quadrupling of missile production by defense contractors, in preparation for a war with China, according to a report published Monday in the *Wall Street Journal*.

The situation is urgent, not only for Boeing strikers but workers across the planet. Unless stopped by the working class, the American oligarchy through Trump is plunging into a conflict which would involve two nuclear powers and be fought in one of the most densely populated regions of the world, leading to millions of deaths, if not worse.

The Pentagon must have its missiles and fighter jets. This is why Boeing has been given a free hand to ruthlessly crush the strike, including through hiring permanent replacements.

The IAM bureaucracy would have workers believe that the mediator is a “neutral” arbitrator who will help them get a “fair” contract. In reality, the mediator is a representative of a government of fascists seeking to end democracy in America and prepare World War III. It is moving actively to crush opposition and enormously ramp up exploitation of the working class.

The other side of this is domestic repression. Trump is utilizing the expiration of the federal budget Wednesday morning to carry out massive federal layoffs and seize even more personal control over the government apparatus.

The Boeing talks also come only one day before the extraordinary meeting of all 800 generals, admirals and other top officers in the US military with Secretary of War Pete

Hegseth and Donald Trump. Over the weekend, the Trump administration announced the deployment of troops to Portland, the first of a new round of such deployments to American cities.

The real target of these deployments is the working class. Earlier this month, in a meeting with Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena, Trump asked the executive to select which cities he should send the military to next. Vena reportedly pointed to Chicago, St. Louis and Memphis, all key rail industry hubs.

According to a report in the *Wall Street Journal*, the government has emphasized in private meetings that it wants to increase production of 12 key weapon systems, including quadrupling production of the Patriot anti-air missile system. The US has already sent several Patriot systems to Ukraine, where they are being used in the proxy war against Russia. Boeing is one of the manufacturers of the Patriot system at its plant in Huntsville, Alabama.

The plants in St. Louis manufacture the F-15 air superiority fighter, the F-18 Hornet, which remains the Navy’s primary carrier-based aircraft in spite of the introduction of its replacement the F-35, high-tech drones, a next-generation trainer aircraft and will eventually produce the new F-47 stealth fighter. All of these would be critical front-line systems in a war with China which would initially be fought in the air and sea surrounding Taiwan.

Boeing’s financials were severely damaged by the scandal which erupted over management’s cover-up of safety problems in its civilian airliners, which led to two crashes and hundreds of deaths. They are being bailed out by the White House with immense sums of cash. In addition to contracts to develop the F-47, Boeing is also under contract to produce the new Air Force One.

Internationally, Boeing has benefited from Trump’s “America First” trade policies. In the last four days, the White House helped to negotiate deals with South Korea and

Turkey involving 328 civilian airliners collectively worth as much as \$58 billion. These are on top of other extensive international deals, which led the Canadian *Globe & Mail* to observe that Trump is “Boeing’s most prolific sales agent.”

The essential issue for Boeing workers is not federal “mediation” but the mobilization of the working class behind the strike. The strikers, whom the IAM has all but abandoned on the picket lines with \$200 in poverty weekly strike pay, must become part of a broader movement of the working class against the American corporate oligarchy, dictatorship and fascism.

This must be connected to the unity of workers all over the world. The catastrophic wars, fought not for “freedom” or “human rights” but for natural resources and supply chains, must end, and military production must be replaced with useful civilian products aimed at raising living standards.

This requires workers organize through a network of rank-and-file committees, independent of the Democratic Party and the corrupt union bureaucrats.

The Democratic Party, ever posturing with less and less credibility as “friends” of the working class, is in reality terrified that Trump’s actions might touch off massive social opposition. In St. Louis, they are doing their level best to help end the strike. On September 17, four Democratic congresspeople issued a letter to CEO Kelly Orberg expressing “concern” over the company’s hiring of permanent replacements, declaring “workers are essential to the success of your company, and they deserve a fair contract that reflects their hard work and sacrifices.”

Bernie Sanders, the “democratic socialist” senator from Vermont, issued a declaration of “solidarity” with workers on his X/Twitter account.

This “support” is the kiss of death. The Democrats joined Republicans in banning a national rail strike in 2022 and helped to promote a sellout national auto contract in 2023 that has led to thousands of layoffs. Their intent is to give the union bureaucracy, whom Biden last year called his “domestic NATO,” time and space to shut down the strike.

The IAM bureaucrats throughout the strike have appealed to Trump to “intervene,” which can only mean calling for the government to shut the strike down. But, dealing with a restive rank and file whose semi-rebellion against the corrupt bureaucrats forced the strike in the first place, they are doing what they can to sabotage this anger, soften workers up on the picket lines and prepare a sellout.

Two weeks ago, the union held a sham “pre-ratification” vote on a deal which did not exist because Boeing had not agreed to it. This is aimed at striking a “militant” posture while shutting down the strike the instant a new deal is reached, on the grounds that workers have “pre-ratified” it. Earlier contract votes were overwhelmingly rejected, forcing

the strike to continue.

The IAM angrily denounced a statement from Boeing calling the agreement “not real.” But management, for its own cynical reasons, stated the truth. The IAM’s real target in the statement is the anger and mistrust of the workers over the bureaucracy’s shabby maneuvering.

The Boeing strike is at a crossroads. The WSWS urges workers to take the initiative into their own hands and away from the bureaucrats by establishing a rank-and-file strike committee to prepare the expansion of the struggle. Such a committee should raise as its central demands:

\$1,000 a week in strike pay.

- **Workers’ control over picketing, including the organization of flying pickets to appeal for support across the region.**

- **The shutdown of Boeing’s entire operations, particularly measures to prevent the training of strikebreakers, and an appeal for solidarity strikes by civilian aircraft Boeing workers, who themselves struck last year only to be betrayed and sent back to work under an IAM sellout contract.**

- **Rank-and-file control over bargaining, including the livestreaming of all talks and the publication of all correspondence between the bureaucracy and the government. A rank-and-file bargaining team must ensure the fight is conducted for what workers actually need, not against them behind closed doors.**



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