

Democrats to Trump on Iran: “Win the war!”

Andre Damon
21 July 2026

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth testified alongside General Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, before the Senate Appropriations Committee on Tuesday to demand \$67 billion in emergency funding for the Iran war.

Held amid mounting casualties, the hearing revealed the deepening crisis of American imperialism in Iran, where it faces a military debacle to which the Trump administration has responded with renewed bombing and the active discussion of deploying ground troops and using nuclear weapons.

Hegseth, admitting that the cost of the war had surged to \$37.5 billion, conducted himself as a belligerent bully. “Shame on you and others who call this a quagmire and a failure!” he raged.

In the face of growing popular opposition, the Democrats made every effort to show that they are a loyal opposition, accusing the administration of incompetence in the prosecution of the interests of American imperialism.

The most significant statement came from Democratic Michigan Senator Gary Peters, who called Hegseth a “failure” and declared, “You don’t have a strategy. You don’t have a long-term plan to actually win this war. Win the war!”

Peters continued, “The men and women are going to be able to do it, but they need to have leadership. When will you show leadership?”

Under conditions of mass popular opposition to the war, which is being used by the Trump administration as a pretext to cut food stamps and other social services, the position of the Democratic Party is not “Stop the war,” but “Win the war!”

Peters personifies the Democratic Party as a party of Wall Street and the military-intelligence agencies. As a Navy Reserve lieutenant commander who served in the Persian Gulf, he spent 23 years in finance at Merrill Lynch and Paine Webber before entering politics and

reported a net worth of up to \$6.3 million at the end of 2014.

He entered the Senate in 2014 as the anointed candidate of the party establishment. Retiring Senator Carl Levin, the longtime chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Senator Debbie Stabenow endorsed him. Senator Elizabeth Warren raised money for him.

Peters has been backed throughout his career by the United Auto Workers bureaucracy. Endorsing him in 2014, the UAW praised him in its *Detroit News* column for supporting “Michigan’s working families and the auto industry.” The UAW endorsed him again in 2020.

In 2017, Peters cosponsored legislation that would have made it a federal crime to support boycotts of Israel and its settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. As Israel was carrying out the genocide in Gaza, he sponsored a bill authorizing \$30 million more for Israeli operations, and he voted to ban American funding of UNRWA, at the time when it was the principal agency coordinating humanitarian aid in Gaza.

The Democrats’ other critique was that the “war of choice” against Iran is taking up funds from their central focus: the war against nuclear-armed Russia. “We’re in a moment in history where we can win the war in Ukraine,” Democratic Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois declared. “But instead of finding the money that they need now for air defenses, we’re putting more money into this exchange with Iran, a war of choice which we never should have entered.”

Democratic Senator Chris Coons of Delaware told Hegseth that “we need to protect our troops wherever our president directs them, that we need to protect our partners and allies, and that the dangerous radical Iranian regime should never possess a nuclear weapon. I think we agree on all of these core basic points.”

Senator Patty Murray of Washington, the

committee's Democratic vice chair, despite saying she would not "rubber-stamp" Trump's request, pledged that "my Democratic colleagues and I ... will do absolutely everything to ensure that we do take care of our service members and keep this country safe."

Not one senator, Democrat or Republican, proposed cutting off funds for the war.

In more than three hours of testimony, exactly one senator asked about the administration's active discussion of a ground invasion of Iran. "The next step would be escalation by ground combat. Do you anticipate that escalation?" asked Democratic Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island. Caine refused to answer.

A July 15 report in the *Wall Street Journal* placed the seizure of Kharg Island and other Iranian territory by US troops among the options under White House discussion. Keith Kellogg, the retired lieutenant general who was Trump's Ukraine envoy, told Fox News's *America Reports* Monday that airstrikes would not end the war and that American troops should take strategic ground inside Iran.

Despite the efforts of the Democrats to solidarize themselves with the efforts of the US military to dominate the world, they could not deny the criminal character of the war being waged by the Trump administration, whose defense secretary earlier vowed "no quarter, no mercy for our enemies."

In her opening statement, Murray said that Trump "is threatening escalation and war crimes." Democratic Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon asked Caine about US attacks on water infrastructure: "You are aware that infrastructure that civilians rely on to survive is not generally considered legitimate military targets?"

These insincere qualms, however, will not stop the Democrats from funding the war.

The supplemental contains \$21 billion for fuel and the replacement of equipment used up in the war, and \$46 billion to expand the production of weapons: rocket motors, guided bombs, hypersonic missiles and counter-drone systems. It also funds far more than the Iran war: nearly \$1 billion to keep the National Guard deployed in Washington, over \$1 billion for the Army on the Southern border, \$900 million for the administration's illegal boat strikes in the Caribbean and over \$18 billion in bombs and missiles already requested through the regular budget.

The package is designed as a bridge to the

administration's \$1.5 trillion military budget for next year, a roughly 50 percent increase over this year's record \$1 trillion. The weapons production lines it opens are to be kept running by the larger budget, which Hegseth and Caine presented as a generational investment in preparing for the wars of the future.

The Trump administration is answering the crisis of its war with reckless escalation. The Democrats are answering it as a party of loyal opposition, seeking to contain the popular hatred of the war while ensuring that American imperialism achieves its aims of dominating the Middle East and the world.

Tuesday's hearing made clear that all factions of the US political establishment support the war and its aim of subjugating Iran to US domination. The fight against war can be taken forward only through the independent mobilization of the working class—in the United States, in Iran and internationally—against the capitalist system that is its source.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact