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Record US military budget prepares for “future conflict with China”

With no serious public debate or discussion, the US House of Representatives voted Thursday to spend nearly a trillion dollars on the military over the next year, funding the proxy war in Ukraine against Russia and plans for military conflict with China.

The vast majority of both Democrats and Republicans in the House voted to spend another \$858 billion on the US military, a figure \$45 billion higher than President Joe Biden had requested and 8 percent higher than last year’s budget.

The principal target of the bill is China, with congressional lawmakers publicly discussing preparations for war with the world’s most populous country in barely-veiled terms.

“This year’s NDAA [National Defense Authorization Act] takes concrete steps towards preparing for a future conflict with China by investing in American hard power, strengthening American posture in the Indo-Pacific, and supporting our allies,” Wisconsin Republican Representative Mike Gallagher said.

In a press statement, Gallagher praised the fact that the bill “Provides similar drawdown authority to arm Taiwan as we have Ukraine.”

Despite the war in Ukraine being used as the justification for the massive surge in military spending, the central focus of the bill is US preparations for military conflict with China.

For the first time in US history, the United States is directly arming Taiwan, providing \$10 billion in arms over 10 years. The direct arming of Taiwan strikes yet another major blow at the one-China policy.

Taiwan is by far the most referenced geographic area in the bill, with 438 mentions, more than Russia, with 237, and Ukraine, with 159.

The bill ends the requirement that the Pentagon provide competitive contracts for military procurement, opening the door to massive price-gouging by military contractors Raytheon, Lockheed Martin and Boeing, which are already posting record profits fueled by the bloody, US-provoked war in Ukraine.

“Whether you want to call it wartime contracting or emergency contracting, we can’t play around anymore,” a senior congressional aide told *Defense News* earlier this year.

This “wartime contracting” means that arms dealers will be free to charge taxpayers effectively whatever they want, with no serious oversight or regulation.

Even as Congress slashes funding for vital measures to save lives in the COVID-19 pandemic, including vaccines and testing, it is recklessly throwing money at the Pentagon. Every department of every service will get more money, without exception. The US Navy will get \$32 billion for new warships, including three Arleigh Burke-class destroyers and two Virginia-class submarines.



Soldiers assigned to the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division conduct convoy operations in Grafenwoehr, Germany, December 2, 2022. [Photo: US Department of Defense/Army Staff Sgt. Malcolm Cohens-Ashley]

And the Pentagon is authorized to purchase a further 36 F-35 aircraft, each costing approximately \$ 89 million, or enough to build six school buildings.

The bill continues the transformation of the US military from a force aimed primarily at subjugating and terrorizing former colonies such as Iraq and Afghanistan into one prepared to fight wars with “peer competitors” such as Russia and China.

Commenting on the planned retirement of the A-10 warthog attack aircraft, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown said in April: “The A-10 is a great platform for a

[permissive] environment, but I don't see very many [permissive] environments that we're going to roll into in the future.”

The US media has largely ignored the House passage of the largest military budget in US history, treating it as a routine event. But what coverage does exist of US military spending has been devoted to demands for its expansion.

The bill includes a major concession to fascistic forces that make up a substantial section of the US military, repealing the COVID-19 vaccine mandate for military personnel 30 days after the bill's passage.

Ahead of the House's passage of the NDAA, the US military announced a “dramatic” increase in weapons production, vowing to triple annual production of 155mm artillery shells.

“We want to be able to build our stocks not just where we started the war, but higher. We're posturing for a pretty — over a period of three years — a dramatic increase in conventional artillery ammunition production,” Doug Bush, the assistant secretary of the Army for acquisition, technology and logistics, said last week.

The passage of this bill is aimed at putting into practice a series of military strategy documents released earlier this year, which proclaimed the 2020s the “decisive decade” in the US struggle for world domination.

In June, the US-led NATO alliance pledged to prepare for “high-intensity, multi-domain warfighting against nuclear-armed peer-competitors” such as Russia and China.



US soldiers fire an M777 howitzer while deployed in Syria at Mission Support Site Conoco on December, 4, 2022. [Photo: US Department of Defense/ Army Sgt. Julio Hernandez]

In October, the US national security strategy pledged to “win the competition for the 21st century.”

Declaring that “Our strategy is rooted in our national interests,” the document pledges to “Modernize and strengthen our military so it is equipped for the era of strategic competition.”

Critically, the document declares that war abroad is a means of achieving domestic goals, stating, “[T]he United States has a tradition of transforming... foreign challenges into opportunities to spur... rejuvenation at home.”

The entire US political establishment is united behind plans for escalating its conflict with Russia and China, to be paid for through a deepening offensive against the social rights of the US population.

There is mounting opposition in the working class and youth to this policy of war and austerity.

To mobilize this opposition, this Saturday, December 10, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality is holding an online meeting, “For a mass movement of youth and students to stop the war in Ukraine!” All readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* should make plans to attend this critical rally.

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