

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

SL: Trump gives Boeing a seat in the Cabinet

### [TRUMP'S ACTING DEFENSE SECRETARY IS A HUGE GIFT TO THE DEFENSE INDUSTRY](#)

If having already needlessly thrown more money at the Pentagon to waste on weapons manufacturers wasn't enough, Donald Trump recently decided to give the defense industry a holiday bonus this year by installing one of their own as acting Defense Secretary.

Just days before Christmas, Trump appeared to discover that his Defense Secretary's resignation letter six days prior was actually a complete repudiation of his worldview. So the president cut Jim Mattis's planned transition time by two months and said Deputy Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan would take over as acting Pentagon chief on January 1.

The person pulling the strings of the military-industrial complex -- if there was such a person -- couldn't have drawn it up any better, as for much of his life, Shanahan has worked as an executive at Boeing, one of the largest recipients of Pentagon contracts.

According to [the Atlantic](#), Shanahan "has less experience in government (a year and a half) or the military (none) than [any defense secretary](#) since an [oil magnate](#) served as the acting head of the Pentagon for several weeks during [Watergate](#) 45 years ago." Aside from his inexperience, the New Yorker [reported](#) that Shanahan's "lack of hardened foreign-policy views [has] endeared him to those at the White House," suggesting that he's unlikely to push back on some of Trump's worst impulses.

But any decision involving Trump wouldn't be complete without a giant [whiff of corruption](#). Indeed, Shanahan's "ascent is just the latest manifestation of the growing influence the world's largest aerospace company has in Trump's Pentagon," an article in Foreign Policy [noted](#). Indeed, Boeing has not only won three multibillion dollar DOD contracts in the last six months, but also Pentagon leaders are forcing the Air Force to buy a plane it doesn't want, Boeing's F-15X.

And while Shanahan -- who also happens to be a big proponent of "Space Force" -- had promised to recuse himself of any matters involving Boeing, Bloomberg [reported](#) that the

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decision to buy the F-15X came “with some prodding” from, you guessed it, Deputy Secretary of Defense Pat Shanahan.

(Check out the Project on Government Oversight’s [database](#) on the revolving door of senior Pentagon officials and military officers going to work for DOD contractors.)

## THE UPCOMING PENTAGON BUDGET BATTLE

Trump’s decision to feed the swamp with Shanahan’s promotion comes on the heels of the Pentagon budget “[circus](#)” that started with Trump calling for DOD to reduce its topline request from \$733 billion to \$700 billion, only to up it a few weeks later to \$750 billion. Either way, the reality is that even the lower figure of \$700 is ridiculously high and unnecessary, especially considering:

1. In real terms, a \$700 billion Pentagon budget [would](#) “**still be higher than at the height of the [Reagan buildup and at the peak of U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan](#), when America had over 200,000 troops deployed in those theaters.**”
2. **At \$700 billion, the U.S. would outspend at least the next seven nations combined**, five of which are our allies. What’s more, our largest strategic competitors, China and Russia, spend a combined ten times less on defense than the U.S.
3. Reducing the Pentagon budget would **force it to finally reckon with the massive amount of waste, fraud, and abuse**. Bureaucratic waste totaling [\\$125 billion](#), a [failed audit](#), and [accounting errors](#) amounting to mismanagement of hundreds of millions of dollars are just a few examples.
4. A recent congressionally-mandated report that called for massive increases in the Pentagon budget was **largely written by the defense industry** and, [according](#) to the Project on Government Oversight, “conveniently inflated the threat posed by peer adversaries -- [which] of course, helps justify the most lucrative defense contracts.”
5. **Throwing more money at the Pentagon is essentially a big corporate giveaway**. Nearly half of the DOD’s budget gets [funneled to the top brass](#) of the biggest defense corporations. What’s more, military spending is the worst way to create jobs. A 2017 [study](#) found that “domestic spending outpaces military spending in job creation by 21 percent (for wind energy development) to 178 percent (for elementary and secondary education).”

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6. Nearly [two-thirds](#) of Americans believe the U.S. does not need to spend more money on defense.

## PROGRESSIVE PRIORITIES

Thankfully, incoming House Armed Services Committee chair Rep. Adam Smith has promised more oversight of the [increasingly expanding military operations worldwide](#) and has said that the Pentagon's budget should be closer to the \$600 billion [range](#). It's also worth noting that the 2011 [Budget Control Act](#), which capped discretionary spending for 10 years, would set the Pentagon's budget at \$575 billion for fiscal year 2020 -- \$175 *billion* less than is now reportedly being proposed.

At the same time, it's not hard to imagine that bold progressive ideas like College for All and the Green New Deal can be paid for simply by shifting budgeting priorities. After all, the Pentagon [received](#) "a whopping [\\$165 billion](#) in additional funds over the past two budget cycles," which would [easily cover](#) public college tuition and fees for those families making less than \$125,000 per year. And what if we'd spent [\\$6 trillion](#) on a clean energy economy as opposed to nearly two decades on war after 9/11?

For more on how the new Congress can rein in Trump's reckless foreign policy, see [our debrief from November 9](#).

## **BURIED LEDES**

Regional forces in Afghanistan overseen by the CIA are largely [operating without constraints](#) of battlefield rules or the law of war, which "some Afghan and American officials say is **undermining the wider American effort to strengthen Afghan institutions.**"

The [neoconservatives](#) who were largely responsible for getting us into the war in Iraq **are making a come back, with some assistance from progressives.**

Netflix's [decision](#) to acquiesce to Saudi pressure and pull Hasan Minhaj's scathing comedic critique of Mohammad bin Salman "**smacks of giving priority to money over the immorality of murder.**"

The staff at the Weekly Standard were a "**warm, fun and convivial group**"? [Really?](#)

"Since when do American citizens have to **pledge to act in the interest of a foreign power in order to do business with their own government?**" [Good question.](#)

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Reminder that **China is putting up to a million Chinese Muslims in “re-education camps”** [where they](#) “are forced to listen to ideological lectures, sing hymns praising the Chinese Communist Party and write ‘self-criticism’ essays.”

And finally, NBC Meet the Press host Chuck Todd was recently [lambasted](#) for hosting a climate change denier, and to his credit, his show this week was [entirely dedicated to the issue](#). **“We’re not going to give time to climate deniers,”** Todd said. “The science is settled even if political opinion is not.” Way to go Chuck.