

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

### POWER IS GROWING TO REIN IN WASTEFUL PENTAGON SPENDING

It's rare for Congress to seriously scrutinize proposals to increase the Pentagon's budget. Most often in the post-9/11 era, throwing more money at this federal agency that has no idea how it spends its money gets a few howls here and there, but the authorization usually just ends up being foregone conclusion.

But with progressives now wielding actual power in one Congressional chamber, that's beginning to change. Those not paying attention to the budget fights should review what happened this week when House Democratic leadership was forced to pull its budget caps proposal from consideration on the floor, in large part because of the gargantuan amount of Pentagon spending contained therein.

When confronted with yet another proposal that favored higher spending for the Pentagon over human needs, House progressives -- with the help of grassroots activists (both on the [left and right](#)) -- said that enough was enough.

President Trump's budget this year proposed a whopping \$750 billion for the Pentagon, a record sum, and was reported as a "negotiating tactic" to get as much spending as possible. In fact, Trump's House Republican allies [had urged](#) a \$733 billion Pentagon topline at the end of last year. Failing to provide a true counter-offer, and despite the fact that the new Democratic Chairman of the Armed Services Committee [said](#) "the defense budget can live with less," the budget plan House Democratic leadership laid out earlier this month essentially capitulated to Trump's request and the Republican party's demands.

House progressives then started to make some noise.

"I plan to vote no on the budget caps bill because our spending priorities should reflect our values," [said](#) Rep. Ilhan Omar. "It is not moral that we continue to spend more money on a wasteful Pentagon budget than we do on priorities like education, health care, and housing combined."

Progressive grassroots activists piled on. In a [joint statement](#) one day after Rep. Omar's comment, CREDO Action, Indivisible, MoveOn, and Win Without War called on House Democrats to re-work their proposal. The solution to countering Trump's immoral budget, they

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



wrote, “cannot and must not be to put even more money into an already bloated and wasteful budget for the Pentagon.”

And this isn’t just standard liberal pabulum. Consider these facts:

- **Waste, fraud, and abuse is rampant.** The Pentagon [cannot account for how much it spends](#) or where it spends it. For example, in addition to weapons systems [cost overruns](#), a few years ago, a (purposely hidden) internal investigation found that the Pentagon wasted [\\$125 billion](#) in administrative costs.
- **The Pentagon can’t even spend all the money it’s given.** The GAO recently found that between fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2018, DOD returned [\\$80 billion](#) -- EIGHTY BILLION! -- in unused funds. (Despite this, Congress has added over \$100 billion to the budget since then.)
- **Pentagon spending is a corporate giveaway.** The defense industry receives tens of billions of dollars every year in taxpayer money. More than [\\$100 million](#) of that is diverted to CEO compensation alone, with tens of millions more going to lobbyists and revolving door industry “experts” to [write reports](#) about how the Pentagon needs more money.

House Democrats got the message. “Amid pressure from liberal activists,” one report [noted](#) on Monday, leadership said they were weighing last-minute changes to the budget bill “to appease those who say the Pentagon is getting too much.” And after Reps. Mark Pocan and Pramila Jayapal -- chairs of the Congressional Progressive Caucus -- [said](#) that “they were ready to deploy the full weight of their 90-member group to reject the legislation, which they said favors the Pentagon over domestic programs,” House leadership [acquiesced](#).

“We are pleased that leadership has decided to postpone floor consideration of a budget caps agreement until we can address some of the persistent and deep-seated concerns of progressives,” Pocan and Jayapal said in a [statement](#) on behalf of the CPC. “The outcome today allows us to develop a stronger proposal that fulfills our promise to invest in communities and families.”

**This is a big victory.** Congressional leadership was forced to listen and make tactical and strategic adjustments because progressives in Congress and the country’s largest grassroots activist groups spoke with one voice in making calls to rein in wasteful and needless Pentagon spending. And as opportunities to place limits on the Pentagon budget [turn](#) to the appropriations process, progressive activists have indicated that the fight has just begun.

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



“Now that the public and the progressive movement has spoken,” CREDO Action, Indivisible, MoveOn, and Win Without War said in a follow-up [joint statement](#) responding to news that the budget bill was pulled. “We urge Democratic leadership to come up with a new plan based on the realities that are facing our country, and that prioritizes human needs over an already-bloated Pentagon budget.”

## **BURIED LEDES**

**Tired of hearing that progressives have no foreign policy?** Our own policy director, Kate Kizer, offers [a definitive proposal](#) for how progressive values can be put into action in her new CNAS piece on U.S. grand strategy.

As part of its campaign to bring us [closer to war with Iran](#), **the Trump administration this week designated Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps as a terror group**, a move experts ([including the U.S. security establishment](#)) called “[a bad idea](#),” “[pointless and dangerous](#),” and an “[unprecedented escalatory move](#)” that will make the lives of those campaigning for reform inside Iran “[a lot harder](#).”

And [should we be surprised](#) that **Trump once had no issues in doing business with IRGC associates?**

Meanwhile, the State Department’s point person on Iran wrote an op-ed this week that one observer neatly [summarized](#): “Claiming to want normal relations with another state while **demanding that their government capitulate to yours under threat of punishment is not credible.**”

**Secretary of State Mike Pompeo joined the Trump administration’s Iran bashing week** by [peddling bogus claims](#) that Iran is in cahoots with al Qaeda, while “refus[ing] to rule out whether the 2001 congressional authorization for war in Afghanistan could be used to justify war with Iran.”

**What’s happens next on U.S. policy in Yemen?** Whether or not Trump vetoes the war powers resolution passed last week, Congress must move to end all U.S. support, and move onto [ending other endless wars](#) around the world.

[Fox News](#) is joining [Republicans](#) in **inciting violence against Rep. Ilhan Omar.**

The U.S. barred Omar Barghouti, a prominent Palestinian activist and co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, from entering the country this week despite holding valid travel documents. “**It is clear this arbitrary political decision is motivated by this**

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



**administration's effort to silence Palestinian voices,"** [said](#) James Zogby, the president of the Arab American Institute.

**Trump's transgender ban goes into effect today**, which the Palm Center [described](#) as “a perfect parallel to the failed ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy, also sold as not being a ban although designed to systemically push gay people out of military service — or at least keep them silent and invisible.”

Five retired [top military officers](#) who oversaw U.S. operations in Central America **condemned Trump's decision to cut off aid to Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador.**

“Now, [more than ever](#), we must be engaging with Russia on the issue of nuclear weapons to prevent catastrophe.”

[So much for transparency](#): “**It has been more than 300 days** since the last time a defense official held its last televised news conference from the Pentagon.”

Samantha Bee this week [explored](#) **the cruelty of Trump's Muslim ban.**

And finally, take a moment and [check out this](#) **Sudanese woman leading chants during an anti-government protest in Khartoum that contributed to the ouster of Omar Bashir this week.** The Arab Spring seems to be alive and well after all.