

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

DATE: 07/17/2020

SL: Are MoCs listening to popular demands to reform security?

The Takeaway:

- The movement organized for progressive foreign policy. Now in this unique national moment, elected progressive leaders have a chance to get themselves and their colleagues on the record.
- Votes are expected next week on the Pentagon budget, the U.S. war in Afghanistan, and police militarization, among other issues.
- These votes are an opportunity to start a fundamental reimagining of security, and lay the groundwork for a major budget fight next year.

Progressives in Congress Envision Foreign Policy Change. Will their Colleagues Listen?

Over the last several weeks, the progressive movement has come together several times to demand that foreign policy leaders in the Democratic Party commit to a set of principles and policies that better align with a progressive [vision](#) for foreign policy, one that acts to uplift and reinforce all peoples' desire for dignity, prosperity and self-determination. Those calls have culminated in a flurry of media coverage, including in the the [Washington Post](#) and [New York Times](#), on the changes our movement wants. From VP Biden's policy and personnel choices in his transition team and potential administration, to House Democratic leadership's selection of the next Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, demands for reformational change to how we conduct foreign policy are [gaining traction](#).

Now, on the heels of these broad movement calls comes an opportunity next week for congressional progressives to demand change directly from their colleagues as the House and Senate consider key amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2021.

On Tap: Pentagon Spending, War in Afghanistan, Police Militarization, and More...

In a rare occurrence, this year the NDAA will reach the House and Senate floor at roughly the same time, with amendment action taking place early next week. The two chambers are expected to vote on two nearly identical amendments, on topline Pentagon spending levels and police militarization, and dozens more in each chamber. While we've seen versions of all of these amendments come up over the last 5 to 10 years, these votes are taking place in a new

WIN WITHOUT WAR



context — deepening economic concerns amidst the coronavirus pandemic and widespread domestic protest against police violence and white supremacy. Now, the progressive foreign policy movement is more organized than ever and the country more awake than ever to how the false distinction between domestic and foreign policy makes us less safe.

Here's a look at some of the key votes next week, the members of Congress leading, and the organizing behind them:

Cutting the Pentagon Budget by 10 Percent (votes expected in the House and Senate)

- *Sponsors:* In the [House](#) and [Senate](#), Reps. Pocan and Lee, and Senators Sanders, Markey, and Warren are making a big push for an amendment reducing the Pentagon budget and redirecting the savings toward underfunded communities. (For procedural reasons 🤪, the House amendment cuts the budget but does not have a mechanism to transfer the money; nonetheless, the amendments' sponsors support moving the money to these purposes.)
- *What's behind this:* The global pandemic and popular uprisings against systemic racism have made clear how misprioritized our security spending is today.
- *Organizing efforts:* Win Without War is [publicly tracking](#) Members' positions. Over 60 orgs have sent a [letter](#) of support to Congress, and labor union AFGE has now [endorsed](#) the House amendment. Public Citizen [hosted](#) a Facebook Live with Reps. Mark Pocan and Pramila Jayapal. Over 21,000 Win Without War activists have weighed in with the Senate already!

Withdrawing U.S. Troops From Afghanistan (vote expected in the House)

- *Sponsors:* Rep. Ilhan Omar, Jim McGovern, Ayanna Pressley, joined by many of their colleagues, have offered an amendment to strip a controversial [provision](#) added in the House Armed Services Committee markup that would block the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan below a certain threshold. Their amendment would instead require an end to the U.S. military deployment by April 2021 – in line with the U.S.-Taliban violence reduction deal in February – and voices strong support for U.S. diplomacy toward an inclusive peace process. The amendment also makes clear that any continued or new deployment must be authorized by Congress.
- *What's behind this:* After 19 years, it is past time to end the U.S. war in Afghanistan and bring the troops home. Ending the military occupation doesn't mean ending the U.S. diplomatic and development role in building sustainable peace, however. In fact, our continued military occupation undermines that goal.
- *Organizing efforts:* Win Without War is [campaigning](#) on this amendment this year, and of course, decades of activism is behind the effort to end the U.S. war in Afghanistan. In 2013, Reps. Jim McGovern and Adam Smith led a nearly identical amendment that [passed](#) 305-121 with overwhelming bipartisan support, including from the current Ranking Member, Mac Thornberry.

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Demilitarizing the Police (votes expected in the House and Senate)

- *Sponsors:* For years, Rep. Hank [Johnson](#) has been pushing to change the 1033 program, which provides surplus military-grade equipment to police forces around the country for free or at highly discounted rates. A parallel effort is being led in the Senate by Sens. Brian [Schatz](#), Kamala Harris, Lisa Murkowski, and Rand Paul.
- *What's behind this:* The 1033 program further militarizes the policing of predominantly Black, Indigenous, people of color, and poor communities. Weapons of war don't belong in our communities (and they don't belong anywhere!).
- *Organizing efforts:* Over 90 organizations have expressed [support](#) in a letter to Congress for the ending or curtailing the 1033 program. [RingTheAlarm](#) and [POGO](#) have video explainers, and multiple organizations are campaigning on the amendments.

When to watch the action

- **Timing in the House:** The Rules Committee meets Friday at 11am to consider over 750 amendments submitted and a rule making amendments in order is expected Friday afternoon or evening. Floor Action begins Monday morning and the bill is expected to wrap up by Tuesday end of day.
- **Timing in the Senate:** We expect amendment action to start on Tuesday, but as always, timing in the Senate is subject to change. There have also been 730 amendments filed in the Senate. Only a fraction will be voted on in both chambers.

A foundation from which to build

While the context for these votes is unique to this moment, the reality is that since Democrats took back the House in the 2018 midterms, we have seen the popularity of progressive foreign policy grow. In 2019 and 2020, there were bipartisan victories to stop war and promote peace — from ending U.S. military support for the war in Yemen and stopping Trump's march to war with Iran to halting arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE and repealing the the 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF). While these victories were cut short by a White House veto or stifled in the Senate, they represent a turning tide on foreign policy that has not been seen in recent years.

Now, for the *second* time this Congress, this week, the House Appropriations Committee has [adopted](#) Congresswoman Barbara Lee's [amendment](#) to repeal the 2001 AUMF within 240 days of the amendment's enactment — the nearly two decades-old law that she presciently [warned](#) would be a blank check for endless war. Lee has been working to repeal the 2001 AUMF for decades and her once lonely position has now become a mainstream Democratic foreign policy position. Congresswoman Lee also scored wins in the markup on amendments to immediately repeal the 2002 AUMF and require congressional authorization for war with Iran.

Reminaging security spending and policy

WIN WITHOUT WAR



In fiscal year 2022, budget caps put in place by the Budget Control Act of 2011 will end, meaning that the country will have the opportunity to fundamentally reform U.S. security spending for the first time in nearly a decade. That's why next week's amendment votes, especially the Pentagon budget cut, are an important test of where Congressional Democrats come down. The hope is they recognize the fundamental reality that it won't do us any good if we have a massive military, but a country built on systemic inequality further devastated by the coronavirus and its long-term consequences. This moment is a chance for progressives to get their colleagues on the record to lay the groundwork for those larger fights ahead.

BURIED LEDES

In recent weeks, U.S. policymakers have likened the coronavirus outbreak to 9/11, as if the pandemic was unexpected. Ann Neumann [highlights](#) that **this belief normalizes not only the pandemic, but also the inequalities worsened by the crisis.**

Trump dismissed public outrage over police killings, [saying](#) that “more white people” are killed by police than Black people – making it clear that he doesn't understand basic [math](#).

With tensions rapidly rising in Hong Kong in the wake of China's new security law, **the *New York Times* [relocated](#) part of its local office to Seoul.**

Russian scientists have [announced](#) the successful initial test of a coronavirus vaccine, claiming that the drug has been proven safe and volunteers have developed an immune response.

A terrific question: “[Is capitalist globalization biologically sustainable?](#)”

Within 24 hours **after a statue of BLM protester Jen Reid went up in Bristol to replace infamous slave trader Edward Colston, the city had it taken down.** City officials [claim](#) that the statue was placed there without permission.

Previously **radical demands to [defund the police](#) continue to gain momentum across the United States**, as does organizers' deserved credit for their bold reimagining of security in the face of extreme inequality and hardship.

[Airstrikes](#) by the Saudi-led coalition killed at least seven children in the al-Jawf province of Yemen, the third such incident since June. The House [may vote](#) on an NDAA amendment banning sales of U.S. bombs to the coalition next week – stay tuned.

WIN WITHOUT WAR



The UN Security Council has been granted access to the rapidly decaying oil tanker FSO Safer by Houthi Rebels off the coast of Yemen, but negotiations on the sale of the oil are still in dispute. The UN has [stated](#) that if the tanker is not stabilized soon, the resulting oil spill could devastate the already war-ravaged Yemeni coast for decades to come.

And finally, reaching the breaking point because of lockdown? In a campaign led by its tourist board, Iceland [set up](#) a website where participants can record their screams and have it played in some of the most remote and picturesque places in the country. Add your yell here: <https://lookslkeyouneediceland.com/>.