

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

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SL: \$1 Billion is the Tip of the Iceberg

### **The Takeaway:**

- This week, we learned that the Pentagon misused \$1 billion allocated for facemasks and COVID-19 test swabs, spending it instead on jet engine parts and dress uniforms. This scandal demands an investigation, *now*.
- The Pentagon's gross misuse of funds is horrendous – but it's hardly surprising. For years, Congress has funnelled eye-popping sums into the Pentagon's unaccountable coffers, lining the pockets of military contractors at the expense of everyday people.
- Pouring money into the Pentagon can't keep us safe. We need to end the influence of the war industry, slash the Pentagon budget, and reinvest in human needs.

## **The Pentagon Misused \$1 Billion Meant For COVID-19.** **The Real Scandal Runs Much Deeper.**

This week, the *Washington Post* [revealed](#) that the Pentagon had misused \$1 billion in emergency funds intended to help combat the COVID-19 crisis, spending it instead on items like jet engine parts and surveillance technology. This is a horrific scandal. It's also just the tip of the iceberg.

### **Facemasks vs. Fighter Jets**

Under the Phase Three COVID-19 response legislation known as the CARES Act, the Pentagon was allocated over \$10 billion dollars in emergency funding. Of that, \$1 billion was specifically appropriated for the purchase of goods that would help combat the COVID-19 crisis, including facemasks, testing swabs, and other critical medical equipment. But the Pentagon had other plans. Driven, no doubt, by the powerful influence of the for-profit arms industry, the Pentagon turned around and spent that \$1 billion on fighter jets, drones, and dress uniforms, often with corporations that had already benefited from the federal Paycheck Protection Program.

### **The Scandal Sparks Outrage**

When news of the scandal broke, the nation was rightfully enraged. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) called out the corruption immediately: "Instead of addressing the urgent needs of a pandemic that has killed over 200,000 Americans, the Trump administration is using money

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meant to protect lives from COVID-19 to pad the pockets of defense contractors.” Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-VT) called the news “pathetic”: “While Trump believes we can't afford to extend \$600 a week to 30 million unemployed workers, he had no problem giving a \$688 million bailout to defense contractors like Rolls-Royce.” Sen. Blumenthal (D-CT), Reps. Jayapal (D-WA) and Smith (D-WA), and more, [spoke out](#). And [Reps. Pocan \(D-WI\) and Lee \(D-CA\)](#), and, separately, [Sen. Warren \(D-MA\) and Rep. Khanna \(D-CA\)](#) have called for an investigation. Meanwhile, the story [caught](#) fire in both [traditional](#) and [social](#) media, and even made it onto a [segment](#) of the Daily Show with Trevor Noah. For a country that has endured so much suffering as a result of the mismanagement of this pandemic, this news of wasted funds was nothing short of outrageous.

## **It's Time to Hold the Pentagon Accountable**

We need to take action to ensure that an abuse like this never happens again. That's why Win Without War, the Project On Government Oversight, the National Taxpayers Union, and 37 other organizations joined forces to demand an investigation into the scandal. In a [joint letter](#) to the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, we [called](#) to investigate when, how, and why the Pentagon decided to contravene the intent of the funding, and to share the findings with the public. Win Without War, and over 15,000 activists, have also [called on](#) Congress to rescind the misused \$1 billion from the Pentagon's budget.

## **73 Years. 0 Successful Audits.**

Scandalous as this all is, it's also nothing new. Time after time, the Pentagon has proven utterly unaccountable in its profligate spending. In its entire existence, the Pentagon has never once been able to pass an [audit](#) — the last attempt [found](#) its records “riddled with so many bookkeeping deficiencies, irregularities, and errors that a reliable audit was simply impossible.” While ordinary people are forced to jump through grueling, [costly](#), and often humiliating hoops to prove themselves worthy of government provision of basic needs, the Pentagon has been repeatedly handed trillions of dollars with virtually zero oversight or repercussion for misuse.

## **The Tip of the Iceberg**

The real scandal, though, is not just that the Pentagon misused its funds, nor even that it spends without accountability. The real scandal is that — as people across the world struggle, suffer, and die at the hands of a combined health, climate, and economic crisis — the Pentagon would have that much to spend at all. Before the crisis hit, the Pentagon already had an obscene \$740 billion budget. While the CARES Act gave most people a paltry, one-time payment of \$1,200, the Pentagon received \$10.4 billion more. Of that, only \$1 billion was marked for making equipment to combat COVID-19 — a job that could easily have been done by another agency — at all. While Win Without War and our allies [fought back](#), demanding that not another dime of COVID-19 relief funds go to the Pentagon, the war industry, never satisfied, continues to [lobby](#) for more.

## **People Over Pentagon**

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Even if every last one of these dollars was spent as intended, it would still be a grave injustice. From pandemics, to climate change, to inequality, the true threats to our safety can't be solved by funneling more into the Pentagon's overstuffed coffers. And yet, Congress continues to do so so that a few powerful CEOs can get larger bonus checks, money is funnelled into congressional districts and states, and military contractors continue to contribute to their campaigns. This scandal should be a wake-up call: not merely to the misuse of Pentagon funds, but to the scandalous inhumanity, corruption, and immorality of the entire Pentagon budget. It's time to put our priorities back in order. It's time to put people over the Pentagon.

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## **Black Lives Matter. Justice for Breonna Taylor.**

The failure to hold Breonna Taylor's murderers accountable is a horrific reminder that our "justice" system values property over Black lives. We must see this for what it is: a white police officer who shot a Black woman will only be tried for the bullets that [missed](#).

Win Without War [joins in solidarity](#) with the protesters demanding accountability, justice, and the defunding of police departments across the country. You can help Black, Indigenous, and other activists of color who are organizing in Louisville by donating to [Louisville Mutual Aid](#) and the [Louisville Community Bail Fund](#).

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## **BURIED LEDES**

The White House is getting creative when it comes to defending white supremacy in the United States: **Mike Pompeo insinuated, with absolutely zero evidence, that anti-racist protests like those in Kenosha are, in fact, [instigated by China](#) to foment unrest.**

In more China-baiting news, **Trump continues to blame the deaths of 200,000 people in the U.S. on anyone but himself – this week, he [demanded](#) the UN hold China accountable for the COVID-19 outbreak.** He claims that the U.S. will usher in a post-pandemic era of cooperation...

...even though **the administration has [refused](#) to participate in the international coronavirus vaccine allocation plan.** Why? Because the World Health Organization is involved.

While U.S. policymakers claim to be protectors of human rights around the world, they **continue to sell weapons to some of the world's worst human rights abusers. A [new bill](#) seeks to change that**, showing that Democrats are willing to take on what was once a marginal progressive fight.

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The administration continued talks of removing Sudan from the state sponsors of terror list, under the [condition](#) that Sudan normalize relations with Israel, proving once again how deeply U.S. foreign policy is beholden to the right-wing Israeli government.

New U.S. sanctions on Syria are [hurting innocent civilians](#) seeking medical care. It's time to reject the idea that broad-based sanctions are a humane alternative to violence.

With the Bolivian election right around the corner, some Democrats are [fighting to avoid a repeat of 2019](#), when an antidemocratic coup installed a racist, anti-Indigenous politician at the head of the country with, at the least, tacit U.S. support.

The administration is embarrassing itself on the global stage. Shortly before the UN General Assembly, **human rights experts expressed concerns over Sec. Pompeo's [belief](#) that there could be "too many human rights"...**

which seems fitting for an administration that is [working to deport a formerly-incarcerated individual](#) who fought wildfires while imprisoned.

And finally, we may be a couple days late, but **it's never a bad time to celebrate our favorite holiday: [September 21](#).**