

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

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SL: In Favor? 25. Opposed? 1.

### The Takeaway:

- Last week, the Senate Armed Services Committee — including every Democrat but one — voted to increase the Pentagon budget by an astonishing \$37 billion.
- You read that right. In the middle of a pandemic, as the climate crisis rages, as we try to wind down our endless wars, with a Democratically-controlled Congress, we're voting to *give a lot more money to the war machine*.
- It's a profound moral failure, but it's not a done deal yet. As the budget process moves forward, we still have a chance to hold those responsible accountable, and to fight for a budget that puts people before the Pentagon.

## Raising the Pentagon Budget While the World Burns

Blumenthal. Duckworth. Gillibrand. Hirono. Kaine. Kelly. King. Manchin. Peters. Reed. Rosen. Shaheen. Late last week, every single Democrat on the Senate Arms Services Committee (SASC) — with the sole exception of Senator Elizabeth Warren — [voted](#) for a Republican amendment (unanimously supported by committee Republicans) to the fiscal year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to put arms dealer greed before our national security, and add \$37 billion to the already egregious three-quarters of a trillion dollar Pentagon budget.

### Human Needs vs. Arms Dealer Greed

If you're reading this newsletter, we don't have to tell you why that's such a profound moral failure. We don't have to tell you that those \$37 billion will be used to line the pockets of arms dealers, to fuel endless war, and to sustain an unsustainable global empire. We don't have to tell you that that money would be [better spent](#) providing for our communities, building a green economy, or combating the pandemic. We don't have to tell you that a vote for a Pentagon budget increase is a vote to prioritize [Raytheon's profits](#) over the safety and security of everyday people. You already know all of this — because you're part of the [majority](#) of the U.S. public that wants to see the Pentagon budget *cut*, not raised. And yet, out-of-touch SASC lawmakers chose to defy the will, and wellbeing, of the people and raise it anyway.

**With Democrats Like These...**

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



This decision was immoral. But it was also, quite frankly, just absurd. This Pentagon budget bump comes after a year and a half of deadly disease, economic insecurity, and climate disaster. It comes right at the time that we're [winding down](#) our endless war in Afghanistan, and fighting to "[Build Back Better](#)." It comes in what may be a small window where Democrats control the presidency *and* both houses of Congress. In fact, it comes just about one year after three of these very committee members — Blumenthal, Gillibrand, and Hirono — as well as Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, [voted to decrease the Pentagon budget by 10%](#). This, of all times, should be the perfect moment to finally fix our broken budget priorities. But SASC Democrats did the opposite, taking President Biden's proposed \$25 billion Pentagon budget bump and, for no discernible reason but deference to the war machine, upping the ante. And, as Roll Call's John Donnelly [reports](#), they "had decided [to do so] long before" the vote in committee. That means, in all likelihood, with the sign-off of Majority Leader Schumer. With [Democrats like these](#), who needs Republicans?

## **The Fight Ahead**

SASC has left those of us who want to see substantial reductions to the Pentagon budget topline in a difficult bargaining position. But the fight's not over yet. The Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) must still pass on the Senate floor (where, admittedly, the topline is unlikely to change.) Meanwhile, on September 1, the House Armed Services Committee will mark up its own version of the bill. Here, it may be possible to hold the line. If we can prevent the HASC Democrats from following the bad example of their SASC colleagues, there is a chance that a lower topline budget will make it through a House vote, and, ultimately, prevent a full \$37 billion increase when the House and Senate reconcile their bills in conference. [This process](#) could take months to complete — and while the NDAA's topline number is an important and influential marker, it is only part of the story. Where the rubber meets the road is whether the same spending increase makes its way into the annual national defense-related appropriations bills, and there are still pressure levers to pull yet. We have a long fight ahead, but it's a fight we're committed to seeing through.

## **Credit Where It's Due...**

One thing that will sustain us in that fight is the knowledge that not every SASC member rolled over — when every one of her colleagues voted to support the Pentagon giveaway, Senator Warren alone did not. [Click here to tweet a "thank you" to Senator Warren](#), and show the rest of Congress how appreciative we are of those who choose peace.

## **...Accountability Where It's Not**

At the same time that we thank those who chose what's right, we must also hold accountable those who chose wrong — not just out of a sense of justice, but to demonstrate to HASC, and all of Congress, what happens to those who vote to put arms dealer profits over human needs. If your Senator falls into that category — Blumenthal, Duckworth, Gillibrand, Hirono, Kaine,

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Kelly, King, Manchin, Peters, Reed, Rosen, or Shaheen — [click here](#) to demand answers. Then, stay tuned in the coming months, as we mobilize to up the pressure.

SASC's decision to increase the Pentagon budget was both immoral and absurd. But by working together, in the long fight ahead, we can make sure that these committee lawmakers' choice stops there. It's time to fix our broken budget priorities. It's time to finally put #PeopleOverPentagon.

## **BURIED LEDES**

Biden is right to want to promote democracy over authoritarianism. **But for the fight for democracy to be effective, our Policy Director Kate Kizer [writes](#), we must start by looking in the mirror.**

**From the looks of it, President Biden is making good on his campaign promise to “end the forever wars.” But, [writes](#) Kate, looks can be deceiving.** (Kate's on a roll this week.)

🎉 A massive victory for reproductive justice! For the first time in decades, **the House [passed](#) the annual foreign assistance bill *without the Helms amendment***, which blocks U.S. funding abroad for health services related to abortions.

That same **foreign assistance bill [includes](#) a provision that would unlock almost a trillion dollars in much needed funds for the Global South as well as a [first time contribution](#) to the Green Climate Fund.** Patriarchal abortion restrictions out, lifesaving financing in? I'd say that's a pretty good deal.

**Drone whistleblower Daniel Hale was [sentenced](#) to 45 months in prison this week:** “I am here because I stole something that was never mine to take — precious human life,” Hale said at the sentencing. “Please, your honor, forgive me for taking papers instead of human lives.”

When you demonize an entire nation as an existential threat to all that we hold dear, you are going to stoke racism. Pure and simple. **Preventing a Cold War with China isn't just the right foreign policy, [it's key](#) to addressing anti-Asian racism at home.**

**Imprisoned without charge, tortured, and disappeared: this is the harrowing tale of Salem Almuzaini's [treatment](#) at the hands of the Saudi government** — the same government that the United States aids, arms, and treats as one of its closest allies. (CW: Graphic violence).

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



Speaking of repressive governments that the United States outrageously arms: Congress appears to finally be stepping up and [blocking](#) **arms sales to the government of Nigeria over human rights concerns...**

... and just this week, **Rep. Ilhan Omar** [introduced](#) **new legislation to help stop the flow of arms to human rights abusers** for good. The. Tides. Are. Turning.

And finally, **that's a** [good dog](#). That's a very good dog.