

Biden's Budget Cements Turn Towards War, Police

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On Monday, President Joe Biden unveiled his 2023 budget, calling for dramatically increased funding for war and the police while allocating all-too-little funding for social services. Out of the total \$1.58 trillion of spending outlined in the budget, \$813 billion is allocated to the military while \$769 billion is allocated for non-military spending. This is a \$31 billion increase in funding for the war machine.

There is nothing “defensive” about this spending. The United States has over 1,000 open and secret military bases across the globe. Despite labeling China and Russia the main threats to U.S. “security,” the United States spends close to three times as much on its armed forces than China and Russia combined. In fact, the United States accounts for nearly half of all military spending worldwide.

This threatens to set off a dangerous arms race around the globe. Other nations cannot allow the United States to increase its military spending without a reaction. The working class of the United States would be better served by a policy of peace based on cooperation and respect for the right of nations to self-determination.

Domestically, Biden's budget promises major increases for the repressive agencies of the government. Federal law enforcement will see an 11% increase in funding to \$17.4 billion. The brutal and unaccountable police forces unleashed against the anti-racist protest movement in 2020 will feel emboldened to commit greater repression against social justice movements. Funding for Customs and Border Protection (border patrol) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement will rise to \$15.3 and \$8.1 billion respectively. This represents a massive slap in the face to voters who supported Biden out of opposition to Trump's racist anti-immigrant policies. Both capitalist parties are united behind an anti-immigrant agenda.

The pro-war, anti-working class budget represents a total retreat from the social spending proposals outlined in Biden's 2021 “Build Back Better” plan. Pressure from Republicans and

right-wing members of Biden’s own party caused the crucial social spending bill to crash and burn late last year. Biden, unwilling to continue (or really even begin) the fight, has abandoned the Build Back Better plan by choosing to not include the proposals in his budget recommendation.

The vast majority of Biden’s climate change proposals, included in the Build Back Better plan, will be left to gather dust. There is no way that \$48.2 billion for the Department of Energy and \$11.9 billion for the Environmental Protection Agency will make a substantial impact in the struggle against climate change. These numbers make a mockery of the scale of the crisis facing humanity and illustrate clearly how the capitalist system’s logic of quarterly profit above all else threatens billions of people with catastrophe.

The budget plan is essentially a political statement of the Biden administration’s priorities going into the midterm elections in November. It is not legally binding and will be modified by Congress – if history is any guide in the direction of even more funding for the cops and the Pentagon. But with the midterm election in mind, Biden has included a proposal to impose a 20 percent minimum tax rate on the ultra-rich. Of course, it is obscene that billionaires pay little to nothing in taxes, and any policy to address this should be welcomed. But how effective enforcement of this tax would be if it is in fact enacted remains an open question. And at 20 percent, the policy would still leave many workers paying a bigger portion of their income in taxes than billionaires.

The tax proposal aside, Biden’s budget overall represents a hard tack to the right. Ironically, the Republicans may stand the most to gain since bowing to the pressure of the war-hawks, racists, and fossil fuel industry will not strengthen the Democrats’ prospect of electoral victory – a lesson they consistently refuse to learn. Biden’s disgusting concessions to the right wing need to be met by an alternative vision of peace, climate justice, and working class power.

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