

Democrats back Trump's massive "World War III" military budget

By Andre Damon
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For the third year in a row, the Democrats are voting for a massive increase in military spending, to put at the disposal of the fascistic Trump administration money it can use, not just to launch wars, but also to create a police state in America.

Senate Democrats voted overwhelmingly Thursday to approve the largest Pentagon budget ever, rejecting calls to stop President Trump from building "usable" nuclear weapons and retaliate for his misappropriation of Pentagon funds to carry out the crackdown on the border.

The biggest military budget ever

Under Trump, the US military budget has gone from \$619 billion in 2016 to \$700 billion in 2018, \$716 billion in 2019 and the \$750 billion passed Thursday by the Senate.

Defense spending now accounts for nearly 60 percent of the government budget, with everything from education, roads and bridges to scientific research and space exploration squeezed into the remaining two-fifths.

If the Senate version of the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act passes in the House of Representatives, Congress will have granted Trump a total annual increase in the military budget of \$131 billion, a figure more than twice as large as Russia's \$61 billion annual military budget. The Democratic-controlled House, for its part, is proposing a military budget of "only" \$733 billion—another US record.

In Thursday's vote, 36 Democrats joined 49 Republicans to pass the largest military budget in American history. Only five Democrats voted against the bill, while six others, including Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, were too busy running for president

to vote one way or another on a bill granting massive war-making powers to the fascistic president.

War with China

The bill squarely targets China, placing sanctions on Chinese banks that do business with North Korea, while prohibiting federal funds from being used to purchase products from the world's largest maker of passenger rail cars, the China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation.

In one of its most draconian restrictions, the bill places limits on the availability of visas to Chinese students and academics, treating them, in language reminiscent of the internment of the Japanese in World War II, as potential spies.

War with Iran

The day after they voted to pass the budget, Senate Democrats staged a farcical vote on a separate amendment, doomed from the start, to require Trump to obtain congressional approval before attacking Iran. Predictably, the vote failed. Commenting on the defeat of the amendment, the *New York Times* wrote curtly, "Mr. Trump has said he has the power to launch a military strike against Iran without Congress's permission, and in effect, the Senate agreed."

No limits on nuclear weapons and Guantanamo Bay

The Senate bill rejected all provisions in the House version that would place even the most token limits on the development of "low-yield" nuclear weapons, in effect giving Trump the go-ahead for his quest to develop "usable" nuclear bombs and missiles. The Senate version also rejected calls to ban new detainees from being placed in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Rubber-stamping Trump's border crackdown

In perhaps the most significant measure stealthily included in the deal, the Senate voted to “back-fill” the \$3.6 billion Trump misappropriated from the Pentagon budget to build his border wall by proclaiming a state of emergency and bypassing congressional opposition.

With this measure, the Senate Democrats effectively endorsed the greatest violation by Trump of the US Constitution to date: using the Pentagon budget in his role as “commander in chief” to short circuit Congress’s power of the purse. These are grounds for not only immediate impeachment, but also criminal indictment for conspiracy to subvert the Constitution.

Democrats back Trump

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jim Inhofe, a Republican, made clear that the bill is aimed squarely at China, declaring, “The National Defense Strategy gave it to us straight” with its emphasis on “strategic competition with China and Russia.”

The top Democrat on the committee, Senator Jack Reed, agreed. “This is a very good bill,” he said. “It contains many needed authorities, funding authorizations and reforms that will help the men and women of our armed services.”

“The right place to be is ‘yes,’ said Democratic Representative Elissa Slotkin, a former CIA analyst who sits on the House Armed Services Committee. ‘Yes,’ an increase, ‘yes,’ a pay raise, ‘yes,’ a significant Defense Department budget.”

In last week’s debates, the 20 Democrats running for president spoke broken Spanish and pulled long faces to condemn Trump’s treatment of refugee children, grandstanded about Trump’s “erratic” threats against Iran, and demanded an expansion of government social programs, including “Medicare for all.”

But actions speak louder than words. For all their denunciations of Trump as a sexual pervert, Russia spy, or both, the Democrats function as though they were in a coalition government with the American Mussolini, rubber-stamping his illegal wars, green-lighting his attacks on democracy and funding his concentration camps.