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Joint Chiefs Chairman: Record military budget “prepares us to fight” China

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin told a House subcommittee that the Biden administration’s record military budget request was directed primarily against China.

Testifying before the House Appropriations Committee subcommittee on defense last Thursday, Austin said, “This is a strategy-driven budget and one driven by the seriousness of our strategic competition with the People’s Republic of China.”

The central target of the US military, Milley declared, was China. “The People’s Republic of China remains our number one long term geostrategic security challenge, the so-called pacing threat in our strategy ... The PRC intends to be the regional hegemon in the western Pacific and Asia within the next 10 years, and exceed the United States’ overall military capability by 2049.”



Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. Mark Milley speaks during a briefing with Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin at the Pentagon in Washington, Wednesday, March 15, 2023. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)

Opening the hearing, subcommittee chairman Ken Calvert declared, “We must be ready to fight tonight and rapidly modernized to maintain the world’s greatest fighting force.”

Milley continued:

There are 10,330 units in the United States military: 4,680 of them are active duty.

Sixty percent of our active-duty force is at the highest stage of readiness right now and could deploy to combat in less than 30 days, and 10 percent to deploy to combat in less than 96 hours.

This military is ready. We are prepared to fight now, and we will continue to be prepared to fight in the future.

In order to maintain this “readiness,” Miley and Austin explained, the Biden administration has proposed the largest US military budget in history, with record-setting increases in every part of the US military. Austin summed up the staggering level of US military rearmament:

This budget also makes the department’s largest-ever investments in both [research and development] and procurement, requesting more than \$61 billion to sustain our air dominance. And that includes funding for fighters and the extraordinary B21 strategic bomber... We’re also seeking more than \$48 billion in sea power, including new construction of nine battle force ships.

And we’re boosting capacity at America’s shipyards to build the ships that our strategy demands. And we’re investing a total of \$1.2 billion in the submarine industrial base.

And we’re buying two Virginia-class attack submarines and one Columbia-class ballistic missile submarine.

On land, we’re investing in air and missile defense. And we’re investing in defenses to counter unmanned aerial vehicles.

We’re also requesting \$11 billion to deliver the mix of long-range fires that our security demands, including major investments in hypersonics. We will also continue to modernize all three legs of our nuclear triad and bolster our strategic deterrence. And we put forward the largest space budget in Pentagon history.

This gargantuan military budget, standing at \$886 billion (\$842 billion for the Pentagon, and the remainder for military-related programs in other departments), is to be further augmented by emergency supplemental appropriations for the war in Ukraine. This was

\$114 billion last year and is likely to be even higher this year, putting the actual war budget at over \$1 trillion.

The nominal reason for the massive growth in military spending in the United States, and the implementation of wartime procurement and no-bid contracts, is Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It was striking, however, that while Ukraine was the pretext for massive military rearmament worldwide, the hearing mentioned China 48 times, nearly twice as often as it mentioned Russia.



The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in formation during Rim of the Pacific exercises July 28, 2022. [Photo: Canadian Armed Forces photo by Cpl. Djalma Vuong-De Ramos]

Even as they made clear the US is preparing for war with China, the two military leaders argued that US intentions were peaceful, because they merely sought to impose Washington's will through the threat of violence, and would only resort to violence if threats did not work.

“Preparation for war and deterrence is extraordinarily expensive, but it's not as expensive as fighting a war,” Milley said. “This budget prevents war and prepares us to fight it if necessary.”

This argument, repeated over and over by the advocates of US military rearmament, asserts that the more money the United States spends on brandishing weapons at those it seeks to compel to do its bidding through threats, the less likely the actual use of those weapons will be.

It was the argument made by Erich Raeder, the grand admiral of the German Navy at the Nuremberg tribunal, who claimed that Nazi Germany's military buildup was peaceful because Germany preferred to achieve its aims through threats instead of war.

The Nuremberg Ruling concluded that Raeder's arguments merely amount to "the belief that Germany's position would be so good, and Germany's armed might so overwhelming, that the territory desired could be obtained without fighting for it."

Raeder's argument was rejected, and he was sentenced to life in prison. Key to Raeder's conviction was the court's documentation of the fact that Raeder not only prepared the military buildup, but was actively involved in planning Germany's wars of aggression.

The aims of the United States, too, are aggressive. Milley's own words make clear that the United States seeks to offset its economic decline through military violence.

Milley continued by arguing that historians would look back at this century and ask, "what was the relationship between United States and China? Did it end up in a war or not?"

He added, "What we see in China ... the greatest growth and wealth of any country ... This is an enormous growth in wealth and an enormous shift in power globally."

He continued, "It is incumbent upon us to make sure that we remain number one at all times."

In other words, the United States is seeking to use its military might to preclude the emergence of any economic power that could rival the global dominance of the United States.

Even as it massively expands its military, the US is constantly moving forward its timetable for a conflict with China.

Last weekend, Republican members of Congress carried out a war game, led by a retired US general, envisioning a war with China by 2025.

In January, Air Force Gen. Michael Minihan told his command that he expects the US to be at war with China by 2025. "My gut tells me we will fight in 2025," he said. He urged airmen under his command to get their "personal affairs" in order in preparation for war.

At the same time, the US is doing everything possible to bring such a war about.

On March 11, US Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines stated that Biden's assertion that the US would go to war with China over Taiwan was not just the president's personal opinion, but actual US policy.

Last week, the US House of Representatives passed the Taiwan Assurance Implementation Act, which formally tasks the State Department to "identify opportunities

to lift any remaining self-imposed limitations on U.S.-Taiwan engagement and articulate a plan to do so.”

This bill is a major milestone in ending the one-China policy. It is accompanied by a massive US military buildup on Taiwan, including a significant increase in the number of US military forces stationed there.

However horrific the bloodbath in Ukraine provoked by the United States, the conflict with China that the United States is actively preparing would lead to death and destruction on a far greater scale.

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