

Austin, Texas: Protesters challenge war profiteers' summit

written by John Parker
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SLL photo: Rasika Ruwanpathirana

Sept. 21 - We gathered last night, coming from Baltimore, Los Angeles, and Denver, at the hotel in Austin, Texas - 12 minutes away from the Austin Convention Center where the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) was holding its "Future Forces" conference.

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SLL photo: Maggie Vascassenno

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The NDIA gathered merchants of death like Lockheed, General Dynamic, Raytheon, and other weapons manufacturers salivating over the prospect of billions more additional dollars to add to the \$70 billion already promised for war in Ukraine.

Ukrainian officials and military officers, including President Volodymyr Zelensky himself, were scheduled to attend this conference – some in person, some virtually – to push for more weapons to be manufactured to make up for those already being used to target the Russian, Lugansk, and Donetsk militaries and to target civilians, especially in the Donbass region.

However, as could be seen on the faces of Ukrainian military officers entering and exiting the conference, the last thing they expected to see were activists chanting: “Hey hey, ho ho, war profiteers have got to go!” and “Biden, Biden, can’t you see – we don’t want a World War III.”

Many of the activists from the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, Dallas Anti-War Committee, Socialist Unity Party, Austin Students for a Democratic Society, and other unaffiliated activists were also surprised at the overwhelmingly positive reception this protest received from residents and those working near the Austin Convention Center.

Paul Tardie, who decided to come over after seeing the protest from across the street, said, “Thanks for doing this!” He said that he was frustrated by the one-sided reporting on what he knew was a U.S. proxy war against Russia.

Nicole Rogers and Jacob Rogers from Round Rock drove 20 miles in traffic to get to the demonstration. They had very unique signs reading “Draft beer, not people” and “War money, blood money,” with its own comic strip within the sign explaining how the military-industrial complex profits off of war.

Nicole led chants highlighting the need for peace and not death from the bombs being sold during this convention. A veteran who was walking by and wanted to know more about our protest spoke to her and walked away saying he was with us.



SLL photo: Sharon Black

Two members of the Dallas Anti-War Committee joined the protest with their banner, leading the picket line and chants. Members Dan and Cassandra drove three and a half hours to get to the protest.

Baltimore community activists drove 24 hours to get to the protest. That East Coast city is another area victimized by infrastructure neglect, which recently manifested in the presence of E. coli in its drinking water.

Said Sharon Black of the Baltimore Peoples Power Assembly: "We need money for food, housing and infrastructure to rebuild our cities. We need to be fighting for abortion rights and trans rights, not for U.S./NATO proxy wars. Biden needs to stop the Starbucks and Amazon union busters, not spend billions on war."

What we found out today is that there are a lot of people who now remain quiet, due to the perceived backlash for challenging the lies from the Pentagon and the corporate media about the U.S. war on Russia. They remain quiet because they have a different view.

From the conversations we had with some of them today, we learned that many more than we realized do understand what is really going on – from the Nazi infiltration of the military and government of Ukraine to the war’s billions of dollars in profits for the military-industrial complex.

More importantly, we discovered that when we mobilize and make our rejection of these lies and this war visible through protest – people will find their voices and join us.

Video

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