

**IF THE BOMBS  
FEEL FAR AWAY  
PRESS YOUR EAR  
TO THE GROUND**



**The whole earth  
cries for  
justice**

**Hey A-B Tech: Drop  
Pratt & Whitney! Cut  
Ties With Genocide!**



RONY BOUTHER

A-B Tech has been an essential partner to aerospace manufacturer Pratt & Whitney (P&W) ever since the multibillion dollar company decided to locate its new production facility in Asheville.

In November 2022, P&W opened a 1.2 million square foot factory in South Asheville, where it builds jet engine components called turbine airfoils. P&W promised the plant would create 800 new jobs, and A-B Tech jumped at the opportunity to serve as P&W's institutional partner for recruiting and training people to fill these positions.

Over the past two years, the college has worked side by side with P&W to develop a customized “fast-track” training program for the company's new employees. According to a recent A-B Tech newsletter, the partnership has been successful, with classes for future P&W workers accounting for “more than 50 percent of the overall growth” in the Customized Training program this year. And by signing on with P&W, the college got access to a mountain of grant funds, including \$10 million to build a state-of-the-art training center next to P&W's plant.

Sounds like a big win for everyone, right?

## **What's Not to Love? Occupation and Genocide.**

Pratt & Whitney loves talking about the jobs it will create, its competitive starting pay, and what a win this project is for Asheville's regional economy.

**What the company *doesn't* talk about is the fact that what it makes kills people.**

P&W builds engines for planes that drop bombs on civilians across the world—including in Gaza, where the Israeli military has killed more than 32,000 people and wounded 75,000 more in just six months.

- Sharing concerns with immediate supervisors, department heads, and/or senior college leadership
- Refusing to teach or support P&W's customized training classes

### **- As a P&W employee:**

- Taking P&W's free training, then quitting to take those valuable skills elsewhere
- Talking to your co-workers about P&W's role in powering genocide, and collectively organizing to refuse servicing contracts for the Israeli military
- Intentionally slowing down and/or sabotaging production

## **Further Learning & Action**

- **Boycott, Divest, Sanction Movement:** <https://bdsmovement.net/>
- **Video:** [https://www.democracynow.org/appearances/noura\\_erakat](https://www.democracynow.org/appearances/noura_erakat)
- **Article:** <https://jewishcurrents.org/israel-policy-starvation-gaza-aid>
- **Syllabus:** <https://al-shabaka.org/policy-focus/grounding-the-current-moment-an-al-shabaka-syllabus/>
- **Article:** <https://truthout.org/articles/what-preceded-this-bloodshed-in-gaza-was-not-peace-it-was-apartheid/>
- **Solidarity Statement from the Movement for Black Lives:**

<https://m4bl.org/statements/movement-for-black-lives-statement-on-us-backed-occupation-of-palestine/>

## “Building a Better Tomorrow for Everyone”

*“Innovation and collaboration are at the heart of everything Pratt & Whitney does, with the primary goal of building a better tomorrow for everyone.”*  
– P&W job posting announcement<sup>7</sup>

P&W claims to be “building a better tomorrow for everyone,” but the only thing it builds is suffering.

The good news is that P&W can’t do this alone. It needs the support of institutional partners like A-B Tech, local politicians, and its employees to deliver weapons to Israel. Many of us have felt powerless over the last six months, wondering how we can disrupt, in even a small way, the destruction of Gaza. Confronting an atrocity so vast can feel paralyzing—but now is a time to act, not to freeze.

And we don’t have to go very far to confront this madness: just down the road, really. Maybe a small part of it is even taking place in our classroom or workplace. We can start where we are, with the people we know. Here are just some of the ways this could look:

- **As a community member:**
  - Learning more about the struggle for Palestinian liberation, and sharing what you learn with your loved ones (see below for suggested readings and other resources)
  - Seeking jobs with employers who don’t profit from war
- **As an A-B Tech student**, organizing to demand the college drop its partnership with P&W
- **As an A-B Tech faculty/staff member:**
  - Talking with coworkers about how A-B Tech’s partnership with P&W runs counter to the college’s mission and negatively impacts its institutional reputation

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<sup>7</sup>“Launch an exciting career in the aerospace industry,” WLOS, October 13, 2023 (<https://wlos.com/>)

Harrowing acts of unimaginable cruelty toward the 2.3 million people living in Gaza have been unfolding daily since October of last year. In January, the International Court of Justice ruled that claims of genocide in Gaza were plausible based on extensive evidence, and in late March the United Nations Security Council finally passed a ceasefire resolution.

There is no denying that Israel and its allies are carrying out genocide in Gaza, yet the bombs continue to fall.

And P&W’s factory in Asheville helps power this genocide. Parts for the F-15, F-16, and F-35 fighter jets are now made right here in our own backyard. In its recruitment materials, P&W invites potential workers to “launch an exciting career in the aerospace industry” and promises “a workplace centered around social responsibility.” But job postings and corporate info sessions hide the truth from future workers. There is no way to be “socially responsible” while powering genocide.

## A-B Tech & P&W: Partners in Crime

The relentless bombardment and siege of Gaza would not be possible without billions of dollars of U.S. “military aid” to Israel, which mainly goes toward purchasing weapons made by U.S. companies like P&W.

Last year, Israel used its military aid budget to purchase twenty-five new F-35 fighter jets, equipped with P&W engines. The company has been vocal about the key role Asheville’s plant will play in delivering those planes for Israel, plus hundreds more orders for other military customers.

When the local plant reached operational capacity, P&W president Shane Eddy said,

“Pratt & Whitney’s new Asheville facility is a cornerstone of our industrial transformation and a key investment that will support growing demand for GTF engine-powered aircraft and for the F135 engine.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Pratt & Whitney Press Release, November 16, 2022 (<https://www.prattwhitney.com/en/newsroom/>)

We can see exactly what “growing demand” looks like: bombs dropped on hospitals and schools, entire families wiped out in an instant, and civilian targets obliterated without a second thought. More journalists were killed in the first ten weeks of the assault on Gaza than have ever been killed in a single country over an entire year, and many human rights observers have reported that the physical destruction and loss of human life in Gaza is the most extreme they’ve ever seen.

But where the world sees genocide, P&W only sees dollar signs.

## Right to Work, Right to Kill

How is it possible that, six months into this mass slaughter, the college has not dropped or even questioned its partnership with P&W?

The answer is that magical incantation: jobs, jobs, jobs. A-B Tech sees its role as preparing the workforce of tomorrow, and P&W is hiring.

As Kevin Kimrey, Director of Economic and Workforce Development at A-B Tech, gushed to WLOS last August, “A-B Tech has been in step with Pratt & Whitney, even going back to before the announcement of expansion into Buncombe County. [A-B Tech] is excited to partner with a world-class manufacturer like Pratt & Whitney to help provide a trained workforce in the high-tech aerospace industry.”<sup>2</sup>

But isn’t A-B Tech’s institutional mission at odds with enabling war crimes? The college’s slogan “Respect, Integrity, Support, and Equity” rings hollow as it sticks by P&W’s side. Being a “job-creator” doesn’t give *any* company a free pass to arm a state enacting genocide.

Of course, P&W is all about getting stuff for free. In fact, it only agreed to locate its new facility here in return for a handout of \$100 million in public (taxpayer) money.<sup>3</sup> The company routinely boasts about how this new facility is part of its “war on cost,” which it fights by “[investing] in

strategic initiatives—such as the new turbine airfoil facility in Asheville, North Carolina—to reduce cost wherever possible.”<sup>4</sup>

P&W’s *real* cost savings come from setting up shop in a state with low wages and few labor rights. As a “Right to Work” state, North Carolina is notoriously boss-friendly. The right-wing state government ensures that employers can pay low wages, provide minimal workplace protections, and avoid pesky collective bargaining. In fact, a recent Oxfam report ranked North Carolina as *the worst state to be a worker*.<sup>5</sup>

Here’s what one employee at P&W’s Asheville plant had to say on a message board:

“The air quality is terrible, we are belittled by ‘shirts of a different color’ and the wages aren’t enough to live [on].”<sup>6</sup>

So make no mistake: P&W isn’t here because it values us; it’s here because it can *undervalue* us. What P&W loves about Asheville is its low wages, hostile attitude toward unions, and lack of redress for workers who get injured or face discrimination on the job.

This is why P&W thinks that our community will ignore the fact that its business model is based on state-sponsored terror. It’s hoping that people are desperate enough to overlook mass murder for \$20 an hour (which as anyone who lives in Asheville knows, barely pays the bills).

And it seems that A-B Tech is hoping the same thing. But now that the Israeli government has advanced from operating an apartheid regime to wholesale ethnic cleansing, will A-B Tech reconsider partnership with P&W? Or will it continue to provide direct, material support to a company that is actively powering a genocide?

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<sup>4</sup>Pratt & Whitney press release, March 6, 2023 (<https://www.prmwswire.com/news-releases/>)

<sup>5</sup><https://www.wavy.com/news/north-carolina/north-carolina-is-worst-in-nation-for-workers-new-report-says/>

<sup>6</sup>Pratt & Whitney meeting its commitments in Asheville? (<https://avtwatchdog.org>)

<sup>2</sup>“Fueling futures: Find your career in aerospace with no-cost training course,” WLOS, August 29, 2023

<sup>3</sup>Pratt & Whitney meeting its commitments in Asheville? (<https://avtwatchdog.org>)