

Is a US attack on Iran imminent?

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In recent weeks there has been a series of press reports as well as statements by military experts that strongly indicate that either the Obama administration or the Israeli government, or both, may be moving toward an attack on Iran.

Some of the press reports have been so detailed and provocative that it is difficult to determine whether they are describing actual plans for military action or whether they are “merely” intended to ratchet up pressure on the clerical regime in Tehran. Even if the United States and Israel are primarily engaged at this point in a war of nerves, the political and military logic of their actions leads inexorably to war.

Yesterday the *World Socialist Web Site* reported on the Brookings Institution’s simulated war games in which Iran was the target (see: “Washington ratchets up war threats against Iran”). Teams of US officials—“playing” the US, Israel, Iran, and other regional powers—tried to determine the outcome of an Israeli attack on Iran’s nuclear plants. The war game tried to present the conflict as initially remaining limited to exchanges of targeted strikes between Israel and Iran.

US policymakers let it be known, however, that they envisaged ultimately mounting a massive assault on Iran. The war game was halted a week into the war—which, by then, had spread to Iranian or pro-Iranian groups in Lebanon, Israel, the Occupied Territories, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Persian Gulf—with the US preparing strikes to annihilate large sections of the Iranian military.

This was the most prominent of a series of provocative announcements against Iran in the US press. Last week saw reports that the US was stocking

bunker-busting bombs at airfields on Diego Garcia, to destroy Iran’s suspected nuclear facilities, and reports of Israeli plans to drop nuclear bombs on these same facilities.

There is an obvious connection between the intensification of preparations for military action and the apparent failure of the US-backed “Green Revolution” to gain the political momentum and social support necessary to topple the Tehran government.

The Green Revolution movement, which never developed support outside a limited middle-class base, became ever weaker in the final months of 2009. At the same time, Washington increased its pressure on Iran in negotiations over its nuclear program, calling for sanctions to be agreed upon by the UN Security Council. In December 2009 the *New York Times* carried an article, describing the rising power of broadly pro-Ahmadinejad factions of the Iranian military, titled “Hard-Line Rise Alters View of Iranian Nuclear Program.”

It is significant that the current press accounts of preparations for war emerged after the acknowledgment by top US personnel that the Green Revolution was a failure. Contradicting months of US-media propaganda, Richard Haass, president of the US Council on Foreign Relations, told CNN on February 14 that the US had no facts to back up claims by Green Revolution spokesmen that its candidate, Mir Hossein Mousavi, had won last June’s election. Asked about a US poll showing a 57 percent Ahmadinejad vote versus 27 percent for Mousavi immediately before the elections, Haass replied, “I don’t know if the opposition is 25 percent, 50 percent, or more.”

For the time being, Washington’s Green Revolution

proxies have been marginalized. The United States has reacted to this setback by leaking information to the press that suggests that a military operation is in the works.

One of the purposes of these threatening reports may well be to goad Tehran into some sort of defensive action that might be portrayed by the US government and the media as a hostile military act. This would provide the US with a *casus belli* that would be invoked to justify an attack on Iran. Another possibility is that the US (and Israel) expects that the escalation of pressure on Iran will produce new fractures within Tehran's political elite. In one way or another, Washington is determined to restore the political and economic control over Iran that it enjoyed before the 1979 Revolution, back in the heady days when the Shah functioned as the CIA's principal agent in Tehran.

The Iranian crisis illustrates the fundamental continuity of US imperialist policy, against claims that Obama would pursue policies fundamentally different from those of Bush. In fact, in a sinister throwback to Bush's campaign of lies on Iraq's alleged "weapons of mass destruction," US officials are escalating threats even though they admit they have no "solid clues" suggesting the existence of an Iranian nuclear weapon.

A US and/or Israeli attack on Iran would be a monstrous act of imperialist criminality. Countless thousands of Iranians would be killed in the first hours of a war. Moreover, a war against Iran would have incalculable international repercussions, and would bring the entire world closer to the day of a global nuclear conflagration.

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