

US/Britain prepare for war against Iran

Peter Symonds
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Articles in the British-based *Guardian* and *Telegraph* newspapers on Wednesday have lifted the lid on military preparations by the US and Britain for an attack on Iran that go well beyond routine contingency planning.

The leaks pointing to a dangerous new military adventure take place amid a debate within the Israeli inner cabinet and media over whether to unilaterally launch air strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities.

Officials and ministers in all three countries have denied the reports, but have repeated the longstanding threat that “all options remain on the table”. However, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is due to release a new assessment of Iran’s nuclear programs, described to the *Guardian* by an unnamed Western official as “a game-changer”, that could well provide the pretext for war. Iran has consistently denied it has any plans to build nuclear weapons.

The *Guardian* reported: “The [British] Ministry of Defence believes the US may decide to fast-forward plans for targeted missile strikes at some key Iranian facilities. British officials say that if Washington presses ahead it will seek, and receive, UK military help for any mission, despite some deep reservations within the coalition government.” In anticipation, “British military planners are examining where best to deploy Royal Navy ships and submarines equipped with Tomahawk cruise missiles over the coming months.”

An article in the *Telegraph* confirmed that Ministry of Defence (MoD) had signalled the need to act quickly based on claims that Iran was shifting key uranium enrichment technology to a facility near Qom buried deep underground. MoD planners told the newspaper

there was a “shortening window of opportunity” as a result. “You have got to get there early enough—once they dig into the ground, it gets much more difficult,” one source declared.

Unnamed British sources told the *Guardian* that US President Obama did not want “to embark on a new and provocative military venture before next November’s presidential election. But they warned the calculations could change because of mounting anxiety over intelligence gathered by Western agencies.” One Whitehall official commented: “President Obama has a big decision to make in the coming months because he won’t want anything just before the election.”

Israel could prompt Obama to plunge into a new war by launching its own strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities, or threatening to do so. Last Friday, prominent Israeli journalist Nahum Barnea, writing in *Yediot Aharonot*, reported that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Ehud Barak were pressing the inner cabinet and security chiefs to agree to attack Iran. The claim provoked a furious response from inner cabinet member Benny Begin, who denounced the media debate as “utterly irresponsible” as it “severely impeded the government’s ability to make decisions” on the issue.

The Israeli government has already made advanced preparations for an attack on Iran. The *Ha’aretz* newspaper reported on Tuesday that the Israeli foreign ministry had begun a diplomatic campaign in mid-September stressing to allies that there was not much time left to end the Iranian nuclear program through diplomatic pressure and sanctions. On the military front, Israeli warplanes last week conducted a long-range exercise—of the type required to reach Iran—using a NATO airbase on the Italian island of Sardinia. On

Wednesday, Israel test-fired a long-range ballistic missile that also has the potential to strike Iran.

Those who claim that Israel and its American and European backers would not risk an attack on Iran and potentially calamitous consequences ignore the fact that their intelligence agencies have already been engaged in activities that are tantamount to acts of war. It is widely acknowledged that Israel, with the likely assistance of the US, was behind the cyber war operation using the Stuxnet computer virus to sabotage Iran's enrichment facilities, as well as the assassination of several Iranian nuclear scientists over the past year.

More fundamentally, the preparations for war against Iran are no more being driven by concerns over its nuclear program than the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were motivated by "terrorism" or "weapons of mass destruction", or the NATO bombing of Libya was to protect the Libyan people. The US has recklessly plunged into one war after another over the past decade in a desperate bid to offset its economic decline by securing its hegemony over the energy-rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia.

The neo-colonial invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have both turned into disasters, which, as American commentators have repeatedly noted, have only enhanced the standing of Iran in the region by removing two hostile regimes. Having failed to secure a status of forces agreement with Baghdad, the US position will be further weakened when it removes its remaining troops from Iraq by the end of the year. The prospects are no better in Afghanistan as the US and its allies prepare to wind back combat forces by 2014.

Far from acting as a restraint, the worsening global economic crisis is impelling US imperialism to use its military might to shore up its economic and strategic interests at the expense of its main European and Asian rivals. That is the twisted logic behind targeting Tehran, which is regarded in Washington as a major obstacle to US ambitions in the Middle East and the main reason for its failures in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, as in the case of Libya, a US-led war on Tehran would seriously undermine the substantial economic interests of China and Russia in Iran, as well

as their efforts to forge closer strategic ties.

The Obama administration is also being driven by the deepening economic crisis and rising class tensions at home that have been exposed by the eruption of the anti-Wall Street protest movement. Despite the widespread popular opposition to militarism and war that has developed over the past decade, the American financial aristocracy is quite willing to take another irresponsible gamble to shore up its interests in the Middle East and as a means of diverting attention from the social devastation produced by its austerity agenda.

The latest reports in the British press constitute the sharpest warning to the American and international working class. As global capitalism lurches from one economic and political crisis to the next, rivalry between the major powers for markets, resources and strategic advantage is plunging humanity towards a catastrophic conflict that would devastate the planet. The only social force capable of ending the danger of world war is the international working class through a unified struggle to abolish the profit system and establish a world-planned socialist economy. That is the perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International and its sections in every country.

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