

US sought use of British bases for war against Iran

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The British-based *Guardian* newspaper reported Thursday that American diplomats have been lobbying Britain for the use of its military bases on Cyprus as well as US bases on the British territories of Ascension Island in the Atlantic and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean in preparation for war on Iran.

The US request points to a massive military buildup against Iran. The Pentagon has already stationed two aircraft carrier battle groups in or near the Persian Gulf, along with additional minesweepers and a specialised floating base that could be used to launch special forces operations inside Iran. A squadron of advanced F-22 fighters has also been moved to the region.

Access to the bases on Cyprus, Ascension Island and Diego Garcia would significantly boost the ability of the US air force to wage round-the-clock strikes against Iran.

The British government has, to date, rebuffed the Pentagon, significantly pointing out that an unprovoked US attack on Iran could be illegal under international law, as Tehran did not currently represent “a clear and present threat”.

British officials have cited advice drafted by the attorney general’s office that has been circulated to the prime minister’s office, the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence. A senior government official told the *Guardian*: “The UK could be in breach of international law if it facilitated what amounted to a pre-emptive strike on Iran. It is explicit.”

Like the US-led illegal invasion of Iraq, the Obama administration is preparing to launch a war of aggression against Iran. This was the chief crime for which Nazi leaders were tried and convicted at Nuremberg following World War II.

That Iran is not “a clear and present threat” also punctures the steady buildup of propaganda in the US

and international media about the danger of a nuclear-armed Iran. In his bellicose speech to the UN General Assembly last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that Iran was just months away from building a nuclear weapon.

Tehran does not have a nuclear weapon and denies plans to build one. Unlike Israel, which has a substantial arsenal of nuclear bombs, Iran is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. All of its nuclear facilities are monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency along with its stockpiles of enriched uranium, none of which is weapons-grade.

A spokeswoman for British Prime Minister David Cameron confirmed yesterday that Britain had been involved in “contingency planning” with the US, also noting, “we have in the past cooperated on the use of UK bases.” However, she declared, “The government does not believe that military action against Iran is the right option at this time, but we are not taking any option off the table.”

British officials claim that the contingency planning was “routine”, but the military buildup in the Persian Gulf is anything but usual. Nor has the British government ruled out any involvement in what would be another illegal US-led war. The British navy currently has up to 10 ships in the region, including a nuclear-powered submarine, and participated last month in the largest-ever US-led joint demining exercise in the Persian Gulf.

The *Guardian* article reported that “a British military delegation with a strong navy contingent” had flown to US Central Command headquarters in Tampa, Florida for talks earlier in the northern summer on “a range of contingency plans”. The US Central Command covers the Middle East and was responsible for the invasion of Iraq.

Britain's reluctance to commit to a new war in the Middle East reflects fears within ruling circles in Europe and the US about the dangers of such a reckless enterprise. Writing in the *Financial Times* on Wednesday, former US national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski expressed deep concern over the belligerent statements of both American presidential candidates on foreign policy, in particular towards Iran and its ally, Syria. The idea, he wrote, that the US could impose "a new order in the Middle East—through the forceful export of 'democracy' to both Syria and Iran—is dangerous daydreaming."

Brzezinski warned of the catastrophic consequences of new military action in an already unstable Middle East. "In this flammable setting, an American intervention in Syria or a military strike against Iran either by Israel or the US would be likely to set off a region-wide explosion." While Brzezinski listed Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan as vulnerable, an attack on Iran would necessarily involve US allies in the Persian Gulf, including Saudi Arabia.

The former national security adviser pointed out that "an explosive crisis in the region would also have consequences elsewhere." These included rising oil prices that would "wreak havoc on Europe's financial recovery", intensified differences among European states, and closer strategic cooperation between Moscow and Beijing against Washington. The broader danger is that a war in the Persian Gulf could also draw in China and Russia, both of which have substantial economic and strategic interests in the region.

Brzezinski suggested that menacing threats against Iran and Syria by President Barack Obama and his Republican challenger Mitt Romney were a product of the heat of the election campaign that would give way to "serious and comprehensive analysis" after the poll. In fact, as the latest *Guardian* report attests, the election campaign is being used as a screen behind which detailed preparations are being made for attacking Iran or Syria, or both.

The bipartisan support in Washington for these criminal ventures points to the deep-rooted character of US militarism. For two decades, successive US administrations have plunged into one war after another in a bid to use military might to offset America's economic decline and maintain its global dominance. Iran's nuclear programs are simply a convenient

pretext to launch an unprovoked war of aggression to bolster US hegemony over the energy-rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia.



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