

# US-Israeli preparations for war against Iran

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25 October 2012

As the presidential campaign nears its end, preparations are proceeding apace for new US wars of aggression that are backed by both President Barack Obama and his Republican challenger Mitt Romney.

The largest-ever joint US-Israeli military exercise commenced on Sunday, designed to test the integrated anti-missile systems of the Zionist state. The three-week war games involve more than 3,500 US military personnel in Israel and Europe, 1,000 members of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), and the deployment of Patriot anti-missile batteries and a US warship equipped with the Aegis anti-ballistic missile system.

According to American and Israeli generals, the drills are designed to simulate a multi-front war with high-tempo salvos aimed at Israeli targets, including short- and long-range ballistic missiles as well as mortars and rockets.

US Lieutenant General Craig Franklin downplayed the significance of the exercises, declaring: “There is no particular message. It’s to prove the defensive capabilities for Israel.” In fact, the war games are neither purely defensive nor without a target. Rather, as the scenario makes evident, the purpose is to prepare for the likely immediate consequences of a US-Israeli attack on Iran, and to test Washington and Tel Aviv’s ability to neutralise retaliation by Tehran and its allies.

Both the Obama administration and the Israeli government have kept up a steady drumbeat of bellicose threats against Iran over its nuclear program. Speaking last month at the UN General Assembly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted that “a red line” had to be set, falsely claiming that Iran was just months away from building a nuclear bomb. A red line has only one meaning: it establishes the pretext

for war.

The US and Israeli hype about the threat allegedly posed by Tehran is utterly hypocritical. Unlike Iran, Israel has refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, or allow International Atomic Energy Agency inspections. It already has a sizeable arsenal of nuclear weapons and the means for delivering them anywhere in the Middle East. Moreover, both the US and Israel have a long record of waging illegal wars of aggression in the region—and are now planning a new one on Iran.

Testing Israel’s anti-missile systems only strengthens the ability of Israel and the US to launch an unprovoked attack on Iran with impunity. The war games are being held in tandem with a major civilian defence exercise in Israel that began last weekend. Under the guise of responding to an earthquake, the IDF Home Front Command, along with all emergency services and government departments, held a drill “to prepare for emergencies which could catch us by surprise.”

These activities in Israel are only part of broader preparations for war. The US has also been strengthening anti-missile defence systems covering its allies in the Gulf States. Last month, the US Navy held its largest-ever anti-mining exercise in the Persian Gulf, involving warships from 30 nations. The purpose was to neutralise any Iranian attempt to mine the Strait of Hormuz in retaliation for US attacks.

Moreover, since the beginning of the year, the Pentagon has doubled the number of aircraft carrier battle groups and stationed a squadron of sophisticated F-22 warplanes in the region, greatly bolstering its ability to wage war on Iran. Any US attack would not only target Iranian nuclear facilities, but much of the

country's military and industrial infrastructure, with devastating consequences for the Iranian people and economy.

In their third presidential debate on Monday, Obama and Romney vied with each other to demonstrate their determination to back Israel, boost crippling economic sanctions on Iran and prepare for war.

While there was bipartisan agreement on this militarist agenda, it was Obama at every point who was its most belligerent advocate. Obama specifically referred to the current war games as proof that his administration had established "the strongest military and intelligence cooperation" with Israel. With complete indifference to the consequences for the Iranian people, he boasted of imposing "the strongest sanctions against Iran in history... Their currency has dropped 80 percent. Their oil production has plunged to the lowest level [since the war with Iraq]... Their economy is in a shambles."

When Romney called for tougher sanctions and referred to military action as a last resort, Obama responded that the time for talks was rapidly drawing to a close. "The clock is ticking," he said. "We are not going to allow Iran to perpetually engage in negotiations that lead nowhere... If they do not meet the demands of the international community then we are going to take all options necessary to make sure they don't have a nuclear weapon."

Behind the backs of the working class in America, the Middle East and internationally, advanced preparations are being made for another criminal war. Like the military interventions into Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, it is a war based on lies and deception. US imperialism is not planning to attack Iran to prevent it building a nuclear weapon, but to fashion a regime in Tehran in line with its ambitions for dominance over the energy rich regions of the Middle East and Central Asia.

Washington's reckless policies threaten to trigger a region-wide conflict that would potentially draw in major US rivals such as China and Russia, both of which have large economic and strategic interests at stake. The only social force capable of halting such a

catastrophe is the international working class. The struggle against militarism and war requires the building of a mass movement based on socialist internationalism to put an end to capitalism and its outmoded nation-state system that is the root cause of war.

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