

US steps up aid to Saudi Arabia's slaughter in Yemen

Bill Van Auken
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Washington is initiating a series of new policies aimed at building up the military power of the monarchical dictatorship in Saudi Arabia as it carries out a siege that could claim millions of lives in neighboring Yemen.

The *Wall Street Journal*, citing senior administration officials, reported Saturday that “The Trump administration is looking at ways to quickly strengthen Saudi Arabia's missile defenses and disrupt the flow of advanced Iranian-made weapons across the Middle East as concerns grow over a destabilizing new crisis in the region.”

The so-called “destabilizing new crisis” in the Middle East is one of Washington's and Riyadh's own making, flowing from the Trump administration's attempt to forge an anti-Iranian alliance uniting US imperialism, Saudi Arabia and the other reactionary Sunni oil sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf and Israel in an anti-Iranian military alliance.

Emboldened by unconditional US support, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin-Salman has carried out a sweeping purge of potential rivals within the Saudi regime, while escalating the murderous war in Yemen and carrying out the kidnapping and forced resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri with the aim of destabilizing Lebanon and igniting a sectarian civil war against the Shia-based movement, Hezbollah.

According to the *Journal* article, the Trump administration views the controversy surrounding Hariri as a “frustrating complication” that is diverting Washington's drive to “galvanize support for new action against Iran.”

The most criminal of the US-backed Saudi actions has been the imposition of a blockade of Yemen aimed at starving into submission its population and the Houthi rebels who seized much of the western part of

the country, including the capital of Sanaa.

Riyadh has justified its blockade by saying it is trying to prevent arms from reaching the Houthis following the firing of a missile from Yemen on November 4 that was shot down near Riyadh's international airport. In reality, what Saudi Arabia—with the assistance of the US Navy—is turning back are shipments of food, medicine and other vital supplies under conditions of spreading famine and the worst cholera epidemic in modern history.

Iran has denied Saudi charges that the missile was of Iranian manufacture, a position that has been supported by a panel of experts appointed by the United Nations Security Council, which issued a statement six days after the missile was fired saying that there has been no evidence of Iranian transfer of short-range missiles to Yemen and charging that Riyadh is exploiting the incident “as justification for obstructing the delivery of commodities that are essentially civilian in nature.”

Washington, which echoed the Saudi propaganda blaming Iran for the attack, has issued no statement condemning the blockade of Yemen, a war crime in which the US is itself complicit. The major European powers have also remained largely silent as a near-genocidal campaign is being executed against the people of Yemen, the poorest country in the Arab world. The European arms manufacturers, like their American counterparts, have secured lucrative contracts with the Saudi monarchy.

According to the *Journal* article, the foremost response of the Trump administration to the crisis in the Middle East is to push more arms on the Saudi regime. Last month, Trump approved a weapons deal that allows Riyadh to purchase \$15 billion worth of missiles, launchers, radar and other military technology. “US officials said that deal could be

accelerated as a result of the missile fired at Riyadh.”

The newspaper added that, “The US military also could step up its efforts to seize weapons shipments going through the Persian Gulf and across the region,” meaning that the US Navy would escalate operations that are contributing to the blocking of relief supplies and the mass starvation engulfing Yemen.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon has acknowledged that the US Air Force has more than doubled its refueling flights that keep Saudi and allied warplanes in the air, continuously bombing Yemeni hospitals, schools, residential blocks and basic infrastructure, accounting for the bulk of the 12,000 deaths in the two-and-a-half-year-old war. Washington also increased its supply of jet fuel to the Saudis by 140 percent over the fiscal year that ended in September, according to a report on the *Al-Monitor* web site.

The bombs and missiles that are killing Yemen are also supplied largely by Washington, with \$3 billion worth of bombs provided to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates since 2015 and a \$500 million sale of precision-guided munitions approved by the US Senate in June.

The latest atrocity made possible by this arms aid took place on Sunday with a Saudi airstrike in the northern province of Jawf demolishing a home leaving eight children and three women, all from the same family, dead under the rubble.

The two-week-old Saudi blockade, however, threatens to dwarf the number of deaths caused by the bombing campaign. Even before Saudi Arabia shut down Yemen’s airports, sea ports and borders, turning away container ships full of food and relief supplies and fuel tankers that had already been inspected and searched for weapons, 7 million Yemenis were on the brink of famine, while 17 million others did not know where their next meal would come from.

The UN and various relief agencies have warned that, with Yemen dependent upon imports for 90 percent of its food, the blockade could rapidly lead to the deaths of millions.

Three Yemeni cities—Hodeida, Saada and Taiz—ran out of clean water on Friday because of the Saudi blockade preventing the delivery of fuel needed to run pumping and sanitation systems, the International Committee of the Red Cross reported. The lack of clean water will place at least a million more people at risk of

cholera on top of the 928,000 already believed to have contracted the disease. The capital of Sanaa and other cities will “find themselves in the same situation” within weeks if the blockade is not lifted, the Red Cross said. The lack of fuel will also shut down generators powering hospitals, condemning many patients to death.

Doctors without Borders (MSF) reported Sunday that the Saudi regime is preventing it from conducting flights in and out of Yemen, despite claims from Riyadh that it was allowing the movement of humanitarian supplies and personnel. The aid agency also said it had been warned by Saudi authorities against operating in areas under the control of the Houthi rebels.

The aid group Oxfam issued a blistering statement warning that “A catastrophe of astonishing proportions is unfolding before our eyes as Yemen’s Houthi-controlled territory is sealed off and suffocated ... Absent a rapid turnaround, we are likely to witness in Yemen an extraordinary level of devastation, the likes of which most of us have never lived through.”

The statement continued by noting that “the US government has led its allies in demonstrations of solidarity with Saudi Arabia against Iran, ignoring a ghastly humanitarian crisis. The international community’s unqualified support for Saudi Arabia’s position nearly culminated in the adoption of a UN Security Council Presidential Statement condemning the Houthis and Iran’s malign activity without so much as a mention of Yemen’s dire humanitarian crisis and the steps taken by Saudi Arabia to push it to the brink of catastrophe.”

The systematic extermination of Yemeni men, women and children by bombardment, starvation and disease exposes the real face of US imperialism. It demonstrates that behind the empty rhetoric about the “war on terror,” “human rights” and “democracy,” it is prepared to kill millions to offset the decline of American capitalism through a drive to assert US global hegemony by military means.



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