

US special forces operations in Yemen presage wider regional war

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The revelation that US special forces have been operating secretly on the ground in Yemen since December underscores once again Washington's reckless drive towards a regional conflagration with Iran.

Coming just a week before President Donald Trump is due to announce whether he will abrogate the 2015 nuclear accord with Tehran, Thursday's report in the *New York Times* that Green Berets are fighting alongside Saudi forces in their genocidal war against the Yemeni people demonstrates that US imperialism will stop at nothing to consolidate its hegemony over the Middle East. Having supplied the Saudis with intelligence and weaponry to continue their murderous assault on the impoverished country, resulting in the deaths of at least 13,000 civilians, the United States has now become a direct participant in the ground conflict.

Riyadh launched the war in March 2015 with the aim of reinstalling the US-backed puppet government of Abd-Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, who was driven from power following an offensive by the Houthi rebels. The Saudi regime views the Houthis as a proxy for Iran and is determined to destroy the rebel group as part of its broader plans to push back Iranian influence across the Middle East.

US aircraft have refuelled Saudi jets, allowing them to carry out continuous air strikes with munitions supplied by the US, Britain, France, and other Western powers. American ships have helped enforce a blockade of the country, restricting the delivery of critical food and medical supplies.

The Saudi military has waged the war with extreme brutality and an utter disregard for civilian casualties. Last month, an air strike on a wedding in the north of the country claimed 33 lives, including many women and children. Less than a week later, an air strike

targeted a medical facility in the capital, Sanaa.

Washington has carried out its own air strikes in the country, chiefly aimed at the al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula group.

But US forces, notorious for such war crimes as the destruction of Fallujah in Iraq, the bombing of hospitals in Afghanistan, and the virtual flattening of Mosul and Raqqa in Iraq and Syria, are being drawn ever more deeply into the Yemeni bloodbath.

Nobody should buy the claim by the *Times* that the deployment of the Green Berets—carried out behind the backs of the American people and with no knowledge of, much less authorization by, the US Congress—is merely for the purposes of operations on the border aimed at protecting Saudi territory. Something closer to the truth was revealed May 3 when reports emerged that the Pentagon is seeking contractors to provide two fixed-wing aircraft and two helicopters to rescue US special forces “in and around Yemen.”

Similar self-serving arguments have been deployed in the past to cover up the predatory character of secret US special forces operations elsewhere, including in the West African country of Niger, where they are engaged in a counterinsurgency war against Islamist rebels. After four Green Berets were killed in a firefight with militants last October, it was revealed that they were involved in an assassination mission when the gun battle occurred.

In Iraq and Syria, special forces ostensibly serving as “advisers” to Iraqi troops and Kurdish militias fired thousands of shells into densely populated areas of Mosul, helping push the death toll into the tens of thousands.

Washington's involvement in the Yemen war, which was initiated under the Obama administration, is part of US imperialism's broader agenda of securing its

unchallenged predominance over the energy-rich and strategically vital Middle East. The driving force behind this is the economic decline of American imperialism, which the US ruling elite has unsuccessfully sought to offset by employing military violence.

The main regional impediment to Washington's predatory ambitions is Iran, which is being targeted for war preparations by a US-led alliance encompassing Saudi Arabia, Israel and the Sunni Gulf sheikdoms.

In March, the US political and media establishment extended a warm welcome to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, who, as the architect of the Yemen war, bears chief responsibility for butchering the civilian population. Trump, who called in a speech in Riyadh last May for the construction of an anti-Iranian alliance, gave flesh and blood to this proposal during bin Salman's visit by unveiling plans to sell billions of dollars of military equipment to the despotic regime.

The central focus of US imperialist aggression in the region over the past seven years has been Syria, where Washington has waged a brutal war for regime change with the support of Islamist proxies since 2011. The Syrian conflict has increasingly assumed regional dimensions, pitting US, French, and British forces against military personnel from Iran and Russia, the main backers of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

With its efforts to expel pro-government forces from the east of the country, which is home to important oil fields, and the launching of missile strikes on the basis of unsubstantiated claims of the use by Assad of chemical weapons, Washington has proven its determination to recklessly escalate the conflict, even at the risk of a direct military clash with nuclear-armed Russia. Such a conflict would rapidly draw in the major European imperialist powers, who are all seeking to obtain their share of the spoils as the Middle East is redivided by means of violent inter-imperialist conflict.

Washington's aggressive actions have emboldened its allies, above all Israel and Saudi Arabia, to target Iran ever more openly. Israeli aircraft have bombed a series of targets in Syria over recent months, killing dozens of Iranian personnel, while the Saudi regime has deepened its collaboration with US forces in the Yemen conflict in preparation for cooperation in a much broader and bloodier war. There can be no doubt that

the public revelation that US forces are on the ground in Yemen will accelerate this process.

With the deadline looming for Trump to decide whether to cancel the nuclear accord, which Iran has implemented to the letter, all indications point to the growing danger of a US-led war against Tehran. Trump appears to have rebuffed attempts by his ostensible European allies to stick with the deal. Even in the unlikely event he decides prior to May 12 to maintain the agreement, such an announcement will be tied to conditions that Tehran will be unable to accept, setting the stage for a breakdown of the deal and a resort to open hostilities sooner rather than later.

The imminent prospect of such a catastrophic conflict, which has been brought a step nearer with the US ground intervention in Yemen, must be taken as a serious warning by workers in the United States, the Middle East and internationally.

The threat of a region-wide and even global war can be averted only through the construction of an international anti-war movement to unite workers in the United States and Europe who are opposed to another round of imperialist bloodletting in the interests of the capitalist elites, with the workers and oppressed in the Middle East and internationally. The building of such a movement requires the adoption by workers and youth of a socialist and internationalist programme to unite the struggle against war with the fight against its source—the capitalist profit system.



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