

No to war against Iran!

Bill Van Auken
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The threat of all-out war in the Middle East is greater today than at any time since the 2003 US invasion of Iraq, and the potential consequences are far graver.

The report that the Pentagon has drawn up plans for dispatching 120,000 US soldiers and Marines to the region in preparation for a war of aggression against Iran must be taken with deadly seriousness by the working class. What is being prepared is a war for regime-change, an act of unmitigated criminality that threatens the lives of millions.

While the *New York Times* cited half a dozen national security officials who were briefed on the plans, on Tuesday the report was described as “fake news” by US President Donald Trump, who said he is “absolutely” prepared to send troops against Iran, but insisted that “we’d send a hell of a lot more troops than that.”

The troop threat comes on the heels of a series of escalating acts of military intimidation against Iran, with the deployment off the Iranian coast of a battleship-carrier strike group, led by the USS Abraham Lincoln, and a bomber task force, including nuclear-capable B-52s. This has been followed by the dispatch to the region of the amphibious assault warship USS Arlington, carrying US Marines, warplanes and landing craft, as well a Patriot missile battery.

The spark for an all-out conflict can come from any one of a number of incidents or staged provocations in a region where tensions have been brought to a fever pitch by decades of unending US aggression and a military buildup that has turned the southern coast of the Persian Gulf into an armed camp dominated by US air and naval bases.

US military sources are already telling the corporate media—which serves as a contemptible instrument of war propaganda—that it has determined that the alleged sabotage of four vessels, including two Saudi oil tankers, off the coast of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) reported on Sunday was the work of Iran or “Iranian proxies.” No evidence whatsoever has been provided to substantiate this claim about an incident which itself remains murky,

but the supposed culpability of Iran is nonetheless echoed as fact by the “embedded” news outlets.

The alleged acts of sabotage were followed two days later by drone attacks on two Red Sea pumping stations operated by Saudi Aramco, the monarchical dictatorship’s national oil and gas company.

Yemen’s Houthi rebels claimed responsibility for the attacks, saying they were launched in retaliation for the near-genocidal US-backed war that has been waged by the Saudi regime against Yemen for the last four years, killing some 80,000 people and bringing over 10 million to the brink of starvation.

The Saudi monarchy, which has terrorized the entire Yemeni population, indiscriminately bombing schools, hospitals, mosques and housing blocs, had the nerve to declare the Houthi retaliation as an act of “terrorism.”

Under the terms of the ultimatums delivered by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and national security adviser John Bolton, either of these actions could be the trigger for a war of aggression. As Bolton put it, “any attack on United States interests or on those of our allies will be met with unrelenting force.” Pompeo has vowed “swift and decisive” military action in response to any alleged act by Iran or its so-called proxies challenging US interests in the region.

Any US military action against Iran would come on top of an economic siege against the country. Dubbed a policy of “maximum pressure,” US imperialism has attempted to tie an economic noose around Iran’s neck.

Since unilaterally and illegally abrogating the 2015 Iran nuclear accord, Washington has not only re-imposed sanctions lifted under that agreement, it has waged full-scale economic war aimed at reducing Iran’s oil exports to zero, freezing it out of global financial markets and shutting down its trade with other nations. The Iranian people have paid the price, suffering nearly 50 percent inflation along with rising unemployment and poverty.

While Iran has repeatedly been found in full compliance with the accord’s strict limits on its nuclear program, Washington has threatened that Tehran’s supposed

pursuit of nuclear weapons—something it has always denied—could merit military action.

Iran recently responded to the failure of the remaining signatories of the nuclear accord—in particular, Germany, France and the UK—to effectively counter the US blockade and provide promised sanctions relief by threatening to resume enriching uranium on a higher level. Though allowed under the deal, this action could also be seized upon by Washington as a pretext for military aggression.

What would be the consequences of a US war against Iran, a country that is four times as large and has more than twice the population of Iraq? The war launched by the Bush administration 16 years ago killed over a million Iraqi civilians, while claiming the lives of nearly 4,500 US troops and wounding over 30,000 more. Not only would the carnage this time around be vastly greater, but a war against Iran would inevitably draw in the entire region, as well as the countries dubbed by Washington's military and intelligence apparatus as US imperialism's "great power" competitors, including nuclear-armed Russia and China—under conditions where the US has launched an all-out trade war against Beijing.

While US policy is in the immediate sense largely driven by the steady military escalation itself, underlying it are a combination of global imperialist interests and sharpening internal social and political contradictions.

It is hardly coincidental that Washington is simultaneously threatening military intervention in both Iran and Venezuela. The first country holds the second-largest oil reserves in the Middle East, while the second boasts the largest proven reserves in the world. In an attempt to offset the ongoing decline in its world economic position, US imperialism aims to assert its undisputed grip over the world's energy reserves. This would empower it to ration—or cut off altogether—supplies to its rivals, in the first instance China, but also Europe. Such ambitions point the way to a third world war.

The buildup to war against Iran is also powerfully driven by the intensifying social and political crisis within the United States itself, characterized by unsustainable levels of social inequality produced by an economy based on financial parasitism.

With the growth of the class struggle, reflected in the highest number of striking workers in the US in more than three decades, the capitalist oligarchy sees in war a means of redirecting social tensions outward, while at the same time creating the conditions for increasingly authoritarian forms for rule. Just as Julian Assange and Chelsea

Manning have been hounded and imprisoned for exposing past US war crimes, so an escalation of militarism abroad will be used to criminalize all opposition to both war and capitalist rule in the US.

The war drive against Iran is being prosecuted largely behind the backs of the American people. There is not even the pretense of seeking legal sanction by taking Washington's trumped-up and unsubstantiated claims of Iranian aggression to the United Nations, let alone congressional authorization (which the Democrats would supply), as was done with the "weapons of mass destruction" fraud in the 2003 unprovoked war against Iraq. Nor is there an attempt to create a "human rights" fig leaf as in the wars against Libya and Syria.

The launching of a war against Iran will produce popular shock and outrage. There is widespread opposition to war and deep and abiding skepticism and hatred for the political establishment and media among broad sections of workers and youth.

The greatest danger, however, is that this mass social opposition is not politically organized, while the entire spectrum of official politics, both Democratic and Republican, supports the catastrophic war policy of American imperialism.

Whatever the immediate outcome of a US strike on Iran, events are moving relentlessly in the direction of world war. This reality must drive an urgent international struggle for a politically conscious intervention of the working class to put an end to imperialism and reorganize society on socialist foundations.



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