

Washington pushes to the brink of war with Iran

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19 June 2019

The US confrontation with Iran has brought the world closer to the brink of a catastrophic global conflict than at any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

This week has seen the announcement that yet another 1,000 US troops are being sent to the Middle East in order to provide “force protection” against an alleged threat from Iran for the tens of thousands already deployed in the region, along with the report in the Israeli media that preparations are already being made to launch a “tactical assault” on an Iranian nuclear facility involving “massive” bombing.

The report from Israel, based upon diplomatic sources at the United Nations in New York, was initially produced by *Maariv Online* and then picked up by the *Jerusalem Post*.

The “military action would be an aerial bombardment of an Iranian facility linked to its nuclear program,” according to the diplomatic sources. One Western diplomat specified that “The bombing will be massive but will be limited to one target.”

It is striking that this ominous report has been virtually blacked out of the US media. No major newspaper or network or cable news outlet has bothered to inform the American public of an impending action with implications for the lives of millions.

The threat of war was underscored by a pair of statements from China and Russia pointing to the growing danger posed by the US escalation. Beijing warned that Washington’s “practice of extreme pressure” threatened to open a “Pandora’s Box” in the Middle East. Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, meanwhile, told reporters in Moscow that the “unending and sustained US attempts to crank up political, psychological, economic and, yes, military pressure on Iran ... cannot be assessed as anything but a conscious course to provoke war.”

Trump told reporters on the White House lawn Tuesday: “We are looking at Iran, we have a lot of things going with Iran. We are very prepared . We’ll see what happens... Regardless of what goes, we are very prepared.”

The imminent threat of a direct US military attack comes in the wake of a steady escalation of US aggression against Iran. Washington has publicly touted its campaign of “maximum pressure” against the nation of 83 million people, imposing a crushing sanctions regime that is unilateral and illegal after abrogating the 2015 Iranian nuclear accord to which Washington was a signatory, along with China, Russia, the UK, France and Germany.

For the Iranian people these sanctions—compounded by the

capitalist austerity policies and privatizations pursued by the Iran’s bourgeois nationalist regime—have meant falling real wages, an inflation rate that is expected to top 50 percent this year, rising unemployment and shortages of medicines and other essentials that have resulted in death and suffering. This economic blockade has been imposed with the express aim of forcing a collapse of the economy and a disintegration of society designed to bring down the Iranian government and replace it with a puppet regime along the lines of the despotic US-backed dictatorship of the Shah, overthrown in the 1979 revolution. The US “maximum pressure” policy is tantamount to a state of war.

Under conditions of already extreme tensions created by this policy, the Trump administration has carried out a steady military escalation against Iran, sending a US aircraft carrier battle group, a bomber strike group led by nuclear-capable B-52s and 1,500 additional troops, before the latest deployment of another 1,000.

All of this has been carried out under the pretext that Iran is posing a threat of aggression against “US interests” in the Middle East, i.e., that they are defensive measures against a supposedly aggressive Iran.

What nonsense! US imperialism has steadily encircled Iran with a ring of steel while seeking to starve its people into submission. Since 2001, it has invaded Afghanistan, on Iran’s northeastern border and Iraq to its west. It has set up a string of air and naval bases facing Iran’s shores across the Persian Gulf and has maintained tens of thousands of US troops in the region.

The claims of Iranian aggression and the US posturing as the aggrieved party acting in self-defense are bound up with the search for a pretext for a US military assault. This has ranged from an errant missile that landed a third of a mile away from the US embassy in Baghdad’s Green Zone to alleged threats from Iranian-backed militias in Syria to the murky events surrounding the damaging of tankers in the Gulf of Oman, which the Pentagon, with no credible proof, has attributed to Iran.

It appears, however, that the Trump administration has decided to make Iran’s threat to fall out of compliance with the nuclear accord that Washington itself ripped up its *casus belli*. When it comes to shameless hypocrisy, US imperialism has few real competitors.

Tehran announced Monday that it will exceed the cap imposed by the nuclear accord on its accumulation of low-enriched uranium in 10 days. The action is part of an attempt to prod the European powers still upholding the agreement—the UK, Germany and

France—to make good on their promise to restore normal trade and investment relations, which have been disrupted by the US sanctions. Thus far, while paying lip service to the agreement and promising to implement a new exchange system to bypass the sanctions, the European powers have done little to challenge Washington's economic blockade.

The feverish character of the US drive to war was expressed Tuesday in a highly unusual trip by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to MacDill Air Force Base in Florida for a meeting with the chief of CENTCOM, which oversees US military operations throughout the Middle East, and the commander of US Special Operations troops. CENTCOM's Marine Gen. Kenneth McKenzie reportedly requested the deployment of another 20,000 US troops to the Iran battle zone but was overruled by the Joint Chiefs of Staff who feared that it could provoke a war. Like McKenzie, Army Lt. Gen. Richard Clarke, the head of Special Operations Command, was recently placed in charge by the Trump administration.

After the meeting, Pompeo insisted that Trump “does not want war,” but then went on to spell out an aggressive policy that leads inexorably to just that.

While Pompeo was in Florida, it was announced in Washington that the acting secretary of defense, Patrick Shanahan, had resigned before his formal nomination could go to the Senate, allegedly over a nine-year-old domestic abuse allegation. Shanahan, a former top executive at Boeing, is to be replaced by Army Secretary Mark Esper, a former vice president of government relations at defense contractor Raytheon and chief of staff at the right-wing Heritage Foundation. What precise relation this shakeup has to the drive to war against Iran is as yet unknown, but the claim that it was the result of family issues strains credulity.

“Shanahan's departure will increase uncertainty at the Pentagon at a moment of significant potential military risk,” wrote *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius, who enjoys close ties to the US military-intelligence apparatus. “Allied jitters are likely to expand, too, with Monday's announcement that the U.S. is sending 1,000 additional troops to the Persian Gulf,” he added.

Much has been made within the media about the apparent divisions within the Trump administration between the president, a supposed isolationist who eschews new Middle East wars, and the two point men on Iranian policy: his national security adviser, John Bolton, who has advocated for bombing Iran into regime change for decades, and Pompeo, the Christian fundamentalist warmonger, who insists that all of his work is dedicated to preparing for the “rapture.”

Whatever these divisions, the drive to war against Iran is deeply rooted in the crisis of American capitalism. For nearly three decades, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy, the US capitalist class, acting through Democratic and Republican administrations alike, has sought to offset its crises and the erosion of its domination of world markets through the use of military force.

The war of imperialist aggression against Iraq, followed by subsequent wars for regime change initiated by the Obama administration in Libya and Syria, left US policy in the region in

shambles. In both Iraq and Syria, where Washington sought to bring to power puppet regimes in preparation for war against Iran, Tehran has substantially increased its influence and status as a regional power, posing an obstacle to the US drive for hegemony over the oil-rich region.

At the same time, Iran constitutes a major source of energy imports for China as well as a key link in its planned One Belt, One Road strategy to deepen its integration with Eurasia.

The drive to war also has its source in the acute social crisis within the United States itself, where social inequality and the growth of strikes and social unrest pose a threat to the ruling financial oligarchy which seeks to direct these internal tensions outward in a new explosion of military violence.

The attempt by Washington to eliminate its regional rival and assert its hegemony over the Middle East in order to secure a stranglehold over China's energy imports by means of a new war against Iran can yield only a far greater and potentially global catastrophe.

Without any attempt to make a case to the American people for war, Washington is preparing to launch a military assault on Iran, a country with three times the population of Iraq in 2003 and four times the land mass.

The American people face the prospect of a series of shocks. The bombing of an Iranian nuclear facility may be answered with an Iranian attack on a US warship as well as rocket attacks on US bases across the Persian Gulf with the possibility of thousands of American casualties overnight. A war with Iran will require an army of hundreds of thousands, necessitating the revival of the draft.

Moreover, because of its strategic position, a war against Iran will inevitably draw in the entire Middle East, while posing military confrontation with nuclear-armed China and Russia.

Within the working class there is hostility to war and a deep distrust in the lies of the government and the media that finds no expression within the existing political setup. The resurgence of the class struggle, however, provides a powerful foundation for the emergence of a new mass antiwar movement based on the independent political mobilization of the working class and the fight for socialism.



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