Amid electoral coup plot, Trump threatens catastrophic war on Iran

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On November 14, the *World Socialist Web Site* asked the question, Is Trump plotting a war against Iran? The answer has not been long in coming.

The *New York Times* has revealed in a November 16 article that the US president last Thursday convened an Oval Office meeting of his national security cabinet to discuss "options to take action against Iran's main nuclear site in the coming weeks."

Present at the meeting, convened as Trump waged his campaign to nullify the results of the presidential election, were Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, newly appointed acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark Milley.

The pretext for this ominous discussion was a report issued last week by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that Iran's stockpile of low-enriched uranium had reached 5,386 pounds, 12 times the limit set by the nuclear agreement reached in 2015 between Tehran and the world's major powers. The accord, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, traded the lifting of United Nations sanctions for Iran's agreement to sharply curtail its civilian nuclear program and submit to a rigorous inspection regime.

Trump pulled out of the agreement in 2018, imposing an endless series of steadily escalating unilateral sanctions aimed at strangling Iran's economy and starving its people into submission, while engaging in relentless military provocations. This culminated in the drone assassination last January of top Iranian leader Qassim Suleimani at Baghdad international airport, a criminal act that brought the two countries to the brink of all-out war.

The size of Iran's uranium stockpile—still far smaller than before the 2015 accord—is of no strategic significance and represents no violation of international law. Tehran has increased the stockpile and exceeded other limits of the treaty in response to Europe's failure to resist Washington's unilateral sanctions. Iran has taken no steps to enrich uranium to the over 90 percent level necessary to produce fissionable material, nor is there evidence that it has any intention of doing so. Iran has repeatedly insisted that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only, and has accepted international inspections that would reveal anything to the contrary.

The *Times* article repeats the propaganda lie peddled by the US and Israeli governments that Iran could be "close to a bomb" as early as next spring. It bears pointing out that the article's authors include Eric Schmitt and David Sanger, both of whom contributed pieces to the *Times* campaign in the service of the Bush administration's fabrication of a "weapons of mass destruction" pretext for the US war of aggression against Iraq in 2002-2003.

According to the *Times,* "Any strike—whether by missile or cyber—would almost certainly be focused on Natanz", Iran's largest uranium enrichment facility located south of the capital Tehran.

The *Times* report cited unnamed administration officials as stating that "After Mr. Pompeo and General Milley described the potential risks of military escalation, officials left the meeting believing a missile attack inside Iran was off the table ... "

There is absolutely no reason to accept such assurances as good coin. Planning for a US strike is continuing apace, and definite measures are being taken for its execution.

The Pentagon reported Monday the redeployment of an F-16 fighter squadron from Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany to Al-Dhafra Air Base in Abu Dhabi in what an Air Force commander told the media was a demonstration of "CENTCOM's commitment to allies

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and partners to bolster security and stability in the region." The aircraft are equipped to deliver both conventional and nuclear bombs against targets. Meanwhile, the US Navy's Nimitz Carrier Strike Group continues operations in the Persian Gulf, while the US has some 35,000 troops deployed in the region.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo arrives in Israel today for talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who, not unlike Trump, is threatened with being ousted from power to face multiple criminal charges. The principal issue to be discussed in Pompeo's visit—as it will be in his subsequent stops in the Persian Gulf oil monarchies that are part of Washington's anti-Tehran axis—will be war against Iran. The Israeli press is filled with speculation over whether the US will strike Iran before Trump is forced from office, or whether Washington will assist Netanyahu in doing so.

One thing is certain. The bombing of Natanz or any other Iranian nuclear facility would be a war crime of world historic proportions, threatening to kill thousands—if not tens of thousands—outright, and subjecting many more to death and disease from the release of uranium hexafluoride gases and subsequent radioactive fallout.

Behind the pretext of Iranian uranium stockpiles, the immediate driving force for such a war crime against Iran lies in the unprecedented political crisis gripping Washington in the face of Trump's attempt to stage a post-election coup to remain in power.

Trump has carried out a purge of the top Pentagon leadership, installing a cabal of fascistic loyalists in top positions, all of them fanatically anti-Iranian. Sacked acting Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, a former lobbyist for the arms industry, was removed both because of his reluctance to support an Iran strike and his public opposition to Trump's proposal to invoke the Insurrection Act and deploy regular Army troops in the streets to attack anti-police violence demonstrations.

An attack on Iran, and the inevitable Iranian retaliation, with the potential deaths of large numbers of US troops, would provide Trump with the pretext for imposing martial law and refusing to surrender the White House. With 62 days remaining before the scheduled presidential inauguration, the danger of such a provocation is ever-present.

Biden and the Democrats have ignored the threat of a catastrophic war against Iran. Instead, they warn of the supposed dangers of a "precipitous" withdrawal of US troops from the nearly two-decade-long US war in Afghanistan and from Iraq, while proclaiming that Trump's stonewalling of the transition process is a threat to "national security," leaving US imperialism vulnerable to its "enemies."

The war threat against Iran and the danger of a new world war are fundamentally rooted not in the crisis of the Trump regime, but rather in its source, the historic crisis of US imperialism. In its merciless aggression against Iran, Washington is pursuing geo-strategic interests. It seeks to exert unfettered hegemony over the Persian Gulf and its vast energy resources, while denying them to its chief global rival, China.

Should Biden succeed in being inaugurated on January 20, this threat of war will only continue to escalate. The Democratic Party has made this abundantly clear through a campaign attacking Trump from the right for being too "soft" on Russia and China.

The overriding concern of the Democratic Party is not to defeat Trump's conspiracies, but rather to prevent popular opposition to them from threatening the interests of Wall Street and US imperialism.

The fight against war and in defense of democratic rights—along with the sacrifice of workers' lives to the ruling class' "herd immunity" response to the COVID-19 pandemic—can be waged only by the working class mobilizing in opposition to Trump and the Democrats and the capitalist system they both defend.

The whole world is watching the extraordinary events that have followed the US elections, and if American workers initiate an independent political struggle, it will be backed by workers across the globe. The common interests of workers in the United States and every other country lie in breaking the grip of the financial-corporate oligarchy and taking power into their own hands in order to restructure economic life internationally on the basis of equality and socialism.

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