

# B-52s fly over Persian Gulf as Washington escalates war threat against Iran

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For the third time in little more than a month, the Pentagon has sent a pair of B-52 Stratofortress long-range heavy bombers to the Persian Gulf in a threat of war against Iran. This threat is being steadily escalated on the orders of US President Donald Trump as he continues to demand the overturning of the results of November's US presidential election.

The warplanes, which are capable of launching both nuclear and conventional weapons, flew low over the Gulf after a midair refueling over the Eastern Mediterranean in a 30-hour round-trip flight from their base in North Dakota. They were escorted by a squadron of F-16 fighter planes.

Without mentioning Iran by name, the chief of the US Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees US military operations throughout the Middle East, left no doubt as to the target of the provocative bomber deployment.

“The United States continues to deploy combat-ready capabilities into the US Central Command area of responsibility to deter any potential adversary, and make clear that we are ready and able to respond to any aggression directed at Americans or our interests,” said CENTCOM commander General Frank McKenzie in announcing the Gulf overflight. “We do not seek conflict, but no one should underestimate our ability to defend our forces or to act decisively in response to any attack.”

The B-52 flights are only part of a continuous and ominous US military buildup in the region. Last week, the Navy sent the nuclear-powered submarine USS Georgia, armed with cruise missiles, along with accompanying warships, into the Persian Gulf, joining the USS Nimitz carrier strike group already deployed there.

The Israeli and other Middle Eastern media have also

revealed that Israel has dispatched its own submarine through the Suez Canal in an apparent approach to the Persian Gulf. The Dolphin-class submarine is capable of firing nuclear cruise missiles.

Meanwhile Israel has continued its airstrikes against Iranian-linked targets in Syria, bombing the Nabi Habil area near Damascus on Wednesday.

Both Washington and Tel Aviv have attempted to cast these extraordinary threats against Iran as defensive measures in response to an alleged danger of an Iranian attack.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a “senior US military officer” told the Associated Press that the Pentagon had “picked up signs” that Iran may be “planning for possible rocket attacks against US interests in Iraq” in conjunction with the first anniversary of the criminal US drone missile assassination of senior Iranian leader Qassem Suleimani on January 3, 2020, after he arrived at Baghdad international airport for an official state visit.

The “senior officer” said that Iran “may be considering” broader attacks against US targets in the Middle East, where some 50,000 American troops are deployed, or “might have its eye on economic targets,” invoking the September 2019 attack on Saudi oil-processing facilities, for which Yemen's Houthi rebels claimed responsibility.

The officer's language—“maybe ... might ... possible”—makes clear that there is no substantive evidence that Tehran is preparing any attack whatsoever, but that any provocation in the region can be used as a pretext for a US war of aggression against Iran.

The statements from the Pentagon follow Trump's December 23 tweet blaming Iran, without any evidence, for rockets that fell on the sprawling US

Embassy complex in Baghdad's Green Zone without causing any injury or doing any significant damage.

"Now we hear chatter about additional attacks against Americans in Iraq," the US president tweeted. "Some friendly health advice to Iran: If one American is killed, I will hold Iran responsible. Think it over."

After having murdered Suleimani, and no doubt aided and abetted last month's Israeli assassination of Iran's leading nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, while subjecting the Iranian population to a "maximum pressure" campaign of draconian sanctions that has cost many thousands of lives and encircling the country with US military bases, bombers and warships, Washington relentlessly casts Iran as the aggressor.

Trump made clear his desire to attack Iran in a White House meeting with his security cabinet last month in which he floated a proposal for bombing Natanz, Iran's main nuclear facility, a war crime that could kill thousands while poisoning many more. While senior aides reportedly talked him out of such an attack, military escalation against Iran has continued unabated.

Since then, the White House has sacked acting Defense Secretary Mark Esper, replacing him with ex-special forces colonel Christopher Miller, while conducting a wholesale purge of the Pentagon's top civilian leadership, installing fanatically anti-Iranian Trump loyalists in key positions.

Last week, various media sources close to the Pentagon reported growing concern within the military's uniformed command that Trump could launch a war against Iran as part of his continuing bid to remain in office and consolidate a presidential dictatorship.

*Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius, who enjoys close ties to the US military-intelligence apparatus, cited the threats against Iran, warning that "potential domestic and foreign turmoil could give President Trump an excuse to cling to power."

CNN cited interviews with a dozen US military commanders and officers close to the senior command in reporting "growing anxiety" within these circles over the possibility that Trump will "order some unexpected military action, such as a strike on Iran, or will ... somehow draw the military into his efforts to overthrow the election results."

The threat that Trump will launch a war of aggression against Iran, on whatever pretext, in the waning days of

what is supposed to be his "lame duck" presidency is deadly serious. Such a war—and potentially significant casualties among US forces in the region—could provide him the pretext for the imposition of martial law, a prospect that he raised in a December 18 White House meeting, and the suspension of both the transfer of power and Constitutional rights.

In the face of these threats, President-elect Joe Biden and the Democrats have voiced no opposition to the war buildup against Iran, much less issued any warning to the American people over the plots being hatched in the White House and the Pentagon.

Studiously ignoring Trump's refusal to concede the election and his threats of extra-Constitutional action, Biden has raised strenuous objections to his transition team being stonewalled at the Pentagon. This has not been on the grounds that the fascistic cabal installed by Trump there are engaged in a conspiracy to plunge the American people into another catastrophic war and pave the way to dictatorship. On the contrary, as he declared in a speech on Monday, his concern is that there be no gap between the militarist policies of the two administrations "that our adversaries may try to exploit."



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