

Israeli drones, warplanes strike Iran and Syria

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Israeli military and intelligence units carried out multiple acts of aggression over the weekend against Iran and Iranian forces in Syria. The attacks were the first offensive military operations under the ultra-right government newly installed in Israel, under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

A drone attack, likely staged from within Iran by Israeli operatives, hit a weapons facility in the central Iranian city of Isfahan on Saturday night. This was followed Sunday night by airstrikes against a truck convoy operated by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps as it crossed the Iraq-Syria border headed into Syria.

Definitive information about the scope, damage and casualties from these attacks was difficult to obtain, but the *Wall Street Journal* cited an unnamed US military source confirming Israeli responsibility for the drone attack in Isfahan.

There were conflicting claims from Iran and from Israeli sources about the damage in Isfahan. The Iranian Defense Ministry said they caused minor damage and no casualties, and that several of what it called "Micro Aerial Vehicles (MAVs)" had been shot down.

Given the small size of the drones, said to be quadricopters, and the location of Isfahan in the center of the country, hundreds of miles from the nearest border, military officials said the attack had likely been launched from within Iran by Israeli operatives. Israeli agents have carried out dozens of attacks within Iran, including assassinations, bombings and other acts of sabotage.

Iran's principal nuclear fuel enrichment facility at Natanz is located in Isfahan province, but well away from the city, and it did not appear to be a target of the latest attacks. There is also a large air force base, an Iran Space Research Center site, and numerous smaller military-related facilities, including at least one

ammunition warehouse or factory which was reportedly hit by the drone strike.

The attacks came in the wake of a visit by CIA Director William Burns to Jerusalem for talks with Israeli officials, and coinciding with the arrival of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who begins a two-day round of official meetings on Monday.

And it follows the largest-ever US-Israeli joint military exercises, held in the eastern Mediterranean and across Israeli territory, and involving more than 7,500 troops. Among the reported actions was to test systems that would be vital in the initial stages of a major war against Iran, including advance strikes to take out air defense systems and aerial refueling of warplanes.

The *Jerusalem Post* wrote, in a gloating tone:

"Experts noted that the US and Israel just spent an entire week conducting military exercises around attacking targets, such as Iran, so carrying out such an attack immediately after these exercises could be meant to send a message as to their seriousness. They estimated that the visit of CIA Director William Burns to Israel just before the attack was evidence of a need for a special face-to-face meeting between the CIA and Mossad chiefs preparing the attack."

The coordination of the military strikes with Washington went beyond simply operational planning. It seems likely that the target within Iran was chosen in response to Iran's military assistance to Russia in its proxy war with NATO in Ukraine.

Russia has been making heavy use of Iranian-built drones in the war, although Tehran maintains that the weapons were sent before the war began as part of longstanding military cooperation.

Both the US and NATO have made highly public claims of Iranian participation in the war. With the

drone strike in Isfahan, the US and Israel appear to be expanding the Ukraine fighting far into the Middle East.

A top aide to Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky made this connection explicitly on Twitter. "Explosive night in Iran," Mykhailo Podolyak taunted. "Did warn you."

Already, at his first Middle East stop in Cairo, where he met with Egyptian military dictator Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Blinken reiterated the bullying US position that "all options are available on the table to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon."

In the airstrike in Syria, which has not been confirmed by Israeli or US military sources—as is usual in such acts of illegal warfare—fighter-bombers attacked a group of 25 Iranian trucks at the al-Qa'im crossing on the Syria-Iraq border.

The Saudi-backed Al-Arabiya network said the trucks had crossed the border and then were hit. According to Syrian media, six refrigerated trucks were among those attacked. Syrian sources also said a meeting of Iranians was targeted in the airstrikes as well.

The details and implications of this expanding warfare will become more apparent. But behind the Israeli aggression is not only the strategic interests of US imperialism, but the deepening internal crisis within the Zionist state.

Thursday's bloodbath in Jenin, when Israeli troops on a raiding party shot dead 10 Palestinians, produced a retaliatory act of terrorism on Friday night when a Palestinian attacked a synagogue outside Jerusalem, killing seven Israelis. This was followed by further acts of violence around Jerusalem in which both Israelis and Palestinians were killed and wounded.

The new Netanyahu government has taken office with the most sweeping assertion of the reactionary expansionist goals in the history of Israel. Its statement of principles asserts the "exclusive right" of the Jewish people to Israel and the occupied West Bank, and the coalition was formed on the basis of an agreement to formally annex the West Bank when Netanyahu chooses to do so, and to legalize the dozens of unauthorized settlements there, which are illegal even under current Israeli law.

The government has already seen the largest opposition demonstrations in recent history, in which both Jews and Arabs took part, against its threat to

neuter the Supreme Court and assume effectively absolute power. This has been followed by the Jenin massacre, which has provoked near-civil war conditions in the occupied West Bank.



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