

US announces naval operation targeting Yemen and Iran

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US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin announced Monday the start of Operation Prosperity Guardian, a naval operation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden targeting the Houthi rebels in Yemen and threatening Iran. Austin made the announcement in Israel, thus underscoring the role that Israeli forces, now engaged in mass murder in Gaza, will play in any future war with Iran.

“The recent escalation in reckless Houthi attacks originating from Yemen threatens the free flow of commerce, endangers innocent mariners and violates international law,” Austin said Monday in a statement. “This is an international challenge that demands collective action.”

Austin made clear the main target of the operation was Iran, saying at a press briefing in Israel, “Iran is raising tensions by continuing to support terrorist groups and malicious attacks by these Iranian proxies who threaten the region and risk a broader conflict.” In a backhanded threat, Austin said, “Of course, the United States does not seek war. And we urgently call on Iran to take steps to de-escalate.”

The US has sent an armada of nearly 20 warships to the Middle East, led by two aircraft carrier battle groups. The new naval operation will include most of the major imperialist powers, including the UK, France, Italy and Spain.

On Saturday, the US Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Carney engaged over a dozen drones launched from Yemen. Austin said the initiative was begun “to tackle the challenge posed by this non-state actor launching ballistic missiles and uncrewed aerial vehicles at merchant vessels from many nations lawfully transiting international waters.”

At a press briefing with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Austin said, “We’re taking action to

build an international coalition to address this threat.”

After Austin leaves Israel, he is scheduled to visit the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier, currently in the eastern Mediterranean. Austin’s visit is part of a parade of high-level US officials visiting Israel. General C. Q. Brown, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, was also in Israel on Monday. Last week, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan visited Israel, while CIA chief Bill Burns also met with Qatari and Israeli officials in Warsaw, Poland.

Earlier this month, Sullivan threatened military action against the Houthi rebels, saying the US would “take appropriate action ... at a time and place of our choosing.”

USNI News, the news service of the US Navy, gave a sense of the massive deployment currently under way:

The U.S. Navy has at least three destroyers in the vicinity of the Bab el Mandeb strait between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden—USS Carney (DDG-64), USS Mason (DDG-87) and USS Thomas Hudner (DDG-116) have all operated in the region. The U.K. Royal Navy guided-missile destroyer HMS Diamond (D34) and the French Navy guided-missile frigate FS Languedoc (653) have operated in the Red Sea as well.

Over the weekend, the U.S. moved aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) and its escorts to the Gulf of Aden—between Somalia and Yemen, according to USNI News Fleet and Marine Tracker. Shipspotters also saw guided-missile destroyer USS Laboon (DDG-58) enter the Red Sea from the Suez Canal on Monday.

During his visit to Israel, Austin reaffirmed Washington's unlimited support for Israel's genocide in Gaza. "I'm here with a clear message," Austin said. "America's support for Israel's security is unshakable." He added, " Hamas committed atrocities during its attack on Israel. It is a continuation of its professed goals: the killing of Jews and the elimination of the Jewish state. No country should tolerate such a danger."

He concluded, "Israel has every right to defend itself against a fanatical terrorist group whose stated purpose is to murder Jews and eradicate the Jewish state. ... So make no mistake, Hamas should never again be able to project terror from Gaza into the sovereign state of Israel."

Despite claims by the US media that the White House was pushing Israel to reduce the scale of the onslaught against Gaza, Austin made clear that the United States is placing no conditions on the number of civilians Israel is allowed to massacre with US funding and weapons. He concluded, "This is Israel's operation, and I'm not here to dictate timelines or terms. Our support to Israel's right to defend itself is ironclad, as you've heard me say a number of times, and that's not going to change. It's critical, as I said earlier, that Hamas not be able to threaten Israel from Gaza or even threaten Gaza anymore."

With this blank check to commit mass murder, Israeli officials are increasing their use of openly genocidal rhetoric. In a radio interview, David Azoulay, head of Israel's regional Metula Council, called for displacing the population to Lebanon and said that Gaza should be made to look like "Auschwitz." "Tell everyone in Gaza to go to the beaches. Navy ships should load the terrorists onto the shores of Lebanon. The entire Gaza Strip should be emptied and levelled flat, just like in Auschwitz."

Gaza's Ministry of Health reported Monday that the official death toll has risen to 19,453, with the vast majority of victims being women and children. Adding the more than 7,000 people missing, the true death toll is likely already well above 20,000.

On Monday, Human Rights Watch published a detailed report accusing Israel of using starvation as a weapon of war against the civilian population of Gaza. "For over two months, Israel has been depriving Gaza's population of food and water, a policy spurred

on or endorsed by high-ranking Israeli officials and reflecting an intent to starve civilians as a method of warfare," said Omar Shakir, HRW director in the occupied Palestinian territories.

In a press release on Monday, Human Rights Watch said, "Israeli forces are deliberately blocking the delivery of water, food and fuel, while willfully impeding humanitarian assistance, apparently razing agricultural areas and depriving the civilian population of objects indispensable to their survival."

Hunger is surging throughout Gaza. The United Nations reported that, according to a survey by the World Food Program, the share of the population experiencing "very severe hunger levels" was reported as 44 percent, compared to 24 percent in a previous assessment just two weeks earlier.



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