

US will deploy 1,000 troops off Gaza shore in plan to build floating dock

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The United States will deploy 1,000 troops off the coast of Gaza for the nominal purpose of building a floating pier for humanitarian aid, the Pentagon said Friday.

President Joe Biden announced the construction of the pier during his State of the Union address on Thursday. “I’m directing the US military to lead an emergency mission to establish a temporary pier in the Mediterranean on the Gaza coast that can receive large ships carrying food, water, medicine and temporary shelters,” Biden said, adding, “No US boots will be on the ground.”

The claim that the construction of the floating pier is motivated by humanitarian concerns is a transparent pretext. The entire population of Gaza could be fed within a matter of days if not for Israel’s blockade of food into the besieged enclave. While US officials declare that Israel should “do more” to allow food into Gaza, the US is enabling Israel’s genocidal policy of starving the Palestinian people by continuing to surge weapons and funding to Israel.

This week, US press reports indicated that the Biden administration has sent over 100 separate arms shipments to Israel since October 7, breaking them up into smaller tranches to avoid congressional oversight.

At best, the building of the floating dock is a massive public relations exercise, designed to distract attention from the United States’ ongoing support for the Gaza genocide. Moreover, the dock will not be operational for two months, during which time 2 million Gazans will continue to starve.

But it has other, more ominous connotations as well. One thousand US troops will be deployed in Gaza in all but name, increasing the level of participation of the US military in the war. The Pentagon sees the genocidal war as a chance to rehearse its amphibious landing and logistics capabilities, which it plans to put to use in future wars throughout the region and the wider world.

To date, US airdrops of food into Gaza have been a

pittance, with Pentagon spokesman Pat Ryder saying that approximately 11,000 meals are being delivered per day—to feed a starving population of over 2 million. On Friday, three more children died of malnutrition at Gaza City’s al-Shifa Hospital, bringing the confirmed death toll from the famine to 23.

In his State of the Union address on Thursday, which took the form of a warmongering diatribe against Russia, Iran and China, Biden endorsed Israel’s actions in its onslaught against Gaza. He declared that “Israel has a right to go after Hamas” and that the conflict should end with the total capitulation of the resistance to Israel. “Hamas could end the conflict by surrendering,” he said.

Biden absolved Israel of targeting the civilian population by saying that “Hamas hides and operates among the civilian population like cowards, under hospitals, daycare centers and all the like.” Israeli officials have made it clear that they intend to launch a full-scale attack on Rafah before the start of Ramadan, which begins in less than a week. With negotiations over a ceasefire having broken down, Biden said Friday that it was “looking tough” to reach to a ceasefire agreement before Ramadan—effectively admitting that an invasion of Rafah will take place.

As Israel enforces famine conditions on Gaza, the meager aid that does get through often turns deadly. Five children were killed when a parachute malfunctioned during an airdrop of humanitarian aid on Friday, while Israeli forces once again opened fire on people at a food distribution center in Gaza City the same day. Last month, Israeli forces fired on people lining up to receive flour, killing over 100 people in what came to be known as the “flour massacre.”

In a briefing, Michael Fakhri, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, told reporters in Geneva that the US airdrops of food and plans to build a floating port were “absurd” and “cynical.” He said they “will do very little

to alleviate hunger, malnutrition, and do nothing to slow down famine.”

He added, “The time when countries use airdrops and these maritime piers is usually, if not always, in situations when you want to deliver humanitarian aid into enemy territory.” But Gaza is completely besieged by Israel, Washington’s closest ally in the region and its largest recipient of military aid.

The director of communications for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), Juliette Touma, said:

There is an easier and cheaper way to bring much-needed supplies into the Gaza Strip. ... That is via the road, including sending more trucks from Israel into the Gaza Strip. ... It shouldn’t be this difficult. There are several crossing points that connect Israel to the Gaza Strip, and this is what we used before the war started.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) told *Al Jazeera*, “A temporary pier that could take weeks to construct or airdrops is not a solution.” Instead, it called on Israel to lift “its siege of Gaza, [reopen] its crossings, including the Karni (Al-Muntar) and Erez (Beit Hanoun) crossings in the north, and [allow] the safe and unimpeded movement of humanitarian workers and aid—including fuel, food and medical supplies.”

Palestinians quoted in the US media condemned the plan. “Instead of telling us they will build a port to help us, stop [providing] the weapons they fire at us,” Hassan Maslah, a displaced Gazan sheltering in Rafah, told Reuters.



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