

Tehran warns of “massive and harsh” response if Israel again bombs Iran

Alex Lantier
17 April 2024

Speaking yesterday at a military parade in Tehran, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi warned that new Israeli strikes on Iran would provoke a “massive and harsh response.” He was responding to Israeli threats to again bomb targets in Iran, as regional tensions surge over Israel’s genocidal onslaught against Gaza.

On April 1, Israel bombed the Iranian embassy compound in the Syrian capital of Damascus, killing three top Iranian military officers. On Saturday, Iran responded to this attack on what is legally Iranian territory by a counter-strike against Israel. In this operation, codenamed Operation True Promise, Iran launched 185 drones and fired 36 cruise and 110 ballistic missiles to bomb military targets inside Israel.

Though no deaths were reported in the attack, which hit runways and a transport plane at Israel’s Nevatim and Ramon airbases, Israel’s far-right government called for massive retaliation. “Israel received broad international legitimacy tonight to strike Iran with unprecedented force,” Israeli Culture Minister Miki Zohar said on Sunday. Zohar claimed Iran “has taken off its gloves” and called on Israel to attack “the head of the snake that is working to destroy Israel.”

At yesterday’s parade, Raisi warned that Tehran in fact could retaliate against future Israeli strikes on Iran with even more devastating attacks. He said, “Operation True Promise was a limited and not a comprehensive measure. If we had carried out a stronger operation, nothing would then have been left out of Israel.”

Israel’s genocide in Gaza and its strikes on Iran, Syria and Lebanon, backed by the NATO powers, are placing the Middle East and the world on the brink of total war. In such a war—unlike previous wars like the US-led invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria—Israel and its NATO allies could rapidly suffer enormous losses.

Israeli officials tried to reassure the Israeli people, who heard explosions over Jerusalem and air raid alerts across

the country, by stating that 99 percent of Iranian targets were shot down. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) claimed they had “foiled” the Iranian attack. However, this was because the IDF had advance warning of the attack, and US, UK and French ships and warplanes helped them shoot down Iranian targets.

Though US officials initially denied that Iran had given them its list of targets in Israel, Turkish officials confirmed that, 72 hours before the strike, Tehran had contacted them, as well as US and other NATO officials, to warn them of the coming Iranian strike.

Israel depended on its NATO and regional allies to repel the bulk of the attack. Citing US military sources, *The Intercept* wrote: “The extent of the US military operation is unbeknownst to the American public, but the Pentagon coordinated a multination, regionwide defense extending from northern Iraq to the southern Persian Gulf on Saturday. During the operation, the US, UK, France, and Jordan all shot down the majority of Iranian drones and missiles.”

The operation’s financial cost was far higher for Israel and its allies than Iran. Israeli General Ram Aminach said Israel fired 4-5 billion shekels’ (US\$1.08-1.35 billion) of missiles on Saturday to hit Iranian targets. On Tuesday, the US Navy asked for \$1 billion to replenish the ammunition it had spent on shooting down Iranian drones. The cost to Iran of Saturday’s strike, carried out largely by cheaper, mass produced drones, was around \$100 million.

Moreover, Iran and its allies can mount larger strikes that could swamp Israeli defenses. Hezbollah, an Iranian-allied militia in Lebanon, did not strike Israel on Saturday but has an arsenal of 150,000 to 200,000 missiles, including hundreds of long-range anti-ship and land-attack ballistic missiles. It is expected to fire over 1,000 missiles per day if Israel launches a war with Lebanon. As for Iran, a major international manufacturer of drones, its

vast missile arsenal includes over 3,000 long-range ballistic missiles.

Iranian Armed Forces Chief of Staff Major General Mohammad Baqeri said that while Iran does not plan further military action against Israel, it can mount larger strikes. “The operation is over from our point of view, but the armed forces are ready and we will act if necessary,” he said. “We were capable of conducting an operation against the [Israeli] regime ten times bigger than this one, but we tried to keep it at the level of punishment and did not target populated and economic centers.”

He also warned that Tehran would respond to US participation in further Israeli strikes against Iran by bombing US military bases in the Middle East.

The Israel-Iran conflict is close to triggering regional and even global war. Washington and the NATO powers are already intervening in support of Israel. However, the prospect of a NATO war with Iran and its allies across the region would also pose unacceptable threats to Russia and China, risking to also draw them into the war.

Russia has troops in Syria, where they are fighting NATO-backed forces waging a war for regime change. Moscow recently deployed them to the Golan Heights, on the border with Israel, apparently fearing an Israeli assault on Lebanon or Syria.

China depends on Iranian oil to power its economy and buys around 90 percent of Iran’s oil exports, which are still hit by US sanctions banning the use of the dollar to trade Iranian oil. In 2021, China signed a 25-year friendship treaty with Iran planning \$400 billion in investment in Iranian oil, transport and manufacturing infrastructure. While the terms of the treaty are not public, it reportedly includes Chinese military guarantees of Iran’s security.

Reviewing Saturday’s Iranian strike on Israel, the British imperialist think tank Chatham House concluded that it aimed to deter Israel from again attacking Iran by making clear the potential consequences of further military escalation. The strike, it added, also let Iranian forces monitor and analyze the response and performance of Israeli and NATO air defense systems. It wrote:

Had Iran’s intent been to hurt Israel, it wouldn’t have violated a core principle of military operations—the element of surprise. But it did. It telegraphed its intentions to Washington and several Arab and European capitals, and assured them that its strike would be relatively limited.

Instead of employing offensive tactics that would have significantly challenged and possibly overwhelmed Israeli defences, it did the opposite. Indeed, had Iran sought to inflict serious pain on Israel, it would have incorporated a heavier dose of fast-flying and precision-guided ballistic missiles, giving Israel very little time to prepare ... Additionally, this was a highly useful information-gathering exercise for Iran. Though hardly definitive, Iran’s assessment of Israeli and partner defences has much improved. ... Iran showcased more capability in its attack than its detractors would care to admit.

The NATO imperialist powers are signaling, however, that they have no interest in calming tensions with Iran or trying to restrain Israel’s far-right government. While cautioning Israel against too rapid a military escalation against Iran in the short term, they are continuing to arm Israel, including to bomb Palestinian civilians in Gaza, and recklessly calling for stepped-up sanctions and continued military action against Iran.

UK Foreign Minister David Cameron traveled to Israel to meet top officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and welcomed Israeli planning for further attacks on Iran. He said, “It’s clear the Israelis are making a decision to act. We hope they do so in a way that does as little to escalate this as possible [and is] smart as well as tough.”

Cameron also joined Washington in calling for sanctions against Iran’s economy, which French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday called a “duty” for France and Europe.

Netanyahu signaled that he rejected this advice, stating that while he was receiving “all kinds of advice,” Israel would “make our own decisions, and the State of Israel will do everything necessary to defend itself.”



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact