

As Middle East war looms, US restates its “ironclad” support for Israeli regime

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6 August 2024

Tensions are at a fever pitch throughout the Middle East amid the anticipated military retaliation by Iran and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militia for Israel’s targeted assassinations of top Hezbollah military commander Fuad Shukr in Beirut last week and, hours later, Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) reported that Haniyeh was killed by “a strong blast” caused by a “short-range projectile” fired from outside a house where he was staying during his visit to Iran. The IRGC warned that Israel would receive “a strong punishment at the appropriate time, place and manner.”

US President Biden met with senior national security officials on Monday [Washington time] to discuss the US response to impending Iranian retaliation against Israel. In a statement released after the briefing, Biden said: “We received updates on threats posed by Iran and its proxies, diplomatic efforts to de-escalate regional tensions, and preparations to support Israel should it be attacked again.”

The US media has been at pains to highlight diplomatic efforts by the Biden administration to prevent the outbreak of a regional war. An article in the *Washington Post* headlined “Washington and Arab states scramble to avert an all-out Middle East war” claimed: “The Biden administration is racing to avert an explosion of violence across the Middle East.”

The article noted that US diplomats were seeking the support of Arab governments to put pressure on Iran to limit its response to the assassinations. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said yesterday, “No one should escalate this conflict. We’ve been engaged in intense diplomacy with allies and partners”. This message, he declared, had been communicated directly to Iran and also Israel.

US imperialism’s posturing as a moderating

influence in the Middle East after backing Israel’s genocidal war in Gaza is utterly hypocritical. The Biden administration has politically backed and armed the Zionist regime, not just for its barbaric slaughter of tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza but also for its attacks inside Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and now Iran.

The Biden administration was informed in advance of Israel’s plan to kill Fuad Shukr and in all probability to assassinate Ismail Haniyeh. The US has not condemned either of these calculated provocations even though it knows full well that these criminal acts were calculated to provoke a wider war targeting Iran. Moreover, the murder of Haniyeh effectively puts an end to the Gaza ceasefire charade that the US claims to support.

In reality, the US is also preparing for a wider war. “Our commitment to Israel’s security is ironclad,” Blinken declared yesterday. “We will continue to defend Israel against attacks from terrorist groups or their sponsors, just as we’ll continue to defend our troops.”

The US has positioned FA-18 fighter aircraft and a surveillance aircraft from the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier at an undisclosed base closer to Israel. A squadron of F-22 fighters has been dispatched from their home base in Alaska to bolster American firepower in the Middle East. US naval destroyers are also being moved into waters closer to Israel.

While US diplomats are supposedly “scrambling” to de-escalate, top American military officials are huddled with their Israeli counterparts over war plans. General Michael Kurilla, head of US Central Command, was in Israel on Monday for talks with military leaders—a visit that was hailed by Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant as “a direct translation of US support for Israel into action.”

On Tuesday, Gallant spoke by phone with US

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin—the fifth such call since a missile strike on July 28 killed a group of children in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Israel exploited the strike as a pretext for the two targeted assassinations, based on the unsubstantiated claim that Hezbollah launched the missile. Hezbollah denied any responsibility.

In a social media post, Gallant warned that the Israeli military was “determined, consistent and powerful,” repeating again that it was “ready for offence and defence.” The comment is a signal that the fascistic Israeli regime will respond to any retaliation by Tehran or Hezbollah with a further military escalation directed at its chief target—Iran.

Israel pushed the region to the brink of war in April when it carried out an airstrike on the Iranian embassy complex in Damascus that killed top IRGC commanders. Iran responded with a barrage of some 300 drones and missiles targeting the airbase in Israel from where the attack on Beirut was launched. Israeli air defences along with US, British and French warplanes shot down most, but only because Iran had telegraphed the timing and scope of the attack in advance to Washington.

There is no guarantee that Tehran will do so again. The attack in April was on its consulate in Syria, which by international convention is regarded as Iranian territory. The assassination of Haniyeh in Tehran was a direct attack on Iranian soil.

While Iran is clearly not seeking a wider war, Israel is just as clearly seeking to provoke one. Far from de-escalating, the Zionist regime is continuing its genocidal war in Gaza and attacks inside Lebanon.

* The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that three schools sheltering internally displaced Palestinians in Gaza had been struck by the Israeli military in the past 48 hours. Mohammed Issa Abu Saada is the latest journalist to be killed by Israeli forces, raising the death toll of journalists in Gaza to 166. The official death toll of men, women and children in Gaza is approaching 40,000.

* The Israeli human rights group B’Tselem released a report on Monday based on first-hand testimonies confirming that Israel had established a network of more than a dozen prison facilities “dedicated to the abuse of inmates.” It stated: “Such spaces, in which

every inmate is intentionally condemned to severe, relentless pain and suffering, operate in fact as torture camps.” It added that at least 60 prisoners, mostly Palestinians, had died in Israeli custody since October 7—a figure likely to be a gross underestimate.

* Israeli attacks inside Lebanon include a strike on a building in the town of Mayfadoun, killing five Hezbollah fighters. Other towns attacked include Odaisseh, where one person was killed, and Khiam.

Israeli warplanes deliberately buzzed Beirut on Tuesday, flying low and setting off loud booms as they broke the sound barrier. The display of Israeli air power was clearly aimed not only at intimidating residents, but also at taunting Hezbollah, whose chief Hassan Nasrallah declared it is “obliged to respond” to Israel’s killings of Haniyeh and Shukr.



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