

Israel launches ground operations in Lebanon amid ongoing air bombardment

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The Israeli military launched its ground incursion into southern Lebanon early Tuesday morning. While Israeli officials claimed that ground operations would be limited in scope, scale and duration, the claims are no more believable in the case of Lebanon than in Gaza.

Underscoring the central involvement of American imperialism in the escalating region-wide war, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Washington is in “continuous conversation” with the Israeli military about its invasion, while public broadcaster Kan referred to “intensive coordination” between Israel and the US on how to deal with an Iranian attack.

Reuters reported late Monday that Lebanese army units were seen leaving positions on the Lebanon-Israel border and were retreating 5 kilometres inside Lebanese territory. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) announced a “closed military zone” encompassing several northern communities along the border, emphasising that entering the area was forbidden. An official told the *Times of Israel* that one goal of the operation would be to eliminate Hezbollah positions along the border. A meeting of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s security cabinet later Monday decided to proceed with the operation.

Heavy shelling and air strikes targeted several locations along the border. The IDF ordered residents in Dahiyeh, the southern suburb of Beirut and a traditional Hezbollah stronghold, to leave their homes. Shortly afterwards, major explosions were heard as at least eight strikes occurred shortly after midnight Tuesday morning, according to Lebanese news agency NNA, destroying several residential buildings.

The invasion of southern Lebanon follows a weekend of unrestrained violence by the Zionist regime, including the massacring of hundreds of civilians in air strikes across the country. The targeted assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah Friday claimed some 300 civilian lives, as six multi-story buildings were flattened in Beirut’s southern suburbs. In the 24 hours to Monday, 136 people were reportedly killed by Israeli strikes. The intensive bombing,

which included the first strike on central Beirut Sunday night, has forced some 100,000 people to flee to neighbouring Syria, where a fratricidal conflict stoked by US imperialism for over a decade is ongoing.

Israel also struck the ports of Hodeidah and Ras Issa in Yemen, some 2,000 kilometres from its border, Sunday. The strikes, which targeted power plants and facilities used by the Houthis to import oil, killed six people and injured 57.

While Hezbollah has continued to fire rockets into northern Israel, the sustained attacks of the past two weeks appear to have seriously undermined its capabilities. Brussels-based military analyst Elijah Magnier told Al Jazeera that Israel has struck at least 3,000 to 3,500 Hezbollah missile units. “There are thousands of Hezbollah operatives who’ve lost their hands or their eyesight, and they’ve been evacuated to hospitals in Syria and Iran. Therefore, these fighters are out of the equation and can no longer participate in any potential war,” he added, referring to the consequences of Israel’s terrorist attack on September 17, when hundreds of communication devices exploded. In addition to Nasrallah, dozens of top Hezbollah commanders have been murdered.

In an indication of the indiscriminate character of the onslaught, akin to the ongoing slaughter of the Palestinians in Gaza, 14 Lebanese paramedics were killed in two days of bombing up to Sunday. On Monday, the health ministry reported the deaths of a further six paramedics in renewed air strikes.

Asked at a press briefing about the reports of a ground invasion, Miller confirmed US imperialism’s intimate involvement in the major escalation of the war. “They have informed us about a number of operations,” said Miller, referring to Israel. “They have at this time, told us that those are limited operations focused on Hezbollah infrastructure near the border, but we’re in continuous conversations about it.” With breathtaking cynicism, he added, “Military pressure can at times enable diplomacy.”

Earlier in the day, Secretary of State Antony Blinken became the latest US official to revel in the mass slaughter,

hailing the assassination of Nasrallah. The Hezbollah leader was a “brutal terrorist” and “the region, the world are safer without him,” he said.

Behind the bogus public statements about a “limited” operation, Israel’s far-right regime is clearly launching a massive offensive to revenge the setback it suffered during the month-long 2006 war on Lebanon, when Hezbollah mobilised broad popular support against an IDF invasion. The United Nations confirmed that its 10,000-strong UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which was tasked with monitoring the ceasefire agreement that brought the 2006 war to an end, was no longer in a position to carry out patrols due to the intensity of fighting.

Speaking to troops in northern Israel, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, who infamously labelled Gaza residents as “human animals” as Israel’s genocide of the Palestinians began, declared, “the elimination of Nasrallah is a very important step, but it is not everything.

“We will use all the capabilities we have. If someone on the other side did not understand what the capabilities mean, it is all capabilities, and you are part of this effort.”

Netanyahu’s far-right regime intends to annex parts of Lebanon, alongside Gaza and the West Bank, as part of its US-backed drive to restructure the entire Middle East. Netanyahu and other leading officials have bluntly laid out this agenda, including in speeches to the US Congress in July and UN General Assembly last week.

Israel’s aggressive expansion of the conflict, which is rapidly assuming the dimensions of a Middle East-wide war, is made possible by the unflinching support it enjoys from US imperialism. As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained within days of Israel launching its destruction of Gaza, Washington endorsed the genocide because it viewed it as a critical component of the preparations for a region-wide war with Iran. In an October 23, 2023 Perspective column taking note of the US surging of troops and naval vessels to the region following the commencement of Israel’s assault on Gaza, the WSWS wrote,

The Biden administration is escalating the war in the Middle East and threatening to directly attack Iran as part of what it sees as a globe-spanning conflict for world hegemony, stretching from Eastern Europe to the Middle East and the Pacific. American imperialism, confronted with the economic rise of China and the global decline of the US economy, sees war as the means to assert world domination.

dollars in weaponry to Israel, including the 2,000-pound bombs that have turned Gaza into a wasteland and are now devastating Beirut and southern and eastern Lebanon.

The Pentagon announced Monday that Washington will send “a few thousand” more US troops to the region, increasing the number of US soldiers in the Middle East to 43,000, according to the AP. The bulk of the new forces consist of squadrons of fighter jets and attack aircraft. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin stated Sunday that he had extended the deployment by a month of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group to the Middle East. A second aircraft carrier strike group, the USS Harry Truman, recently departed from Virginia and is expected to arrive in the region in a week.

With their repeated escalatory actions, Israel and its US paymaster are attempting to goad Iran into some sort of response, which can then be used to launch a vicious attack on Tehran. Already this year, Israel assassinated seven Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps members in Damascus and humiliated Iran’s bourgeois-clerical regime by killing Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh while he was visiting Tehran as a guest at the inauguration of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. For their part, the Iranian regime and its bourgeois-nationalist allies throughout the region have nothing to offer in the face of this imperialist-led onslaught, other than vain pleas for an accommodation with the imperialist powers.

The only social force capable of preventing the plunging of the entire Middle East into a bloodbath with incalculable consequences for its long-suffering population is the international working class mobilised in struggle against imperialist war. Rejecting reactionary Zionism and bankrupt bourgeois nationalism, the workers of the Middle East, whether Arab, Persian, or Jewish, must unite on the basis of the fight for socialism in alliance with their class brothers and sisters in the imperialist centres to put an end to the capitalist profit system and war.



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