

Trump administration engaged in advanced planning for military strike on Iran

Jordan Shilton
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An article published by the *New York Times* Thursday makes clear that the Trump administration and the far-right Israeli regime have developed detailed plans for a military onslaught on Iran's nuclear facilities. It also confirms that US military assets—including a fleet of B-2 bombers—were deployed to the region in recent weeks in accordance with the joint-attack plan.

According to the *Times*' account, US and Israeli military and political leaders have discussed operational plans for actions from underground commando raids to a week-long bombing campaign with “bunker-busting” munition, underscoring that Washington is on the brink of plunging the entire Middle East into a region-wide war that would have catastrophic consequences for millions of people.

The article, published under the byline of several *Times*' authors with close ties to the White House and America's military-security apparatus, revealed that the Zionist regime and Washington have been working in close consultation for months on plans to destroy Iran's nuclear capabilities in an attack slated for as early as May.

According to the *Times*, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “initially pushed for an option that would have combined airstrikes with commando raids. The plan would have been a far more ambitious version of an operation Israel carried out last September, when Israeli forces flew by helicopter into Syria to destroy an underground bunker used to build missiles for Hezbollah...”

“After shelving the commando idea, Israeli and American officials began discussing a plan for an extensive bombing campaign that would have started in early May and lasted more than a week. An Israeli strike last year had already destroyed Iran's Russian-made S-300 air defense systems. The bombing campaign would have had to begin with striking remaining air defense systems, allowing Israeli fighters to have a clearer path to hitting the nuclear sites.”

The report's publication was clearly timed to impact ongoing high-level talks between American and Iranian officials. These talks began last weekend in Oman and are scheduled to continue tomorrow in Rome. Trump's special envoy, the billionaire property speculator Steve Witkoff, is to meet with Iranian Foreign Minister Abas Araghchi to discuss Iran's nuclear programme and possible relief on the brutal sanctions Washington has imposed on Iran since Trump unilaterally pulled the US out of the UN-backed Iran nuclear accord in 2018.

Trump has set a two-month deadline for reaching a new agreement with Iran, and has repeatedly declared that if the talks fail the US will attack Iran.

Thursday's *Times* article, which was based entirely on intelligence leaks, was meant to underscore this threat: either Iran capitulates to Washington's demands, or it will face a combined onslaught by the

American and Israeli militaries.

Although the article was framed in terms of Trump reining in Israel's advanced plans for a major military operation and “waving off” an attack on Iran to give diplomacy a chance, the information presented demonstrates that in so far as there are disagreements, they are of a very limited tactical character. One passage reported that Vice President Vance argued in one discussion that “Mr. Trump had a unique opportunity to make a deal. If the talks failed, Mr. Trump could then support an Israeli attack, Mr. Vance said, according to administration officials.”

The fact of the matter is that American imperialism, both under Democratic and Republican presidents, has been preparing for years for a regime-change war to topple the bourgeois-clerical regime in Tehran and bring to power a puppet government entirely under Washington's thumb. Preparations to carry this out have intensified dramatically over the past 18 months, while the US under Biden and then Trump has provided unflinching support for Israel's genocide against the Palestinians. Throughout, Washington has viewed Israel's rampage on multiple fronts in the Occupied Territories, Lebanon, Syria and beyond as a key component of a broader push to redraw the map of the Middle East so as to secure US hegemony against its rivals in the energy-rich and strategically critical region, above all China and Russia.

Iran's bourgeois-clerical regime has long been riven by infighting between a “moderate” or “reform” faction seeking a rapprochement with the US and European imperialist powers, and a “hardline” faction committed to closer alignment with China and Russia.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian led a push for renewed talks with Washington in recent months, claiming that the election of Trump—a notorious anti-Iran war-hawk—could nevertheless provide an opening for sanctions relief. Ultimately, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, gave his blessing to exploratory talks, but at the same time Tehran has continued to seek closer relations with both Russia and China, and has held separate talks with them over its nuclear program.

Araghchi visited Moscow on Wednesday, where he reportedly delivered a letter from Khamenei to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The fact that the traditional hardliners have tacitly given their approval to talks with Washington reflects both the regional and domestic crises confronting Iran's bourgeois-clerical regime. Since Israel launched its genocide against the Palestinians in October 2023 with US backing, Iran's key allies in the region— Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and Syria's Assad—have either been severely weakened or overthrown. Iran's ability to defend its own territory has also been seriously called into

question following Israel's assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh, while he was a guest of honour in Tehran in July 2024, and the Zionist regime's missile attacks on key military targets in Iran in late October.

At home, the regime sits atop a social powder keg, and social tensions have been intensified by the devastating impact of Western sanctions. In January, a report in a "reform"-aligned daily newspaper noted that 50 percent of the population lives below the poverty line of \$450 per month, and that the Iranian currency, the rial, fell by around 30 percent between September 2024 and January 2025, pushing up consumer prices still further.

These factors by no means preclude the possibility that the bilateral talks could fail. As the *Times* article makes clear, Trump and his advisers, far from ruling out military action, have merely determined to put it on hold for the time being. The fascist-minded President has himself repeatedly threatened to "obliterate" Iran. Given the mounting social and political crisis in the US, with rising popular opposition to Trump's drive towards dictatorship, a sudden and desperate turn to war with Iran to divert social tensions outwards is a real possibility.

The imminent prospect of a devastating military assault—now spelled out in the *Times* article—could just as well strengthen the forces within the Iranian regime calling for a more hardline stance to the West as those pushing for a rapprochement. The threat of a military onslaught would remain if the regime capitulates to Trump's sweeping demands for even more stringent restrictions on Iran's civilian nuclear programme than were included in the previous 2015 nuclear accord. Moreover, the Trump administration has signalled that any deal would also have to include limits to Iran's ballistic missile programme—arguably Tehran's most important deterrent to a US attack.

The 2015 Iran nuclear accord, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, was agreed between Iran, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (the US, Britain, China, France, and Russia), and Germany. The UNSC resolution implementing the agreement allows for a so-called "snapback" of UN sanctions on Iran if Tehran is deemed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to be "noncompliant" with the deal or if no new agreement is reached by October 2025. Given the ongoing US/NATO war on Russia in Ukraine and Trump's trade war with China, there appears little prospect of Beijing and Moscow consenting to the reintroduction of UN sanctions on Iran at the behest of the Western powers.

In recent years, China has emerged as Iran's most important customer for its oil exports, in part because Beijing can organise trade in yuan to avoid US sanctions. Economic cooperation was formalised in a 25-year partnership agreement, which reportedly committed China to invest \$400 billion in Iran in exchange for a steady supply of cheap oil. Tehran's relationship with Moscow has also deepened, with Iran providing drones for Russia's war in Ukraine and receiving Russian defence equipment in return. In January, a military partnership agreement between the two countries was announced. As a result, both Beijing and Moscow would inevitably view a direct US attack on Iran's nuclear programme as an attack on their economic and geopolitical interests in the region—one, moreover, that given the bitter conflicts between Russia and China on the one side, and the US on the other in Ukraine and Eastern Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and on the economic front, could rapidly escalate into all-out war.

For the European imperialists, referred to as the "E3" in the context of talks on Iran's nuclear programme, the threat of reimposing UN

sanctions remains one of the few diplomatic tools they possess to influence the current talks, from which they have been all but excluded by Trump. In March, the E3 issued a joint statement with the US denouncing Iran, after the IAEA's latest quarterly inspection report revealed an increase in the amount of uranium Iran has enriched to a purity level of 60 percent, just short of the 90 percent needed to build a nuclear weapon.

While the European imperialist powers are in fundamental agreement with Washington on the need to reduce Iran's regional influence and curtail its nuclear programme, the rift that has opened up between the transatlantic allies over recent months due to Trump's push for an accommodation with the Putin regime on the basis of a negotiated settlement to the war in Ukraine and his tariffs against the European powers underscores that they are not necessarily pursuing the same goal in reaching a new deal with Iran. The American and European imperialists could well find themselves in conflict over the talks or a unilateral military strike by Washington with Israeli support.

Even in the event of a new agreement between the US and Iran, the threat of a regional war will remain acute. Tehran's capitulation to American imperialist demands would escalate the conflicts between Washington on one side, and China and Russia on the other, and lead to them being fought out ever more directly. Moreover, it would be based on an agreement by the bourgeois-clerical regime to dismantle what remains of the economic and social concessions that were made to the working class in the wake of the 1979 Revolution, opening up the Iranian economy to ruthless exploitation by American capital. This process would further exacerbate the already sharp social tensions in the country, threatening the regime's downfall.

The only progressive way out of the looming war danger throughout the Middle East and the deepening social catastrophe for the Iranian masses produced by the competing imperialist and great-power interests is through the fight for socialism. Workers in Iran must unify their struggles with those of the working class throughout the Middle East, irrespective of their national and ethnic origin, and with the workers in the imperialist centres, to build a global anti-war movement. This movement must counterpose a socialist and internationalist programme in the fight for workers' power to both the aggressive drive of American and European imperialism, and the bankrupt Islamism and nationalism of the bourgeois-clerical regime.



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