

# US strike on Iran appears imminent as aircraft carrier task force arrives in Arabian Sea and Trump makes new threats

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An American “armada” in the shape of the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and several guided-missile destroyers is now deployed in the Arabian Sea, placing it in position to launch a devastating aerial bombardment of Iran with the aim of bringing about regime change. The Pentagon’s Central Command announced Tuesday a multi-day air “exercise” in what could well be cover for the second direct attack on Iran by American imperialism in little more than six months.

The exercise will “demonstrate the ability to deploy, disperse, and sustain combat airpower,” according to the Pentagon. Britain has also dispatched fighter jets to Qatar, and two European airlines have cancelled commercial flights to the region.

As he left the World Economic Forum in Davos last week, US President Donald Trump threatened Iran. After he drew attention to the ships heading for the Persian Gulf region, he warned any attack would make last year’s US strike on Iranian uranium enrichment sites “look like peanuts.” This was a reference to the unprovoked and illegal 12-day war waged by the US and Israel against Iran last June, during which the country’s nuclear facilities were repeatedly struck and more than a thousand people were killed.

On Wednesday morning, Trump underscored the imminence of a possible military strike on Iran, saying the fleet headed by the USS Abraham Lincoln is larger than that Washington deployed off Venezuela before kidnapping its president, Nicolás Maduro, and stands “prepared to rapidly fulfill its missions with speed and violence if necessary.”

“As I told Iran once before, MAKE A DEAL!” Trump declared on his Truth social media account. “They didn’t, and there was ‘Operation Midnight Hammer,’ a major destruction of Iran. The next attack will be far worse! Don’t make that happen again.”

Washington’s threats against Iran are part of a long-running drive to topple the bourgeois-clerical regime and bring to power a pro-Western puppet government to facilitate US imperialist dominance over the energy-rich Middle East. Successive US governments have used brutal economic sanctions to devastate Iran’s economy and plunge the vast majority of its population into miserable poverty, making a mockery of the claims of the Trump administration, his ostensible Democratic Party opponents, and the European imperialist powers, to be interested in the “liberation” or “human rights” of the Iranian people.

Following the same playbook used in the lead-up to last June’s strikes, Trump continues to claim that “diplomacy” is still an option. “They want to make a deal,” said America’s would-be dictator last week of the Iranian regime, which has repeatedly sought to arrive at an accommodation with the imperialist powers to secure sanctions relief. “I know so. They called on numerous occasions. They want to talk.”

Trump was so successful last year in convincing senior layers of the Iranian regime that Washington was intent on a negotiated settlement that

many top-ranking generals were still residing in their private homes when the air strikes began, making them easy pickings for the targeted strikes carried out by the Zionist regime on behalf of American imperialism. This time around, there are reports suggesting that Washington may be plotting an even more ambitious decapitation exercise, including the assassination of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, a war crime that would likely provoke a region-wide conflagration. According to anti-regime media, Khamenei has moved into an underground shelter in Tehran Province, while his third son, Masoud, has assumed day-to-day oversight of his office and is now the key figure coordinating with the government.

The Trump administration intends to capitalise on the weakened position of the bourgeois-clerical regime in Tehran and engineer a change in government that will line up with the US against its rivals, Russia and China. Israel’s imperialist-backed genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza, months-long bombardment of Lebanon, and repeated strikes on Yemen, and the US-backed toppling of the Assad regime in Syria significantly weakened Iranian-aligned forces throughout the region. Last year’s nearly two-week bombardment of Iran by Israel and the US, together with the earlier assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh during his visit to Tehran as a guest of honour of the Islamic Republic, demonstrated how exposed the regime is.

This is due both to concerted infiltration by Israeli and US intelligence, and its bankrupt bourgeois-nationalist perspective. Hostile to the democratic and social aspirations of the Iranian working class and toilers, the Iranian regime is organically incapable of mobilizing the masses of the Middle East against imperialism and its Zionist client state, and has instead for decades sought an accommodation with the imperialist powers.

## Anti-government protests

Not only has Tehran’s regional position been weakened, but it has also been shaken by the mass protests that erupted on December 28. They were initiated by bazaar merchants, traditionally a pillar of support for the regime. Unrest rapidly spread due to plummeting living standards that are largely the product of decades of US-imposed sanctions and, more recently, the European powers’ use of the “snapback” mechanism to reimpose UN sanctions last October.

Politically, the protests came to be dominated by right-wing, pro-imperialist forces, including privileged elements calling for the restoration of the monarchy and Kurdish and Baluchi separatists. After initially offering talks, the government abruptly changed course, and at the express orders of Khamenei, ruthlessly suppressed the protests, resulting in the

deaths of at least several thousand people and possibly many more. The US-based son of Reza Pahlavi, whose brutal monarchical dictatorship was toppled by the 1979 Iranian Revolution, has called on the US to carry out “surgical strikes” against the regime, after previously encouraging his supporters to “seize” the centres of Iran’s major cities.

Iranian authorities have steadily increased their count of the numbers killed since the protest movement began on December 28. It now acknowledges that 3,117 people were killed. These include some 2,225 civilians and more than 200 security forces, with the remainder classified as “terrorists.” Officials have claimed much of the violence was orchestrated by armed protesters in the service of foreign governments. They have pointed to statements by Israeli officials and former CIA director Mike Pompeo that all but boasted that Mossad operatives were active on the ground alongside Iranian protesters.

From all reports, the state security crackdown had succeeded in emptying the streets of protesters by the beginning of the week of January 12. However, despite initial promises, the regime has not restored internet access, pointing to its crisis.

The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) reported Tuesday that at least 6,126 people have been killed, including 5,777 protesters, 214 government-affiliated forces, 86 children and 49 civilians, numbers it said were based on verified reports from its network of activists inside Iran. This far exceeds the death toll in previous protest movements since 1979. HRANA also said that more than 27,700 people had been arrested, many of whom the government has described as members of “terrorist” groups.

The condemnations of the Islamic Republic’s brutality emanating from the imperialist capitals and their media mouthpieces are entirely hypocritical and self-serving. These same forces have carried out or supported and justified the horrific violence that American imperialism has employed to consolidate its grip over the Middle East and Central Asia. Just since the beginning of this century, Washington’s neo-colonial wars have resulted in the deaths of millions and the displacement of many millions more from their homes in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Somalia, and other countries. Trump and other representatives of American imperialism are cynically exploiting the plight of the Iranian population to justify a still further aggression to establish a “new Middle East,” where Washington can plunder its resources, secure strategic transportation routes, and deny China and other rivals access to energy supplies and trade routes.

The arrival of the USS Abraham Lincoln off Iran’s shores comes just days after Trump’s attack on Venezuela and pronouncement that the US is seizing control of the country’s vast oil resources. Washington is now menacing another of Beijing’s key oil suppliers—continuing its economic warfare and preparations for military conflict against China. Caracas functioned as a hub for sanctioned Iranian oil exports and a base for the commercial dealings of the Iranian-allied Hezbollah.

## Growing threat war will engulf the entire region

Washington’s reckless escalation of war in the Middle East threatens to unleash a region-wide bloodbath. Earlier this month, Trump made repeated threats to attack Iran, claiming as justification that Iranian security forces were killing peaceful protesters and promising protesters that “help is on its way.” He delayed doing so after his military advisers told him that unseating the regime would require troops on the ground as well as air strikes, and his Gulf allies warned that an assault on Iran would cause turmoil throughout the region, not least because they, too, are sitting atop social powder kegs.

Instead, Trump imposed additional sanctions on Iranians accused of ordering the killing of protesters, including Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran’s Supreme Council for National Security and four regional commanders of Iran’s Law Enforcement Forces and Revolutionary Guard.

He also announced a 25 percent tariff on the products of any country that continued to conduct trade with Iran, but as of yet has issued no executive order putting this into effect.

The Trump administration has also intensified pressure on Iraq’s federal government, threatening to limit its access to its oil revenue if militias backed by Iran are included in the next government. That government is to be headed by pro-Iranian Shia leader Nouri al-Maliki. Iran has long used Baghdad’s banking system as a means of navigating US restrictions on its access to dollars, prompting successive US administrations to impose sanctions on more than a dozen Iraqi banks.

Several of Washington’s Gulf allies have publicly refused—since April 2025—to let Washington use their bases, where around 40,000 US troops are already stationed, for any strike on Iran, for fear both of the popular reaction and Iranian retaliatory strikes. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), a close ally of Israel and home to the US military’s Al-Dhafra Air Base, said on Monday that it would not allow its airspace, territory or territorial waters to be used for any hostile military actions against Iran, although Jordan has apparently agreed.

The Trump administration is closely coordinating its efforts with Israel, its regional attack dog. The *Times of Israel* reported that Commander of the United States Central Command, Admiral Brad Cooper, was in Israel last weekend for meetings with top military and intelligence officials.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) has been on high alert, carrying out preparations following Trump’s threats of military action against Iran. Israeli army Northern Command chief Rafi Milo told TV Channel 12, “We see the force buildup the US is carrying out, both in the Persian Gulf and throughout the region. We are very alert, very prepared, and ready both in strong defence and in preparing offensive responses.”

Iran has warned that its response to any attack would be far greater than its reaction to the US and Israel’s 12-day war last June. After the US directly entered the war, the Iranian regime responded with an attack on the US military base in Qatar that was effectively communicated in advance to Washington and caused no casualties.

Late last week a senior Iranian official said, “This military buildup—we hope it is not intended for real confrontation—but our military is ready for the worst-case scenario. This is why everything is on high alert in Iran.” He added, “This time we will treat any attack—limited, unlimited, surgical, kinetic, whatever they call it—as an all-out war against us, and we will respond in the hardest way possible to settle this.”

Although he would not say what form the Iranian response would take, he insisted, “A country under constant military threat from the United States has no option but to ensure that everything at its disposal can be used to push back and, if possible, restore balance against anyone who dares to attack Iran.”

Abbas Araghchi, Iran’s foreign minister, a member of the faction of the Iranian political establishment that has repeatedly pressed for an agreement with the US, was no less belligerent. He wrote in an op-ed published in the *Wall Street Journal* last week that Tehran would be “firing back with everything we have” if attacked. He said, “An all-out confrontation will certainly be ferocious and drag on far, far longer than the fantasy timelines that Israel and its proxies are trying to peddle to the White House. It will certainly engulf the wider region and have an impact on ordinary people around the globe.”

Ali Abdollahi Aliabadi, a key military figure, warned that any military strike on Iran would turn all US bases in the region into “legitimate targets.” General Mohammad Pakpour, who heads the Revolutionary Guard, said Iran is “more ready than ever, finger on the trigger” and

warned Washington and Israel “to avoid any miscalculation.”



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