

Trump and Hegseth launch “total war” against Iran

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Over the three days since the United States and Israel launched their illegal and unprovoked war on Iran, the character of the assault has become clear: a massive bombardment aimed at the systematic destruction of the Iranian state and the subjugation of an entire population.

Reports indicate that in the first 48 hours alone, US and Israeli forces struck roughly 1,200 targets, using 2,000-pound bombs and conducting decapitation strikes to murder senior political and military leadership. The bombardment has focused on disabling Iran’s air defenses and the basic nervous system of the country—anti-aircraft batteries, radar, communications networks and command-and-control systems—in preparation for an even more devastating assault.

As of Monday afternoon Eastern Time, at least 742 civilians have been reported killed in Iran, including 176 children, with more than 900 injured, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran (HRANA).

Trump has reveled in the slaughter. “We’re knocking the crap out of them,” he told a cable TV anchor, issuing an explicit threat of far greater killing to come: “We haven’t even started hitting them hard. ... The big one is coming soon.” Trump has declared that the war could last “four to five weeks” and possibly “far longer.” In a social media post late on Monday night, Trump declared that “wars can be fought ‘forever’” with US weapons stockpiles.

Speaking to the far-right *New York Post*, Trump declared, “I don’t have the yips with respect to boots on the ground. Like every president says, ‘There will be no boots on the ground.’ I don’t say it.”

The pyromaniacs in the Trump administration and their allies in Israel are setting the entire region aflame and threatening to plunge the world into a catastrophe of staggering dimensions.

The justifications and “explanations” issued by the White House shift by the day and even by the hour. Trump and his aides cannot give a consistent account of why this war was launched, what “threat” it supposedly answers or what outcome they claim to be pursuing. Trump himself has acknowledged that his plans for a “transition” after the murder of Ayatollah Khamenei were disrupted by the fact that they had killed everyone in the leadership of the Iranian state.

What predominates in Washington is utter gangsterism. This was the political content of the first official military briefing at the Pentagon since the attack began, held Monday morning. Secretary

of War Pete Hegseth used the briefing to proclaim, “Two days ago, under the direction and direct orders of President Donald J. Trump, the Department of War launched Operation Epic Fury, the most-lethal, most-complex and most-precise aerial operation in history.”

The “most lethal” aerial operation in history? Presumably that means more lethal than the firebombing massacres of the Second World War, including the incineration of Tokyo, which killed at least 100,000 people, and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which killed 90,000 and 60,000, respectively.

Hegseth made clear in his remarks that there is no line that the US military will not cross. The war would be fought, he boasted, “All on our terms, with maximum authorities, no stupid rules of engagement, no nation-building quagmire, no democracy-building exercise, no politically correct wars. We fight to win ...”

This is a declaration of intent to wage war as the Nazis did. Hegseth, imitating Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels, declares “total war”: the US won’t be constrained by international or domestic law. This is precisely what the Nuremberg Tribunal condemned in judging the Third Reich: the launching of aggressive war as a “crime against peace”—the “supreme international crime”—which led ultimately to the execution of those responsible.

Buying for blood, Hegseth extolled the “warrior ethos,” declaring: “We are not defenders anymore. We are warriors, trained to kill the enemy and break their will.” At one point, Hegseth hailed Israel as “capable partners ... unlike so many of our traditional allies who wring their hands and clutch their pearls, hemming and hawing about the use of force.” That is, the Israeli genocide in Gaza is to be the model for Iran.

The entire briefing had a menacing tone: A regime that has launched an illegal war and is preparing mass killing is simultaneously declaring that it owes the American people no explanation and will tolerate no questioning. When a reporter cited Trump’s statement that the bombing would continue for “four to five weeks,” Hegseth sneered that it was a “gotcha question.” The White House and the Pentagon recognize no constraint on their actions other than what Trump earlier described as his own “morality.”

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) convened an emergency Board of Governors session on March 2 after Iran alleged that the Natanz nuclear enrichment facility was struck. In his statement, Director General Rafael Grossi warned that “we

cannot rule out a possible radiological release with serious consequences, including the necessity to evacuate areas as large or larger than major cities” if attacks on nuclear sites continue.

Hegseth’s remarks also pointed to the next stage of escalation. Refusing to rule out “boots on the ground,” he echoed Trump’s own statements and left open the prospect of a US-led invasion—i.e., a full-scale land war against a country of roughly 93 million people.

The 2003 Iraq invasion began with about 145,000 US troops, which US officials described as only “a fraction of what would be needed to invade Iran.” Iran is larger, more mountainous, and more populous than Iraq, and far more capable of sustaining prolonged resistance. Any attempt at regime change by ground conquest would, by any serious measure, require several hundred thousand troops at the outset, with vastly larger forces demanded by occupation and internal control.

Standard counterinsurgency and occupation planning by the strategists of US imperialism uses a benchmark of roughly 20–25 security personnel per 1,000 residents; applied to Iran’s population, that implies a total presence on the order of roughly 1.9 to 2.3 million troops.

A war on this scale cannot be fought without the total subordination of American society to war. The immense costs will be imposed through a massive assault on the working class. At the same time, the government will be compelled to suppress opposition by force. A prolonged war against a country of 93 million people requires not only bombs and troops abroad but a ferocious police state at home.

The utter criminality of the Trump administration’s foreign policy is inseparable from its war on the Constitution and democratic rights within the United States. The regime is openly preparing measures to rig the 2026 elections—or even suspend them entirely—through bogus claims of mass voting by “illegal aliens,” while issuing threats that opponents of its policies of war, austerity and repression will be rounded up en masse.

The Trump regime has initiated a war whose consequences they neither foresee nor control. There is an element of insanity in its actions, but it is an insanity rooted in class interests. The war against Iran arises out of decades of expanding US aggression, driven by the imperative of American imperialism to counter its economic decline through military violence.

At the same time, the Trump administration confronts an escalating political crisis at home, intensified by the Epstein revelations, which have ripped away any remaining veil from the operations of a criminal oligarchy. A government mired in crimes and threatened by growing popular anger responds as such governments always do: It seeks salvation in war.

In the corporate media and throughout the political establishment there is no serious explanation, let alone indictment, of the origins and consequences of this war: for the Iranian people, for the region threatened with conflagration and for the entire world.

It is not the Democratic Party that Trump fears. He knows very well that the Democratic leadership is on its knees, begging only for a seat at the war table. This week, Senate and House Democrats are proceeding with two separate political charades, pretending to oppose the war but actually doing nothing.

The Senate will vote on legislation under the War Powers Act restricting Trump’s actions in Iran. Even if it passes, which is unlikely, it would not be by the margin required to overcome the inevitable Trump veto. The House Democrats avoided this problem by presenting their “antiwar” bill as a mere resolution, which does not have the force of law and would not represent the slightest obstacle to Trump’s criminal war.

This is not opposition to war but collaboration. The Democratic Party is a party of Wall Street and American imperialism. It defends the same class interests as the Republicans and is committed to the global operations of US militarism. Its principal fear is not Trump’s war and dictatorship, but the emergence of a movement from below.

The intensifying war crisis underscores the urgency of the statement issued by the Socialist Equality Party National Committee yesterday, “Stop the criminal US-Israeli war against Iran!” The statement outlined the basis upon which the fight against war must be waged:

First, the struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population.

Second, the new anti-war movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.

Third, the new anti-war movement must be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class.

Fourth, the new anti-war movement must, above all, be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism.

We call on workers and youth to mobilize against this criminal war and the entire US-Israeli assault on the Middle East. The factories, ports, logistics hubs, schools and hospitals must become centers of discussion and organized resistance. Call meetings to demand the immediate end of this war. Expose the lies that justify this aggression, reject every attempt to silence opposition, and take up the fight for an international socialist program against war and dictatorship.



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