

US media, politicians raise prospect of “boots on the ground” in Iran as Marine force deploys

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Amid an ever-greater escalation of the US war on Iran, the American media and political establishment are openly raising the prospect of sending ground troops into the country which would vastly expand the scope and scale of a war that has already killed thousands.

These statements confirm the warning made by the *World Socialist Web Site* on Friday that “the Trump administration is preparing the next and most terrible stage of the escalation of the war—an invasion with US ground troops to seize control of Iranian territory along the Strait of Hormuz.”

In a front-page article Saturday, the *New York Times* declared that US President Donald Trump “will have to grapple with two of the biggest decisions of the war: whether to attack, with ground troops, Kharg Island and the nuclear storage facilities where about 970 pounds of near-bomb-grade uranium is believed to remain.”

On Kharg Island, Iran’s main oil export terminal, the *Times* noted the island “is an exposed target, accessible to the U.S. Navy at the northern end of the Persian Gulf. But seizing it means protecting an occupying force from remnants of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, which could launch strikes from the shore or small boats, or blow up the pipelines that supply the port facilities on the island with Iranian oil.” If the operation succeeds, the *Times* added, “Mr. Trump will have full control of the port that most Iranian oil exports originate from—and thus a stranglehold on the country’s economy.”

As for the attempt to capture Iran’s uranium, the *Times* raised that it would mean sending troops to “go in with a huge protective force and spend days or weeks carefully extracting the canisters. There is little room for error: If the canisters were pierced and moisture entered them, the result would be both highly toxic and radioactive. If they were kept too close together, there would be risk of

triggering a critical nuclear reaction.”

The *Wall Street Journal*, for its part, published a detailed assessment Saturday that openly discussed the option to “use ground troops to seize the territory around” the Strait of Hormuz. The *Journal* reported: “Maintaining control of the area would require an invasion, military analysts say. The U.S. would try to suppress Iranian ground forces with airstrikes, keeping them away from the landing force, though there could be direct combat.” Any American troops on the ground, the *Journal* noted, “would remain targets for Iranian attacks. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps—190,000 troops strong—and its elite Quds Force specialize in asymmetric warfare and have spent decades backing insurgents throughout the Middle East, including in neighboring Iraq, where they helped militants launch deadly attacks on U.S. troops following the 2003 invasion.”

The British *Telegraph*, for its part, published an article Sunday titled, “How Trump’s ‘911’ marine unit could wrest control of Strait of Hormuz,” with the subtitle: “Elite force’s arrival could enable US to launch raids, prompting new phase of Iran war.”

On Friday, the Pentagon announced it would deploy a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU)—a rapid-response amphibious force of roughly 2,200 Marines backed by over 2,000 sailors on three warships—from its base in Okinawa, Japan to the Middle East. The Pentagon’s own description of the MEU’s mission is the “rapid insertion of sustainable combat forces—‘boots on the ground.’”

Daniel Byman, a former senior adviser to the State Department and US intelligence official, told the *Journal*: “If you start with limited numbers of special-operations forces, do you need more forces to protect them? You have to kind of decide whether to accept gains or double down.” To secure the shipping lane, the *Journal*

concluded, “U.S. troops might have to be deployed in Iran for months or longer.”

The logic of “doubling down” is precisely the trajectory of the war. Having launched a criminal assault on Iran on February 28, the Trump administration has found that two weeks of bombing—more than 6,000 targets struck, the supreme leader and top officials killed, over 65 naval vessels damaged, destroyed or sunk—have not forced Iran’s capitulation. The Strait of Hormuz remains effectively closed. Iran continues to strike at commercial shipping with small boats, antiship missiles, drones and sea mines. Oil has surged past \$103 a barrel. The war’s architects miscalculated, and now the answer from the military and political establishment is escalation.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a longtime advocate of regime change in Iran and close ally of the president, made this explicit. “He who controls Kharg Island, controls the destiny of this war,” Graham posted on X. “Semper Fi.”

“Semper Fi”—short for Semper Fidelis, “Always Faithful”—is the motto of the United States Marine Corps. Graham’s post was a dog whistle calling for a Marine amphibious invasion of Kharg Island, which Trump struck Friday and boasted had been “totally obliterated.” Trump told NBC he might hit it again “a few more times just for fun.” Retired Marine Colonel Mark Cancian of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) told reporters: “These are the first ground combat troops that are headed to the region. The US might be able to capture the island and then say ‘OK, we’re done.’”

The scale of the catastrophe already unleashed is enormous. According to Iran’s health ministry, more than 1,400 people have been killed and over 18,000 injured since February 28. The youngest victim was eight months old. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports up to 3.2 million displaced. The country’s internet has been reduced to 4 percent of normal capacity. Nine hospitals have been knocked out of service entirely. In Tehran alone, the governor reports at least 10,000 homes damaged or destroyed. A strike on a factory in Isfahan on Friday killed at least 15 workers on what was a regular working day.

In Lebanon, Israel has seized on the war to launch what a senior Israeli official described as a campaign to “do what we did in Gaza.” Since March 2, Israeli bombardment has killed 850 people—107 of them children—and driven more than 850,000 from their homes, roughly one out of every seven people in the country. Israeli leaflets dropped over Lebanon declared: “In light

of the great success in Gaza, the newspaper of the new reality arrives to Lebanon.” UN satellite analysis has documented damage to 81 percent of Gaza’s built environment—And this is the model Israel is now applying to its northern neighbor. On Friday alone, an Israeli airstrike on a clinic in Burj Qalawiya killed 12 medical workers while they were treating patients, bringing the total number of paramedics killed since March 2 to 26.

Thirteen American service members have been killed in what the Pentagon has branded Operation Epic Fury, including six who died when a KC-135 refueling aircraft crashed in western Iraq on Thursday.

Energy Secretary Chris Wright, appearing on Sunday morning television, provided the first concrete timeline for the war, confirming that “four to six weeks” was the “likely timeframe.” He acknowledged the Strait of Hormuz is not safe for shipping. Former Republican Congressman Patrick McHenry was even more revealing on ABC’s *This Week*, dismissing the entire war as “noise on the way” to a trade confrontation with China. “Venezuela was in service to American energy dominance,” McHenry said. “The issue with Iran was a target of opportunity where you had the 40 top leaders gathered in the same spot and they took action.”

More than 1,400 Iranians dead, 850 Lebanese dead, 13 Americans dead, oil above \$100 a barrel, 3.2 million people driven from their homes—all of it, in McHenry’s words, just “noise” on the road to “reshaping the world.”

The Democratic Party’s response has been to offer the most tepid criticism imaginable. Democratic Senator Adam Schiff of California said on NBC’s *Meet the Press* that he did not think the war was “worth the costs” and that Trump had not “leveled with the American people.” But it was the Democrats who helped provide the arms for this war. In January, as Trump was massing forces for the assault on Iran, the House passed the \$839 billion defense appropriations bill by a vote of 341 to 88, with Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, Minority Whip Katherine Clark and Democratic Caucus Chair Pete Aguilar all casting “Yea” votes. In the Senate, the bill passed 71 to 29, with Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and Minority Whip Dick Durbin voting in favor.



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