

US ground invasion looms as Iran war escalates

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Less than three weeks after the United States and Israel launched their criminal war against Iran, an impending ground invasion by American troops is paving the way for the conflict's escalation into a global conflagration.

Some 7,500 marines are within days of arriving in the region aboard multiple ships from three US amphibious assault groups. The USS Tripoli group was redeployed from the Asia-Pacific region, while personnel assigned to the three ships in the USS Boxer Amphibious Ready Group, based in California, cut short their leave to depart for the Middle East earlier. A third similarly-sized unit of marines is en route to the region.

The catastrophic consequences that will follow a ground invasion flow from the criminal character of the US/Israeli war on Iran. US President Donald Trump announced the launching of the war in the dead of night February 28, less than two days after US and Iranian diplomats met for a third round of talks in Geneva. US imperialism's stated goal is the destruction of Iranian society, which Trump and his fascist Secretary of War Pete Hegseth have repeated on numerous occasions. Trump once again revealed Friday in the program of targeted assassinations employed by American and Israeli forces to eliminate dozens of leading military and political figures, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, declaring, "They are all gone...We are wanting to talk to them but we have nobody to talk to. We like it that way."

This mafia-style bravado cannot conceal the fact that the war of extermination has plunged American and world imperialism into an accelerating crisis. Trump's plan to decapitate the bourgeois-clerical regime in Tehran and bring about "regime change" from the air has failed spectacularly. Iran has responded by seizing control of the Strait of Hormuz and firing retaliatory strikes on US bases and energy infrastructure across the Gulf region. Oil and natural gas prices have skyrocketed, threatening social

and economic unrest in the imperialist centres of North America and Europe as rampant inflation impoverishes millions of workers.

The only answer the gangster in the White House has on offer is to wage the war more aggressively. Axios reported Friday that three sources in the White House said deploying ground troops is "under serious consideration." One of the most likely scenarios is an attempt to capture Kharg Island, where some 90 percent of Iran's oil exports is processed. Trump told reporters Thursday that he was "not putting troops anywhere," before adding in the style of a dictator, "If I were, I certainly wouldn't tell you."

Trump may have convinced himself, like Hitler before him, that he alone can determine the course of the war. But the reality is that merely by sending troops in such large numbers to the region, their deployment has become all but inevitable. The alternative would be a humiliating withdrawal by Washington. Under conditions of an intensifying struggle among the major powers for raw materials, cheap labour, geostrategic influence, and control over trade routes, Trump could hardly expect to politically survive such a climb-down.

The deployment of ground troops will give the war an even greater escalatory dynamic. The 13 US military fatalities reported so far will rapidly multiply, demanding the sending of ever greater numbers of troops. Iran would be able to target US positions on Kharg Island, which lies just 15 miles off the coast, or along the mainland's coastline if operations were launched there. Iran would have the ability to reinforce its defensive positions from its population of 93 million people. One Australian think tank drew the comparison with the 1915 operation launched by Britain and its allies during World War I to capture the Gallipoli peninsula, which resulted in over 250,000 deaths and ended in failure.

This is not the only comparison one can make between the present conflict and the First World War. Another is

the rapidity with which all of the major imperialist powers are being dragged into the war. At the beginning of the week, the European imperialists were still declaring at a meeting of foreign ministers in Brussels that this is “not our war.” By Thursday, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Japan released a statement pledging to take part in clearing the Strait of Hormuz. On Friday, Britain announced it was permitting the US to use its bases for attacks on Iranian targets being used to prevent ships passing through the waterway, which serves as a transit route for 20 percent of the world’s oil. The main fears driving the Europeans towards escalation in a desperate bid to bring the war to a swift conclusion are that a prolonged war will cripple their economies through high energy prices, deprive Ukraine of US-made weapons to continue the war on Russia, and strengthen the Kremlin financially due to better oil and LNG revenues.

The war’s expansion is rooted in crisis-ridden capitalism, expressed in the irreconcilable contradictions between a global economy and the division of the world into nation states, and between the social character of production and the private ownership of the means of production by a tiny financial oligarchy. The oligarchy for which Trump speaks hopes that by laying hold of Iran’s energy resources, and sidelining Russia and China in the Middle East, the US can overcome its protracted economic decline.

Washington’s goal is to erase the 20th century by overturning the social and political gains made by the working class in the revolutionary and anti-colonial struggles of this period, and return the world to the naked colonial oppression that characterised the dawn of imperialism in the late 1800s, with the only difference that the US, rather than Britain, will be the unchallenged hegemon. To pursue this strategy, the ruling class requires an intensification of class war at home alongside military warfare abroad. This is why Trump’s operation to establish a dictatorship in the US finds no genuine opposition from within the ruling class and the European ruling elites are systematically integrating far-right parties into established politics.

From the very outset, the *World Socialist Web Site* drew attention to the criminal nature of this war and its escalatory potential. On the first day of the war, WSWS International Editorial Board chairman David North wrote,

This war will not solve the internal social crisis

of American society, nor will it reverse the protracted deterioration in the global position of US capitalism.

All these contradictions, domestic and international, will be intensified. The war itself will inevitably escalate and engulf the entire planet.

Trump more or less acknowledged the dimensions of the war he has unleashed during a meeting at the White House with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi Thursday, when he compared the US/Israeli bombardment of Iran to Japan’s 1941 attack on Pearl Harbour. Asked by a reporter why Japan and other US allies did not receive advanced notice of the war, Trump stated, “We didn’t tell anybody about it because we wanted surprise. Who knows better about surprise than Japan, ok? Why didn’t you tell me about Pearl Harbour ok? Right?”

Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 brought the United States into World War II. By the end of the slaughter in 1945, the war had claimed the lives of over 80 million people, and witnessed the horrors of the Nazis’ Holocaust of European Jewry and America’s dropping of two atomic bombs on Japanese cities. Washington and its imperialist rivals are prepared to use no less ruthless methods today to secure their share of the spoils in the new repartition of the world.

Halting the resurgence of imperialist barbarism demands the mobilisation of the international working class for the socialist reorganisation of society. Workers in the imperialist countries have no interest in paying hand over fist for the ruling elites’ wars of plunder through steep price inflation, job cuts, and the elimination of social programs to fund the military. Their natural allies in the struggle to inflict a defeat on American and European imperialism are workers in Iran and throughout the Middle East, who can beat back imperialist conquest only by taking their place in the global struggle for political power to pass into the hands of the working class and socialism. This is the program advocated by the *World Socialist Web Site* and International Committee of the Fourth International.



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