

As American deaths mount, Trump escalates war against Iran

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The Trump administration is engaging in a massive escalation of the war against Iran. The United States resumed the bombing of Iran on July 11, after President Donald Trump declared the June 17 ceasefire “over.” US forces have struck the country for nine consecutive nights, extending their targets from military sites to bridges, railways, ports and the power grid, while enforcing a naval blockade with missile fire.

Iranian missiles killed two American soldiers in Jordan on Friday. On Sunday the US military announced that a third soldier had been killed in northern Iraq and that additional remains, not yet identified, had been recovered at the base in Jordan. The *Washington Post* put the war’s American toll Sunday at 17, possibly 18, dead and more than 430 wounded.

The Jordanian base where the two soldiers died had been struck at least twice in one week; a strike a day earlier wounded about 20 soldiers, the *Post* reported Sunday. The *Post* also reported two further attacks in Jordan—one on King Faisal Air Base that wounded several soldiers, another on Prince Hassan Air Base that damaged Black Hawk helicopters—about which Pentagon spokesmen declined to comment. No Pentagon spokesman has taken questions on the war since May 5.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported July 15 that Trump “is leaning toward expanding U.S. military operations in Iran,” with options including “sending ground forces to seize Iranian islands near the Strait of Hormuz.” The *Journal* reported that a White House Situation Room meeting was held “to discuss the potential seizure of Kharg Island and other territory along the Strait of Hormuz using U.S. troops.” The journalist Seymour Hersh reported June 10 that Trump asked whether using low-yield nuclear weapons against Iran’s underground

missile plants “was doable.”

“The U.S. is planning for a wider war,” a US official familiar with internal administration discussions told the *Washington Post* in an article published Sunday. The official said the Pentagon is sending more warplanes to the region, but warned that the military is running low on air-defense missiles and long-range strike weapons, and that battle damage limits how many more troops and aircraft can be brought in. “We do not have enough to safely sustain operations, and I don’t think the White House is aware of that,” the official said.

Iran is widening its response. The official quoted by the *Post* said Tehran regarded last week’s US strikes on the bridges and rail lines serving Bandar Abbas as an escalation and answered in kind: “They had less concern about inflicting mass casualties on the United States.”

Nearly five months of war have not destroyed Iran’s capacity to strike American bases across Jordan, Kuwait and the Gulf, or to keep the strait closed. An Iranian strike hit a Kuwaiti power-and-water plant for the second straight day Sunday, Jordan shot down three missiles, and attacks were reported on the port and airport of Aqaba. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard declared July 15 that with “American bandits” blocking Iran’s oil and gas exports, “they must await the closure of other oil and gas export routes that serve the interests of the U.S. and its allies.”

Military analysts told the *Post* that US forces were in no condition for ground operations inside Iran, which Trump has refused to rule out. “I think it would be a mistake to put ground forces anywhere in islands in the strait or onshore,” said Seth Jones of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “I don’t think U.S. forces are prepared for standoff strikes from Iranians.”

American troops landing on Kharg Island would be subjected to waves of missile and drone strikes from the shore, and the casualties already sustained would be only a down payment. Each new loss would intensify the pressure for further escalation—up to the use of the nuclear weapons Trump has already discussed.

The logic of the war drives American imperialism to escalate because a retreat would mean a crippling loss of global prestige—the fear that gripped the ruling class throughout the Vietnam War, when President Richard Nixon declared in April 1970 that the United States must not act like “a pitiful, helpless giant.” But each escalation has widened the war and multiplied the dangers, and a landing of American troops on Iranian territory, against a prepared enemy and with depleted stocks, would be an act of colossal recklessness.

The war against Iran is part of a conflagration that now extends from Ukraine, where Ukrainian weapons, provided and funded by the NATO powers, are raining down on Russian cities, to the economic strangulation of China. The *Wall Street Journal* reported Saturday that Iran’s precision in striking sensitive targets has raised concerns among US officials that China or Russia is providing targeting assistance. Whether or not this claim is true, the Iran war is one front of a far broader global war.

The Democratic Party is playing its assigned role: demobilizing the widespread popular opposition to that war.

This weekend, as the war stood on the brink of a massive expansion, the Democratic Party staged more than 700 “Good Trouble Lives On” rallies, nominally in opposition to Trump’s attacks on democratic rights. At the flagship Good Trouble rally in Atlanta, three-and-a-half hours of speeches passed without the word “Iran.”

Also over the weekend, Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York rallied in Detroit for Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed. Neither El-Sayed nor Ocasio-Cortez referenced Iran. Sanders mentioned the war once, in a single sentence. The *New York Times* also published a 65-minute interview with New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, the most prominent elected member of the Democratic Socialists of America. Mamdani did not mention Iran.

When Trump signed the memorandum of

understanding on June 17, the Democratic leadership attacked it as a capitulation. The theme was continued over the weekend. Democratic Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, the vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, criticized Trump on ABC’s *This Week* for failing to achieve the aims of US imperialism in the Middle East: “Regime change, how we doing there? We got a worse crowd than before. Getting the enriched uranium, well, it’s still there.”

Asked by ABC’s Jonathan Karl whether he agreed with Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts, who has called for cutting off all funding to the war, Warner refused: “We have troops in the region,” he said, urging Trump instead to “come to Congress, make his case to the American people.” Democratic Senator John Fetterman of Pennsylvania, who voted to block limits on Trump’s war powers, said, “I think it’s entirely appropriate to continue to confront Iran.”

Trump’s resumed bombing of Iran carries out the demands that leading Democrats have been making for weeks. Their effective position is that the war should continue.

The Democrats support the war because they are a party of the same ruling class as Trump. Their conduct continues the policy of the Biden administration, which armed the Gaza genocide, and, as its adviser Amos Hochstein has acknowledged, made active preparations for strikes on Iran. They have focused their criticisms on complaints that the war has not succeeded in imposing US domination of the Middle East and its energy resources.

The Democratic Party’s function is to corral the overwhelming popular opposition to the war into a get-out-the-vote operation for the midterm elections. The Trump administration is able to ignore public opinion because the Democratic Party works to suppress it. In doing so, the Democrats clear the road to a wider war.



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