

US war against Iran enters new phase with strikes on oil tankers

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The US-Iran war entered a new phase on Tuesday, with Washington and Tehran exchanging missile strikes that included attacks on shipping and threats of further escalation across the Middle East.

The US destroyed five Iranian oil tankers after Iran reportedly launched ballistic missiles at a US Navy warship. Iran responded with missile attacks on a US military installation in Jordan along with threats against American-linked shipping in the Persian Gulf.

The latest escalation demonstrates the collapse of every claim by the White House that the war is being wound up through limited military actions, economic sanctions or temporary ceasefires. The conflict is spreading geographically and increasingly targeting the infrastructure upon which the global economy depends.

On Tuesday, US Central Command said American forces struck five Iranian crude-oil carriers, four in the Gulf of Oman and one near Kharg Island. One tanker was sunk, while the remaining vessels were described by the Pentagon as disabled or rendered inoperable.

The attacks followed what Washington said were two Iranian ballistic-missile attacks against a US Navy warship over the previous two days. CENTCOM said the American vessel evaded the missiles and no US personnel were injured. Iranian state media and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) gave a different account, claiming that Iranian forces had damaged US destroyers carrying cruise missiles and Aegis air-defense systems.

The US military's action follows an increasingly explicit policy of reprisal against Iranian shipping. American officials have threatened to strike multiple Iranian vessels for every US ship attacked by Tehran. The policy amounts to a declaration that Washington will use military force to enforce its control over Iranian maritime trade, regardless of the consequences for global commercial shipping.

Iran has threatened to prevent vessels linked to the US and its allies from passing through the Strait of Hormuz. The IRGC urged crews to abandon tankers in waters near Kuwait and Bahrain and warned that additional ships could be attacked.

Roughly one-fifth of the world's petroleum supply passes through the strait. Any sustained disruption will affect fuel

prices, transportation, food production and industrial supply chains throughout the world.

Iran responded to the destruction of the tankers with a ballistic-missile barrage directed at Jordan, which hosts US military forces. The reported target was the Al-Azraq Air Base, where American aircraft and military personnel operate.

Iran claimed that its missiles struck facilities used for aircraft maintenance, deployment and shelter. US officials said the attack was ineffective and that all American personnel were accounted for. Jordanian authorities reported that 20 ballistic missiles were fired toward the country. Eighteen were intercepted by Jordanian air defenses, while two fell in unpopulated areas. No casualties were reported.

Iran also claimed that it had targeted American warships and other military assets in the region. The competing accounts of events could not be independently confirmed.

The attack nevertheless marks a significant expansion of the war. Jordan has attempted to avoid becoming a direct combatant, but its hosting of US forces makes it a potential target in any confrontation between Washington and Tehran. The same is true of US bases and military facilities across Iraq, the Gulf monarchies and the eastern Mediterranean.

The US military installation is generally identified as Muwaffaq Salti Air Base, located near Al-Azraq in eastern Jordan. The base is a major Jordanian air facility that hosts US military personnel and supports American air operations.

Iranian officials said their missiles targeted aircraft-maintenance and preparation facilities, deployment areas and hardened shelters associated with US F-35, F-16 and F-15 fighter aircraft. Some reports also referred to the nearby Prince Hassan Air Base as a target, but the precise facilities struck remain unclear.

Iranian officials have warned that the Middle East is "practically on the brink of World War Three," according to *The Independent*. The statement, made by Tehran parliamentarian Kamran Ghazanfari, cited the widening conflict involving the United States, Iran and other regional and international powers. The war is drawing in US allies, Iranian-backed forces, commercial shipping and the global energy market.

Speaking to reporters Wednesday before leaving for Dallas,

President Donald Trump predicted that the war would end “immediately after” the US midterm elections in November. “I think war is going to end immediately after the election because they can’t hold out any longer,” Trump said.

The US President accused Tehran of being “desperate to try and affect the election,” while insisting that Iran was weakening under American economic pressure. Trump also indicated that Washington was not seeking to restart negotiations after the collapse of earlier ceasefires.

The timing of Trump’s prediction reveals some of the political calculations behind the war. The president is presenting the conflict simultaneously as a military campaign, an economic siege and an election issue. Claiming that Iran will soon capitulate, Trump offers no explanation for why a government supposedly on the verge of collapse has been able to continue missile attacks, threaten shipping and deny Washington its stated objectives after six months of bombing.

Earlier this week, Trump declared on social media that oil prices would “drop precipitously” when the United States “WIN[s] the war with Iran.” This statement connects the administration’s effort to portray military domination of the Strait of Hormuz and Iran’s energy exports with a claimed solution to the economic inflationary consequences of the war.

Oil markets have responded to each new military escalation with sharp price increases. Brent crude rose to about \$99 a barrel Tuesday after reports of renewed attacks on US Navy vessels and the destruction of Iranian tankers. West Texas Intermediate crude reached approximately \$94 a barrel. Brent had already climbed above \$90 earlier in September after the fighting intensified, while prices in August reached their highest levels in nearly a month after Trump threatened retaliation against countries supporting Iran.

The impact of the war is being felt by the working class internationally through higher gasoline, heating and transportation costs. *The Independent* cited an estimate from Brown University that the war had added \$100 billion to US energy costs, or roughly \$763 per household, with the total increasing by about \$1 million every two minutes.

The price surge has created opportunities for energy corporations and financial speculators, including those with direct connections in the White House, to cash in on the market instability. Trump’s nine largest disclosed oil and gas holdings reportedly gained between \$1.5 million and \$4.4 million during the first six months of the war. His investment accounts continued buying and selling shares in companies including ExxonMobil, Chevron and ConocoPhillips.

These disclosures show that the president is running a war that directly affects asset values held by him and his family. The White House denies that Trump or his relatives have any role in investment decisions, saying the holdings are managed independently through discretionary accounts and automated investment models.

This denial does not resolve the issue since the president need

not personally place every trade for the financial interests of his family and the entire ruling oligarchy to benefit from the war. Energy companies, defense contractors, shipping firms and banks are all profiting from the destruction of productive resources and the militarization of economic life. This is a fundamental tendency of imperialism.

While the Trump administration claims that military pressure will force Tehran to surrender, the facts point in the opposite direction. After months of bombing and blockade, Iran has not capitulated, the Strait of Hormuz remains contested and American forces are increasingly exposed across the region.

The latest developments confirm the analysis of the *World Socialist Web Site*, which has described the war as part of a broader imperialist struggle for control of energy resources, strategic chokepoints and global economic power, particularly against China, which had been the principal buyer of Iranian oil.

The war will not be ended by Trump’s election timetable. Washington’s objective is not simply about shipping in the Strait of Hormuz but the strategic imperative that US imperialism must assert its domination over Iran and the entire Middle East.

Meanwhile, Tehran’s response is incapable of ending the conflict and reflects the dead end of bourgeois nationalism under conditions of an escalating imperialist military siege.

The alternative to this spiral toward a new world war is the independent mobilization of the working class in the United States, Iran and internationally against imperialist war and the capitalist system that produces it. The immediate demand must be the end of all US military operations, the withdrawal of American forces from the Middle East and the lifting of sanctions and the naval blockade.



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