

US threatens Iran with war

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Will US bombs and missiles soon be raining down on Iran? The dispatch of US warplanes and an aircraft carrier strike group to the Persian Gulf region with the express aim of sending “a clear and unmistakable message” that Washington is ready to attack Iran, along with other bellicose US actions, indicate that preparations are far advanced for a provocation that could—and most likely would—trigger a catastrophic war.

On Sunday evening, US National Security Adviser John Bolton announced that the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln and US Air Force bombers were being deployed to threaten Iran. Claiming that there were “troubling and escalatory indications and warnings,” Bolton vowed “that any attack on United States interests or those of our allies will be met with unrelenting force.” “We are fully prepared,” added Bolton, “to respond to any attack, whether by proxy, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or regular Iranian forces.”

Bolton’s threats were echoed by fellow anti-Iran war-hawk, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. He too advanced a sweeping justification for possible military action against Iran, including any “attack” on US “interests” and those of its allies by a long and diverse list of groups that Washington castigates Tehran for backing, from Shia militias in Iraq and Houthis fighters in Yemen to the Palestinian group Hamas and Lebanon’s Hezbollah.

“We will hold the Iranians accountable for attacks on American interests,” Pompeo told reporters late Sunday, “The fact that those actions take place, if they do, by some third-party proxy, whether that’s a Shia militia group or the Houthis or Hezbollah, we will hold the Iranians—Iranian leadership—directly accountable for that.”

With these “warnings” Washington has effectively proclaimed license to manufacture, at a time of its choosing, a pretext for launching war on Iran.

An “attack” on the “interests” of the US and its allies could include virtually anything, from a clash between one of the various Shia militias in Iraq and any of the 5,500 US troops that remain stationed there, to the death of an Israeli-American citizen by a cruise missile launched from the Gaza Strip .

In Syria, where notwithstanding Trump’s “pullout” announcements, some 2,000 US Special Forces troops and their proxy armies continue to occupy large swathes of the country, the US military has frequently targeted Islamic Revolutionary Guard-supported militias. With these militias remaining in close proximity to US forces, the Pentagon or the CIA could at

anytime strike them and label the ensuing clash an Iranian “attack.”

The reckless and criminal character of Washington’s actions cannot be exaggerated. The Middle East is already ablaze as a result of the series of illegal wars the US has-led and fomented in the region since 1991. A US attack on Iran, a country far larger and more populous than Iraq, would in all likelihood ignite a regional war, with Israel and Saudi Arabia serving as junior partners of US imperialism while pursuing their own predatory interests, and Syria, Hezbollah, Iraqi Shia militias and others allied with Tehran.

Moreover, from the start such a conflagration would threaten to draw in the European imperialist powers, as well as Russia and China, the great powers that Washington now officially designates as its principal “strategic adversaries.”

Because of its role as the world’s most important oil-exporting region and geostrategic significance as the hinge between Europe, Asia and Africa, the interests of all the imperialist and great powers intersect in the Middle East and all would have a massive strategic stake in its repartition through war.

War between the US and Iran would also have a colossal impact on class relations within America. The ruling elite would seek to impose the full cost of the war on the working class and to criminalize the mass opposition to it that will rapidly emerge.

In his Sunday statement, Bolton claimed, “ The United States is not seeking war with the Iranian regime.” This is a brazen lie.

In an act tantamount to war under international law, the US has imposed sweeping sanctions on Iran aimed at crashing its economy and bringing about regime-change in Tehran.

Last May, Trump abrogated the UN-endorsed the nuclear accord or JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) that the Obama administration and the other great powers had reached with Iran in 2015, although the International Atomic Energy Agency and all the other parties to the agreement—the European Union, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and China—attested that Iran had followed its provisions to the letter.

In torpedoing the JCPOA, Trump boasted he would soon impose sanctions even harsher than those with which the US and its European allies had punished Iran from 2011, halving its oil exports and crippling its foreign trade.

Last Thursday, the Trump administration dramatically ratcheted up its economic war on Iran, vowing to enforce a complete embargo on Iranian oil and natural gas exports. In November, when it froze Iran out of the world banking system and re-imposed sanctions on Iranian energy exports, Washington provided waivers to eight countries allowing them to continue to import reduced amounts of Iranian oil and natural gas.

Over protestations from the main consumers of Iranian energy exports, including China, India, Japan and Turkey, Trump, Bolton and Pompeo refused to extend any of these waivers when they expired May 2.

Washington is now committed to imposing a complete cut-off of Iranian energy exports. Other countries, including China, the largest purchaser of Iranian oil, are to be coerced into compliance by the threat of US secondary sanctions, based on the Federal Reserve Board and Wall Street's domination of the world financial system.

The US sanctions have already had a devastating impact on Iran's economy, driving up unemployment and fueling a 50 percent increase in prices since the spring of last year and this in a country long marred by increasing poverty and social inequality.

Washington's preparations for a military provocation against Iran and proclamation of a total banking and energy embargo on Iran in defiance of the world is part of a dramatic escalation of US aggression and militarism around the world, with Washington acting as a power unto itself, dictating to foe and ostensible friend alike.

The Trump administration is escalating its offensive against Iran even as it brandishes the threat of a military assault on Venezuela aimed at completing its regime-change coup against the country's elected president, Nicolas Maduro.

On Sunday Trump threatened to raise trade-war tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods to 25 percent and impose tariffs on an additional \$200 billion of Chinese exports, if Beijing fails to cede to US demands in this week's trade talks. And on Monday, in a further act of aggression, two US warships sailed near islands in the South China Sea claimed by China, in the Pentagon's latest "freedom of navigation" exercise. The name notwithstanding, these exercises are aimed at asserting the Pentagon's "right" to deploy an armada off China's coast.

The wars US imperialism has unleashed since 1991, in an attempt to offset the decline in its economic power, have manifestly failed to stop the erosion of US global dominance. But the American ruling class, seeped in financial parasitism and criminality, has no response other than increased aggression and violence.

The Democrats have tactical disputes with Trump over foreign policy, including over the wisdom of privileging all-out confrontation with Tehran. But they are no less committed to the pursuit of US global hegemony through aggression and

war. In league with sections of the military-intelligence apparatus, they have waged a neo-McCarthyite campaign against Trump, alleging collusion with Russia with the aim of imposing a more aggressive anti-Russia policy on the administration. They also support Trump's offensive against Beijing, underscored by Bernie Sanders' recent anti-China tirade.

US imperialism, however, is only the leader of the wolf-pack. The European imperialist powers are themselves all frantically rearming and cultivating far-right and fascist parties to intimidate the working class and build a constituency for militarism and war.

The oligarchical regimes that arose in Russia and China as a result of the Stalinist bureaucracies' restoration of capitalism, for their part, whip up reactionary nationalism while oscillating between military adventurism and desperate attempts to reach an accommodation with Washington and the other imperialist powers.

Iran's bourgeois nationalist regime, similarly, has no answer to imperialist aggression. The now shredded nuclear accord was only its latest failed attempt to effect a rapprochement with US imperialism. Committed to defending the class privileges of the Iranian bourgeoisie and ideologically founded on Shia populism and nationalism, the Islamic Republic is organically incapable of mobilizing the masses of the Middle East against imperialism.

Opposing imperialist aggression and war requires the mobilization of the only social force with the power to overthrow capitalism and the outmoded nation-state system in which it is historically rooted: the working class.

The resurgence of the class struggle around the world—exemplified by the Yellow Vest protests in France, the mass protests in Algeria, the rebellion of the Matamoros workers in Mexico, and the wave of teachers and other strikes in the US—is creating the objective basis for the emergence of a working class-led global movement against imperialism and war.

Such a movement must unequivocally defend Iran and Venezuela, historically oppressed countries, against US aggression, oppose any and all war preparations against them and fight for the immediate lifting of all sanctions.

Based on opposition to all the political parties and organizations of the bourgeoisie, it must unite the struggle against war with the fight to mobilize the international working class against capitalist austerity and social inequality.

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