

## US Preparing “Assault” Against Iran

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*The Pentagon announced on Monday that the US is sending 1,000 additional troops and other military resources to the Middle East amid belligerent threats against Iran by the Trump administration. The troop movement follows the previous deployment of the USS Lincoln aircraft carrier and its battle group to the Persian Gulf, along with a bomber strike group led by nuclear capable B-52s.*

An article from the Israeli website Maariv Online, republished in the *Jerusalem Post*, reported that the Trump administration is actively preparing a “tactical assault” on Iran. The report, based on diplomatic sources at the UN in New York, stated that “since Friday, the White House has been holding incessant discussions involving senior military commanders, Pentagon representatives and advisers to President Donald Trump.”

According to Maariv Online, the unnamed officials said that “the military action under consideration would be an aerial bombardment of an Iranian facility linked to its nuclear program.” A Western diplomat commented: “The bombing will be massive but will be limited to one target.”

Announcing the troop deployment, acting US Defence Secretary Patrick Shanahan stated:

“The recent Iranian attacks validate the reliable, credible intelligence we have received on hostile behaviour by Iranian forces and their proxy groups that threaten United States personnel and interests across the region.” He then absurdly added: “The United States does not seek conflict with Iran.”

In reality, the current explosive situation in the Persian Gulf is entirely of Washington’s manufacture. In breach of UN resolutions, the Trump administration unilaterally abrogated the 2015 deal between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany to limit its nuclear program in return for sanctions relief.

The US subsequently re-imposed and strengthened its crippling sanctions on Iran aimed at cutting off all oil exports and collapsing the Iranian economy. It also threatened to take punitive economic measures against companies breaching its unilateral sanctions. Washington’s actions amount to an economic blockade of Iran and an act of war.

With US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in the lead, the Trump administration is exploiting attacks on two tankers in the Persian Gulf last Thursday as the pretext for threatening to strike Iran. On Sunday, Pompeo declared that the US was “considering a full range of options,” including “a military response.”

The US Central Command, which would oversee any attack on Iran, released a video which it claims shows a small boat of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) approaching and removing an unexploded limpet mine from one of the damaged tankers—the Japanese-owned *Kokuka Courageous*. It followed up yesterday with photos of the same alleged activity.

US officials have continued to blame Iran for the attacks despite a declaration from the tanker's owner that the vessel was hit by a flying object according to its crew members. Both Japan and Germany have questioned Washington's claims and called for further evidence, saying the video did not constitute sufficient proof. Iran has denied any involvement in the attacks.

The UN sources quoted in the *Jerusalem Post* article claimed that Trump himself had not been enthusiastic, but had lost his patience and given the green light to Pompeo, who has been pushing for action.

Pompeo is due to travel today to US Central Command (CENTCOM) headquarters in Florida. He will meet with two top military leaders—CENTCOM commander General Kenneth McKenzie and General Richard Clarke, head of the Special Operations Command—to “discuss regional security concerns and operations.”

CNN noted that the visit was “unusual” as Pompeo was not accompanied by acting US Defence Secretary Shanahan, who was remaining in Washington to “continue to develop options.”

The US has also seized on Iranian statements on Monday warning that its low-level enrichment of uranium will exceed the limit set under the 2015 agreement within 10 days to further wind up tensions. Speaking to the media on Monday, US National Security Council spokesman Garrett Marquis branded Iran's actions as “nuclear blackmail” and insisted it must be met with “increasing international pressure.”

What staggering hypocrisy! The US has torn up the 2015 agreement, is crippling Iran's economy and menacing war. Less than a month ago, Trump declared that if it came to conflict, it would be “the official end of Iran”—implying that the US would use its full arsenal including nuclear weapons to obliterate the Iranian population of more than 80 million. Yet when Tehran suggests that it will no longer be bound by the deal, it is declared to be “blackmail.”

Marquis also reiterated Trump's lie that the US pulled out because “the horrible nuclear deal left their capabilities intact.” In fact, the 2015 agreement, which Iran only agreed to under the Obama administration's threat of war, severely curtailed its nuclear programs, placing them under highly intrusive inspections. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has repeatedly found Iran in compliance with the agreement's stringent requirements.

Iran has only tentatively moved towards abrogating the agreement, even though it would be fully justified in doing so by Washington's illegal actions. In early May, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani set a 60-day deadline for the other signatories—Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China—to put tangible measures in place to enable Iran to export oil and transact with international banks. The deadline expires on July 7.

The European powers have sought to save the agreement, but so far have taken little

action. An alternative payment system, INSTEX, which that would circumvent the existing US-dominated international financial and banking system, has been launched but is not yet operational. Even if it were up and running, it would initially only apply to trade in food and medicine. A fully operational system would bring the European powers into open conflict with the United States, which would undoubtedly retaliate.

The Trump administration's warmongering in the Persian Gulf is opening up divisions in Europe. While German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas has openly questioned US "evidence" of Iranian involvement in last week's tanker attacks, Britain has quickly fallen into line. On Monday, Italy's deputy prime minister Matteo Salvini, leader of the fascist Lega, signalled Rome's support for Washington's war drive against Iran.

The Trump administration is recklessly preparing for a war against Iran. Any US airstrike on Iran, even if limited to one attack, would rapidly escalate into an all-out war that would not only involve other US regional allies such as Saudi Arabia and Israeli, but also threaten to drag in other major powers to defend their vital interests.

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*Featured image: An American guided missile cruiser fires a tomahawk missile during the 2003 US invasion of Iraq [Credit: US Navy]*

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