

## Widening the War: The US Sends Troops to Israel

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*The dangers should be plastered on every wall in every office occupied by a military and political advisor. Israel's attempt to reshape the Middle East, far from giving it enduring security, will merely serve to make it more vulnerable and unstable than ever. In that mix and mess will be its greatest sponsor and guardian, the United States, a giant of almost blind antiquity in all matters concerning the Jewish state.*

In a measure that should have garnered bold headlines, the Biden administration has announced the deployment of some 100 US soldiers to Israel who will be responsible for operating the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system. They are being sent to a conflict that resembles a train travelling at high speed, with no risk of stopping. As Israeli **Defence Minister Yoav Gallant** [promised](#) in the aftermath of Iran's October 1 missile assault on his country,

“Our strike will be powerful, precise, and above all – surprising.” It would be of such a nature that “They will not understand what happened and how it happened.”

In an October 16 [meeting](#) between the **Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III and Gallant**, the deployment of a mobile THAAD battery was seen “as an operational example of the United States’ ironclad support to the defense of Israel.” Largely meaningless bits of advice were offered to Gallant: that Israel “continue taking steps to address the dire humanitarian situation” and take “all necessary measures to ensure the safety and security” of UN peacekeepers operating in Lebanon’s south.

Image: Sinwar, wounded, staring at an Israeli drone, with his face covered in a keffiyeh, shortly before his death (Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0)



The charade continued the next day in a [conversation](#) between Austin and Gallant discussing the killing of Hamas leader **Yahya Sinwar**. THAAD was again mentioned as essential for Israel’s “right to defence itself” while representing the “United States’

unwavering, enduring, and ironclad commitment to Israel's security." ("Ironclad" would seem to be the word of the moment, neatly accompanying Israel's own Iron Dome defence system.)

A [statement](#) from the Pentagon press secretary, **Maj. Gen. Patrick Ryder**, was a fatuous effort in minimising the dangers of the deployment. The battery would merely "augment Israel's integrated air defense system," affirm the ongoing commitment to Israel's defence and "defend Americans in Israel, from any further ballistic missile attacks from Iran."

The very public presence of US troops, working alongside their Israeli counterparts in anticipation of broadening conflict, does not merely suggest Washington's failure to contain their ally. It entails a promise of ceaseless supply, bolstering and emboldening. Furthermore, it will involve placing US troops in harm's way, a quixotic invitation if ever there was one.

As things stand, the US is already imperilling its troops by deploying them in a series of bases in Jordan, Syria and Iraq. Iran's armed affiliates have been making their presence felt, harrying the stationed troops with increasing regularity since the Israel-Hamas war broke out on October 7 last year. A gradual, attritive toll is registering, featuring such attacks as those on the Tower 22 base in northern Jordan in January that left three US soldiers dead.

Writing in August for *The Guardian*, former US army major Harrison Mann [eventually realised](#) an awful truth about the mounting assaults on these sandy outposts of the US imperium: "there was no real plan to protect US troops beyond leaving them in their small, isolated bases while local militants, emboldened and agitated by US support for Israel's brutal war in Gaza, used them for target practice." To send more aircraft and warships to the Middle East also served to encourage "reckless escalation towards a wider war," providing insurance to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he could be protected "from the consequences of his actions."

Daniel Davis, a military expert at Defense Priorities, is [firmly logical](#) on the point of enlisting US personnel in the Israeli cause.

"Naturally, if Americans are killed in the execution of their duties, there will be howls from the pro-war hawks in the West 'demanding' the president 'protect our troops' by firing back on Iran." It was "exactly the sort of thing that gets nations sucked into war they have no interest in fighting."

Polling, insofar as that measure counts, suggests that enthusiasm for enrolling US troops in Israel's defence is far from warm. In results from a [survey](#) published by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations in August, some four in ten polled would favour sending US troops to defend Israel if it was attacked by Iran. Of the sample, 53% of Republicans would favour defending Israel in that context, along with four in 10 independents (42%), and a third of Democrats (34%).

There have also been some mutterings from the Pentagon itself about Israel's burgeoning military effort, in particular against the Lebanese Iran-backed militia, Hezbollah. In a [report](#) from *The New York Times*, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, **Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr.**, is said to be worried about the widening US presence in the region, a fact that would hamper overall "readiness" of the US in other conflicts. Being worried is just the start of it.

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Featured image: THAAD (From the Public Domain)

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