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U.S. sends troops to Gulf region, threatens new war

Sept. 22 — The Pentagon announced Sept. 20 that it will “deploy additional U.S. troops and missile defense equipment to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.” This deployment is allegedly in response to a missile attack the weekend before that stopped half of Saudi daily oil production and temporarily raised oil prices worldwide.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Vice President Mike Pence blamed Iran for the attack, calling it an “act of war.” While Iran denies making the attack, the Houthi organization in Yemen says its forces did it. As of Sept. 22, neither the U.S. nor Saudi Arabia has produced evidence of Iran’s involvement.

Washington, most recently the Trump administration, has carried out continuous hostile acts against Iran. These acts include breaking the 2015 nuclear treaty with Iran, as well as imposing economic sanctions and sending warships — and now troops — to the Gulf region. These steps raise the probability of a catastrophic war in Southwest Asia.

While such a war would greatly harm Iran and its people, the country is much stronger than Iraq was when attacked by the U.S. in 2003. Iran today has 80 million people, compared to Iraq’s 25 million at that time. The Iranian government has much greater support from its people, has a better armed and motivated military, and has allied forces in many neighboring countries. Taking this into account, another “unending” U.S. aggression in the region would cost much more in lives and wealth than the 2003-11 U.S. war against Iraq.

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The inability of the Saudi military to stop the missile attack last week, wherever it came from, shows that the Saudi oil industry and the reactionary Saudi monarchy itself are vulnerable to collapse.

That same Saudi monarchy has intervened for the past four years in a civil war in Yemen, killing thousands of Yemenis with U.S.-supplied bombs and jets. This U.S.-backed Saudi war has brought millions of Yemenis to the edge of famine, creating a humanitarian disaster among Yemen's 30 million people. Despite the high-tech Saudi arms, the opposing side in Yemen, Ansar Allah, also called the Houthis, has fought the Saudi army to a standstill.

Yemenis say they did it

The Houthis say they carried out the attack against the Saudis using drones. The Houthis also said they would end the targeting of Saudi Arabian territory "with military drones, ballistic missiles and all other forms of weapons, and we wait for a reciprocal move from them." (Al Jazeera, Sept. 20)

In the same article, Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Hezbollah, the revolutionary group based in Lebanon, advised Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates not to incite war against Iran "because your houses are made of glass." Saudi Arabia "should think well, as a war with Iran will mean their destruction." Like the Houthis, Nasrallah also demanded the Saudis end their war against Yemen.

The Iranian government rejects Washington's charge, saying it was not responsible for the attack. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif also said that any U.S. or Saudi military attack against his country would result in an all-out war. "I am making a very serious statement that we don't want war; we don't want to engage in a military confrontation. ... But we won't blink to defend our territory," Zarif told CNN on Sept. 19.

Zarif's comments expose the double-edged nature of U.S. aggression. Wherever the Pentagon deploys troops in the Gulf region, these U.S. forces are not only a threat but also a target. Forces allied to Iran in Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, for example, are within range of U.S. bases. Any U.S. war against Iran would leave tens of thousands of U.S. troops on bases in the region vulnerable to attack, as well as Saudi oil.

The Trump administration and the Pentagon know that an attempt to carry out a limited air strike against Iranian targets could lead to a war in which they don't control the escalation or the outcome. It should be remembered that U.S. forces invaded a nearly helpless Afghanistan in 2001 and occupied that country with as many as 100,000 troops and mercenaries. The result? The U.S. military still seems unable to leave that country 18 years later, and the people's suffering continues.

By withdrawing from the treaty, signed by the Obama administration in 2015, which restricted Iran's potential development of nuclear weapons, the Trump regime has created today's extremely dangerous situation. It is important for anti-imperialist forces in the United States to continue to point out that Washington is responsible and to do everything possible to stop a new war in the region.

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