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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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Peter Symonds

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Biden gives green light for retaliation against Iran



President Joe Biden walks towards Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, Friday, October 13, 2023. [AP Photo/Susan Walsh]

In the wake of the drone attack in northern Jordan that killed three American soldiers and wounded dozens more, President Biden affirmed to reporters yesterday that he had decided on the US retaliatory action. Having blamed “radical Iran-backed militant groups” for the deaths, the retaliation could include strikes on such militias anywhere in the Middle East and targets within Iran itself.

Asked by reporters if he blamed Iran for the deaths of the US soldiers, Biden declared that he held Tehran responsible “in the sense that they’re supplying the weapons to the people who did it.” Pressed to say if Iran was directly responsible, he refused to respond, simply declaring “we’ll have that discussion.” Iran has denied any responsibility for the attack.

Well aware that the US-backed Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza has transformed the Middle East into a powder keg, Biden played down the potential for regional conflict.

“I don’t think we need a wider war in the Middle East. That’s not what I’m looking for,” he said.

Yet that is exactly what the Biden administration is doing, not only through its political, economic and military support for Israel but its expanding war against Houthi militia in Yemen and strikes in Iraq and Syria. US imperialism is rapidly and recklessly plunging the Middle East into a region-wide war that together with the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine threatens to engulf the world.

While Biden gave no indication of the nature of US retaliation, National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby told reporters aboard Air Force One that the US intended to strike the militia groups and degrade their capacity to attack US troops while sending a “strong signal to their backers” in Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Ominously, he declared that Biden’s order would be a “tiered approach” encompassing “potentially multiple actions.”

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Current and former US officials told the *Financial Times* that the Biden administration would target militia leaders, Iranian personnel in Syria or Iraq and assets outside of Iran. “This won’t be a single attack, so there will probably be several rounds. I think it has to be a very robust attack action,” a former senior US military commander in the Middle East said.

Right-wing Republicans, including leading presidential contender Trump, are braying for blood, denouncing Biden’s “weakness” and calling for strikes against Iran, knowing full well that such action would dramatically escalate the simmering war across the Middle East.

The Biden administration has not ruled out a direct attack on Iran or on senior Iranian officials in the Middle East. Indeed, the White House undoubtedly gave the go-ahead for the highly provocative Israeli air raid in December outside Damascus that killed Iranian Brigadier General Sayyed Razi Mousavi—the top adviser inside Syria of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). That was followed by a further Israeli air attack on

Damascus earlier this month that killed the IRGC intelligence chief for Syria and his deputy as well as two other IRGC officials.

Israel, again unquestionably with the full support of Washington, is also preparing to expand its war from Gaza and the West Bank into southern Lebanon. Speaking to Israeli reservists on the border with Gaza on Monday, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said that Israeli troops will “very soon go into action” on the country’s northern border with Lebanon. The forces close to you, he said, “are leaving the field and moving towards the north, and preparing for what comes next.”

Gallant’s comments are a warning that Israel is planning a dramatic escalation of a conflict with Hezbollah militia in Lebanon that has been underway since its war on Gaza began. Northern Israel already has tens of thousands of regular troops and some 60,000 reservists, an Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) official told ABC News last week.

Israeli air raids and artillery barrage attacks inside Lebanon and Hezbollah attacks on Israeli forces in northern Israel have taken place virtually on a daily basis. An estimated 100,000 Israelis have evacuated the country's northern towns while around 76,000 Lebanese living near the border have fled. Hezbollah has reported that 171 of its members have been killed since October 8, while Israel has said that nine soldiers and six civilians have been killed.

Even as the Biden administration uses the deaths of three American soldiers as the pretext for new military aggression in the Middle East, the death toll in Gaza continues to climb in the barbaric Israeli war waged on the Palestinians with the full backing of Washington. According to the Palestinian Health Ministry in Gaza yesterday, the number of dead since October 7 rose to 26,751 with another 65,636 others wounded. The Israeli army killed 114 and wounded 249 others in the previous 24 hours.

The ministry’s spokesperson Ashraf Al-Qedra reported that Israel was increasing its siege on the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip for the second week, placing “150 medical personnel, 450 wounded, and 3,000 displaced people under targeting.” With only enough fuel to keep the hospital’s generators running for two days, Al-Qedra warned that the situation would become even more dire.

Based on reports from the Palestinian news agency Wafa, *Al Jazeera* yesterday detailed Israeli operations inside the West Bank over the previous 24 hours. These included the killing of three Palestinians inside the Ibn Sina Hospital in Jenin by Israeli special forces; the bombing of the Al-Farouq Mosque in Khan Younis refugee camp; ongoing raids inside

the Nur Shams and Tulkarem refugee camps, where Israeli forces bulldozed roads, water, telecommunication and electricity lines.

The horrors of the Israeli war inside Gaza and the West Bank are a harbinger of the barbarity that Israel, the US and its allies are preparing to inflict on a far wider scale throughout the Middle East. The US targeting of Iran is not the response to the deaths of three American soldiers, but flows from long-held ambitions for American domination of the energy-rich region and the failure of its previous criminal wars in the Middle East to achieve that end.

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