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US unleashes military strikes in Iraq and Syria, targeting Iran



US F-35B Lightning stealth fighters accompany Air Force B-1B Lancer strategic bombers over the Sea of Japan

The United States launched on Friday night what officials billed as a weeks- or months-long campaign in the Middle East targeting Iran.

US President Joe Biden sent nuclear-capable B-1B bombers from the Dyess Air Force Base in Texas to deliver over 125 munitions on 85 targets in seven locations throughout Iraq and Syria. The US claimed to have targeted military facilities used by “Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force and affiliated militia groups.”

These strikes were illegal, taking place in defiance of the governments of Syria and Iraq, and carried out without congressional authorization or any attempt to gain the consent or approval of the American population.

An Iraqi official condemned the strike in Iraq as “unacceptable” and “a violation of Iraqi sovereignty,” adding that it is “a threat that will drag Iraq and the region into unforeseen consequences.” Syrian state media outlets condemned the act of “American aggression.”

The pro-imperialist Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported to AFP that at least 18 people had been killed in eastern Syria, across a broad section of the country stretching more than 62 miles.

The United States claimed that the strikes were in response to the killing of three American service members in Jordan last week. Biden visited Dover Air Force Base in his home state of Delaware to witness the transfer of the soldiers’ remains. As he gave a terse three-paragraph statement, the bombers were already en route to their destination.

In reality, the deaths of these soldiers were the outcome of the ongoing military occupation of the region and the massive military escalation undertaken over the past three months.

As it has provided funding, weapons, logistical support and political cover for Israel to carry out a campaign of genocide in Gaza, the US has flooded the region with warships, aircraft and soldiers, with the deliberate aim of provoking a wider conflict.

In announcing the attacks Friday, Biden declared, “The United States does not seek conflict in the Middle East or anywhere else in the world.”

Such statements, repeated ad nauseam day after day, are meaningless. Whether or not American imperialism “seeks” all-out war in the Middle East, it has been continuously bombing, starving and invading countries throughout the region for decades, including the 2003 invasion of Iraq that led to the deaths of over a million people.

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Clearly, the United States “seeks” the outcome of this spiraling war, which is the reorganization of the Middle East as part of American imperialism’s effort to subjugate Russia and China.

To this end, Biden made clear that the new military offensive in the Middle East will continue over a protracted period. The bombings, Biden said, “will continue at times and places of our choosing.” Biden added a further threat, “Let all those who might seek to do us harm know this: If you harm an American, we will respond.”

“This is a first set of responses,” White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said, adding there would be “future responses.”

In other words, the strikes mark the continuation and escalation of American imperialism’s “perpetual war” in the Middle East.

US media coverage of the attacks was entirely uncritical, repeating the spurious justification that they were “retaliatory” and “defensive.” To the extent that there was criticism within the political establishment, it was to denounce Biden for not doing more.

In an editorial entitled “Will Biden Finally Deter Iran,” the *Wall Street Journal* accused Biden of exercising too much “restraint,” calling for the White House to use “enough force against the right targets so that US troops are no longer fodder for enemy target practice.”

Leading members of the US political establishment also quickly endorsed the attacks, with Senator Jack Reed, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, publicly backing them.

The massive, long-range bombardments were clearly a demonstration of the types of strikes the United States would potentially use against targets inside of Iran. “The beauty of the American bomber is we can strike anywhere in the world at a time of our choosing,” Pentagon spokesman Gen. Douglas A. Sims told reporters Friday night. Critically, these bombers are capable of delivering exactly the same types of strikes, but with nuclear payloads.

While the strikes did not directly target mainland Iran, the White House preceded them with a new round of sanctions and criminal charges against officers and officials of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

The White House indicated that aircraft from Jordan were expected to join upcoming strikes, demonstrating the extent to which the Middle East is being drawn into the maelstrom of a widening regional war.

The US attacks on Syria and Iraq occurred as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken continues his tour in the region, which includes stops next week in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Israel and the West Bank.

Blinken claimed his aim is the negotiation of a “humanitarian pause that will allow for sustained, increased delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza.”

In reality, Blinken's trip is aimed at facilitating the expansion of the imperialist-instigated regional war and shoring up support for Israel, which is waging a war of extermination against the people of Gaza with US support.

On February 1, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a briefing that "Over 100,000 Gazans are either dead, injured, or missing and presumed dead."

Tedros was referencing a January 13 report by the Euro-Med monitor, which noted that 92 percent of those killed were civilians. According to figures from Euro-Med, 32,246 Gazans are either confirmed dead or missing for over two weeks and presumed dead. Of these, 12,660 are children, and 6,860 are women.

Israel has partially or fully destroyed over 190,000 homes in Gaza, representing over 60 percent of the housing stock. On Thursday, the *New York Times* published an article reporting the systematic demolition of buildings in Gaza, noting that "At least 33 controlled demolitions have destroyed hundreds of buildings—including mosques, schools, and entire sections of residential neighborhoods—since November."

The *Times* noted, "To carry out these demolitions, soldiers enter the targeted structures to place mines or other explosives and then leave to pull the trigger from a safe distance."

Last week, the International Court of Justice ruled that the Israeli government could plausibly be committing genocide and ordered it to prevent further genocidal acts and statements. But in the week since this occurred, the IDF has killed at least 874 Palestinians.

This was accompanied by further evidence of mass summary executions, including the discovery this week of a mass grave of 30 handcuffed and blindfolded people who appear to have been summarily executed.

The ongoing and escalating genocide in Gaza and the massive new US bombing operation throughout the Middle East make clear that neither the International Court of Justice nor the United Nations are capable of putting an end to the bloodbath in the Middle East being perpetrated by the imperialist powers.

Opposing this eruption of imperialist barbarism requires the mobilization of workers and young people around the world on the basis of a socialist program.

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