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US escalation against Iran threatens all-out war in Middle East



The USS Truxtun, right, and Canadian ships MV Asterix, middle, and Montreal in the Red Sea, May 3, 2023. [Photo: Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Kenneth Blair]

On Friday, the United States carried out airstrikes on seven locations throughout Iraq and Syria, in what US officials said was the beginning of weeks or even months of attacks across the region. Over the next two days, Saturday and Sunday, the US and UK launched further airstrikes against the Houthi rebels in Yemen.

The attacks mark “the beginning of our response and there will be more steps to come,” National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said Sunday on CNN’s State of the Union.

In other words, the United States’ “endless war” in the Middle East, which has killed millions of people and destroyed entire societies over the course of the past three decades, is entering a new and more deadly stage.

US officials have made it clear that a central target of the US military offensive is Iran. Appearing on “Meet the Press” Sunday, Sullivan was asked directly if the United States would rule out strikes “inside Iran.” Sullivan declared he would not do so, stating, “I’m not going to get into what’s on the table and off the table when it comes to the American response.”

When Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson followed Sullivan on the same program, he made an even more explicit threat to attack Iran. When asked, “Do you want to see strikes inside Iran?” Johnson replied, “It should not be off the table.”

The back-to-back appearances by officials of both the Democratic-controlled White House and the Republican-led House of Representatives were meant to convey the unanimity within the US political establishment for the escalation of the war in the Middle East.

The Biden administration is proceeding with staggering recklessness, inflaming a regional war that threatens to draw in the entire world. A full-scale US war with Iran would have catastrophic human, political and economic consequences, eclipsing even the bloodbath caused by the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

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Every statement made by the White House to justify this war is a lie. The White House declares it is “not seeking war with Iran,” and every airstrike is justified with the assertion that it was not an “escalation.”

Each new illegal airstrike is presented as a “defensive” action to protect US troops. But the very presence of these troops in the region is the continuation of decades of bloody US wars throughout the Middle East, which have killed more than one million people and have been accompanied by the systematic and deliberate use of torture as state policy. The US maintains over 45,000 US troops throughout the region, coupled with dozens of warships and hundreds of military aircraft.

The latest US offensive in the Middle East is a crucial element of an unfolding global war, centrally targeting Russia and China. The subjugation of Iran, lying at the heart of Eurasia, is a critical component of the United States’ drive for global military domination.

In its effort to militarily encircle and economically strangle China, Washington is seeking to drive a wedge between Beijing and Iran, which is a large oil supplier to China.

A major factor in instigating the escalation against Iran is the massive setback suffered by the United States and the European imperialist powers in Ukraine. Even as US imperialism doubles down on its fight against Russia to the last Ukrainian, it has opened up another front in the global war.

In his appearance on Sunday, Sullivan was keen to point out that the US strikes against Yemen and conflict with Iran have “absolutely nothing to do with Israel.” This too is a lie. The Biden administration has given Israel a green light to devastate Gaza in order to secure Israeli assistance to wage war in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and, ultimately, Iran. Israel’s “final solution” of the “Palestinian problem,” through the massacre and expulsion of the population of Gaza, is a critical component of the US drive to reorganize the Middle East under its domination.

Less than 10 days after the events of October 7, the *World Socialist Web Site* warned: “The US is using the present crisis to put into effect long-standing plans for a war with Iran, as the Middle Eastern front of the US war with Russia and war plans against China.” The WSWS wrote that the massive armada the United States immediately sent to the Middle East was not just a “show of force.” It was meant to be used.

Since then, the United States has mobilized this armada to repeatedly bomb Iraq and Syria, while strikes on Yemen have become virtually a daily occurrence.

American imperialism confronts a staggering domestic crisis, in which democratic forms of government are breaking apart under the pressure of enormous and ever-expanding social inequality. Even as they are enmeshed in a bitter factional struggle that is rapidly intensifying into a full-scale constitutional crisis, both US political parties are committed to a massive escalation of war throughout the Middle East and across the globe.

The domestic political crisis in the United States is a major factor in the global eruption of US imperialism. The deeper the crisis, the more aggressive the American government becomes abroad, hoping to project its internal tensions outward.

The brazen recklessness with which the Biden administration is escalating war is made possible through the systematic demobilization of the working class by the apparatus of the trade unions. Last month, prior to announcing the United Auto Workers’ endorsement of Joe Biden, UAW President Shawn Fain declared, “Mr. President, it’s time for us to go to war.”

This statement, pregnant with menace, made explicit the role played by the trade unions in the global eruption of US militarism. The Biden administration, having declared that it has “broken down the dividing line between domestic and foreign policy,” sees the suppression of the class struggle by the trade unions as a key element of the US war drive. The union apparatus functions as the direct adjunct of American military operations throughout the world.

The struggle against imperialist war requires the independent mobilization of the working class, free of the domination of all the agencies that seek to suppress the class struggle, in a fight to overturn the capitalist nation-state system that is the root cause of imperialist war.

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