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US deploys combat troops to Israel as preparations mount for an attack on Iran

The US Defense Department announced Sunday that a THAAD missile defense battery manned by US soldiers is being deployed to Israel, marking the first time US “boots on the ground” are being deployed to Israel since October 7, 2023.



Soldiers prepare to load the U.S. Army Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) launching station onto a 4th Airlift Squadron C-17 Globemaster III at Fort Bliss, Texas, Feb. 23, 2019. [AP Photo/Staff Sgt. Cory D. Payne]

The move comes amid statements by US officials to NBC that they have been in active discussions with Israel regarding planned Israeli strikes on Iran’s energy infrastructure, and that Israel has “narrowed down what they will target.”

The announcement follows a declaration by Vice President Kamala Harris in an interview last week that Iran is the United States' "greatest adversary."

The deployment of the THAAD battery and US combat troops marks a major expansion of direct US involvement in the war. Over the past year, the Biden administration has maintained the pretense that Israel, which it funds and arms, is acting independently of Washington, which is nominally seeking a "ceasefire" in the Middle East. But this pretext is increasingly falling apart, as the US becomes directly involved in a war to reorganize the Middle East under imperialist domination.

In an article profiling a "new strategy" in the war against Lebanon, Reuters noted, "Now, US officials have dropped their calls for a ceasefire, arguing that circumstances have changed." It quoted State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller, who declared, "We do support Israel launching these incursions to degrade Hezbollah's infrastructure."

Announcing the deployment of the troops, the Pentagon said, "The THAAD Battery will augment Israel's integrated air defense system. This action underscores the United States' ironclad commitment to the defense of Israel... from any further ballistic missile attacks by Iran."

It added, "It is part of the broader adjustments the US military has made in recent months to support the defense of Israel and protect Americans from attacks by Iran and Iranian-aligned militias."

Asked Sunday why the US is sending the missile system, Biden's reply was "to defend Israel."

THAAD, or Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, is a missile defense system operated by the US Army. Each THAAD battery typically includes six truck-mounted launchers, a radar unit, and a fire control center, and is staffed by about 100 personnel.

In September, the US announced the deployment of thousands of additional troops to the Middle East, adding to the 40,000 US troops already deployed to the region.

The latest announcement comes as Israel is intensifying its rampage throughout the Middle East, attacking UN peacekeepers in Lebanon and intensifying its bombing and starvation campaign in Lebanon.

On Sunday, the United Nations said in a statement that Israeli tanks broke down the gates of the base of its peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon, following a string of attacks on UN peacekeeping forces in the region.

Sunday's attack on UN forces happened after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded that UN peacekeepers withdraw to the north. "The time has come for you to

withdraw UNIFIL from Hezbollah strongholds and from the combat zones,” Netanyahu said in a statement to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. In a recorded address Sunday, Netanyahu declared that the UN peacekeeping force provides “a human shield to Hezbollah terrorists.” (Israel generally refers to civilians it targets as “human shields.”)

The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was created in 1978 to oversee the retreat of Israeli forces to the southern border, known as the “Blue Line,” which demarcates the boundary between Lebanon, Israel and the Golan Heights. It includes 10,000 troops, including 1,000 from Italy and 700 each from France and Spain.

In a statement, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres declared that “Attacks against peacekeepers are in breach of international law, including international humanitarian law. They may constitute a war crime.”

Israel, meanwhile, is intensifying the Gaza genocide, laying siege to the Jabalyia refugee camp, with over 300 Palestinians killed over nine days at the camp. In a statement on X, UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese wrote Saturday that “Israeli forces are committing another massacre in northern Gaza.”

She continued: “People in Jabalyia are killed—both in groups and one by one—amid unspeakable cruelty and sadism. By Israelis who have accepted to be ‘willing executioners’ of a genocidal plan. With western-manufactured weapons and with western support.”



Palestinians try to put out a raging inferno after the Israeli military targeted tents in the courtyard of Al Aqsa Martyrs hospital in Deir al Balah, Gaza Strip, Monday, October. 14, 2024. [AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana]

In a statement Sunday, Muhannad Hadi, humanitarian coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, reported that Israel has systematically blocked the entry of food and essential supplies into Northern Gaza, forcing the 400,000 people in that area to move south.

Hadi wrote:

Since 1 October 2024, Israeli authorities have increasingly cut off northern Gaza from essential supplies. Erez and Erez West crossings have been kept closed, and no essentials have been allowed from the south. Three renewed orders have been issued—on 7, 9, and 12 October—directing people to displace.

He added:

In the past two weeks, over 50,000 people have been displaced from the Jabalya area, which is cut off, while others remain stranded in their homes amid increased bombardment and fighting. A military siege that deprives civilians of essential means of survival is unacceptable. The latest military operations in northern Gaza have forced the closure of water wells, bakeries, medical points, and shelters, as well as the suspension of protection services, malnutrition treatment, and temporary learning spaces.

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