

In show of support for Israel's assassination of Hamas leader, US to send more fighter jets and warships to Middle East

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American imperialism will be “bolstering its force protection” in the Middle East in the coming days with the deployment of additional warplanes and ships to the region. The move, coming in the aftermath of Israel’s targeted assassinations of Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr and Hamas leader Ismail Hanniyeh, will ratchet up tensions with Iran and continues the spiral towards a region-wide war.

The deployment was discussed in a call between US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and his Israeli counterpart Yoav Gallant Friday morning, according to the *New York Times*. A Pentagon statement confirmed that Austin ordered the deployment of a fighter squadron to bases in the Middle East, which are within striking distance of Iran. Washington is moving more ballistic missile defence-capable cruisers and destroyers to the US European and Central Command areas. The Pentagon statement continued, “The Department is also taking steps to increase our readiness to deploy additional land-based ballistic missile defense.”

White House spokeswoman Sabrina Singh indicated that the deployment could be large when she acknowledged that additional soldiers may be required in the Middle East to operate the aircraft. “We will be bolstering our force protection in the region,” she told reporters.

Washington is already maintaining a strong naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean and Persian Gulf. The *Washington Post*, citing an anonymous source in the defence establishment, reported Thursday that 12 US warships have been assembled close by following Israel’s twin assassinations in Beirut and Tehran earlier in the week. The build-up is led by the USS Theodore Roosevelt aircraft carrier, which was accompanied in the Persian Gulf Wednesday by six destroyers. Three amphibious

ships making up the Wasp Task Force, which also includes 4,000 marines, were present in the eastern Mediterranean. The task force was supported by two destroyers.

A flurry of calls between representatives of the Israeli government and the imperialist powers Thursday and Friday underscored that the major military build-up is a coordinated action. US President Joseph Biden spoke with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Thursday, vowing that the US would support Israel in a war with Iran. The White House readout declared that Biden, who was joined on the call by Vice President and Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris, “reaffirmed his commitment to Israel’s security against all threats from Iran, including its proxy terrorist groups Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis. The President discussed efforts to support Israel’s defense against threats, including against ballistic missiles and drones, to include new defensive U.S. military deployments.”

Just hours later, the call took place between Austin and Gallant Friday morning, before Gallant consulted with his British counterpart, Labour’s John Healy. “I emphasized the importance of creating a coalition to defend Israel against Iran and its proxies—especially these days,” Gallant wrote after the call. This was an echo of Netanyahu’s appeal during his address to the US Congress for the creation of an “Abraham alliance” in the region consisting of the US, Israel and Arab Gulf states to confront Iran. Netanyahu explicitly referred to NATO as his model for this alliance to emphasize its aggressive character.

In another indication that the prospect of war in the Middle East rests on a knife’s edge, France’s Foreign Ministry urged its nationals to leave Iran “as soon as possible.” Turkish Airlines cancelled all planned flights to

Iran Friday evening, saying they would resume Saturday.

The attempt by the White House and pliant corporate media to characterise the new US military deployments as “defensive,” while portraying Biden as committed to “deescalation” is absurd. Biden’s reported urging of Netanyahu to finalise a “ceasefire” agreement for Gaza has nothing to do with a commitment to peace or improving the miserable lot of Gaza’s starving population but reflects concern within US ruling circles about waging a war on two or more fronts.

The most aggressive and predatory force in the entire Middle East is American imperialism, which has fully endorsed Israel’s genocide in Gaza as a means to set the stage for a region-wide war targeting Iran. While it remains unclear whether Washington was directly involved in the targeted assassination of Hanniyeh, there is no doubt that a massive military expansion of the conflict was a major topic of discussion during Netanyahu’s visit to Washington, and that he received reassurances from Biden and Harris that the US would back Israel all the way.

The Israeli Prime Minister received rapturous rounds of applause from his bipartisan congressional audience for his denunciations of Iran and appeal for the US and Israel to lead a regional war. After Harris met Netanyahu behind closed doors, she began her briefing to the media by stating, “So, I just had a frank and constructive meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu. I told him that I will always ensure that Israel is able to defend itself, including from Iran and Iran-backed militias, such as Hamas and Hezbollah.”

The targeted killing of Hanniyeh, a long-time Hamas leader who was elected at the top of the party’s list when Hamas won a landslide victory in the 2006 election in the Palestinian territories, has provoked outrage across the Middle East. Tens of thousands of people participated in protests against Hanniyeh’s assassination in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Yemen Friday. Hanniyeh was an official guest of the bourgeois-clerical Iranian regime at the ceremony for newly-elected President Masoud Pezeshkian in Tehran when he was killed by a missile strike on the house where he was residing.

None of the imperialist powers condemned the Zionist regime’s criminal action, instead issuing demands that Iran not retaliate and pledges to support Israel. This response was clearly intended to send a message to Pezeshkian and the faction of the Iranian regime that supports reaching some sort of accommodation with the imperialist powers: only complete capitulation to

American imperialism will be tolerated, and the alternative is war.

Israel’s regime of war criminals has felt emboldened by this show of support to continue its slaughter of the Palestinians. On Wednesday, Israel conducted a targeted strike in Gaza City on the vehicle of Al Jazeera journalist Ismail al-Ghoul and his cameraman, Rami al-Rifi, killing both. Al-Ghoul’s reports, primarily from northern Gaza, were popular among Arab audiences. He was wearing a press vest when he was killed. Conservative estimates put the number of journalists killed by Israel since its genocidal onslaught began at 113.

The silence on such acts of lawlessness from the political representatives of the North American and European imperialist powers and their media accomplices goes hand in hand with their reckless escalation towards a third world war. As Washington, London and Berlin back Israel’s “final solution” of the Palestinian question, endorse its targeted assassination of political opponents, and prepare for war with Iran, they are waging a direct war with Russia in Ukraine in all but name that has claimed the lives of at least 500,000 Ukrainians and tens of thousands of Russians. The imperialists have made clear that nothing, including the threat of the conflict spiralling into a nuclear exchange, which would endanger human life on the planet, will stop them from pursuing their economic and geopolitical interests through war.

As American imperialism intensifies its preparations to wage war alongside Israel against Iran, everything depends on the independent political mobilisation of the international working class. The only way to stop a catastrophic bloodbath throughout the Middle East is through the building of a global anti-war movement led by the working class. To stop imperialist war, this movement must conduct a fight against its root cause in the capitalist profit system by adopting a socialist and internationalist programme.



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