

Biden administration approves huge \$20 billion arms sale to Israel

Peter Symonds
13 August 2024

The US yesterday approved a massive \$20 billion arms sale to Israel as a wider regional war looms.

Israel is deliberately provoking a conflict with Iran and its regional allies, with its assassination of top Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on July 31, just hours after killing top Hezbollah military leader Fuad Shukur in Beirut.

The sale includes more than 50 F-15 fighter jets, Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missiles, or AMRAAMs, 120 mm tank ammunition, high explosive mortars and tactical vehicles. The package also includes upgrade kits to modify Israel's existing fleet of two dozen F-15 fighter jets, including with new engines and radars.

Announcing the arms sale, the US State Department declared:

The United States is committed to the security of Israel, and it is vital to U.S. national interests to assist Israel to develop and maintain a strong and ready self-defence capability.

There is nothing defensive about the new weaponry which will greatly enhance Israel's ability to wage a wider war.

The fact that the bulk of the arms package is aimed at a major expansion and upgrading of the Israeli air force confirms that the US and Israel are preparing for conflict throughout the Middle East. The Israeli air force, which already enjoys overwhelming air superiority in the region, demonstrated its capacity to carry out long-range operations with strikes last month on the Yemeni port of Hodeidah against facilities allegedly used by Iranian-backed Houthi militias.

While the new F-15 warplanes could take years to supply if built from scratch by Boeing, the US would find ways to accelerate the process in the event of a regional war. The US has already reportedly supplied the Israeli military with artillery shells from the US reserve stockpile based in Israel. The War Reserves Stock Allies-Israel established in 1984 is a vast US arms depot, including ammunition, smart bombs, missiles and military vehicles, at six different locations throughout Israel which can request access.

As well as the arms sale, the US Navy has accelerated the transit of a second aircraft carrier, the *USS Abraham Lincoln*, and its associated naval strike group to the Middle East. The *USS Abraham Lincoln*, which is equipped with F-35C jet fighters, will join the *USS Theodore Roosevelt* Carrier Strike Group, which is already in the region. The *USS Georgia* guided-missile submarine is to join the armada.

In another indication of preparations for a regional war, the State Department confirmed on Monday that the US would resume sales of offensive weapons to Saudi Arabia, lifting a token three-year ban put in place in response to Saudi atrocities in its war in Yemen on Iranian-aligned Houthi militia. "Saudi Arabia has remained a close strategic partner of the United States, and we look forward to enhancing that partnership," spokesman Vedant Patel told reporters.

The entire Middle East is teetering on the brink of war. Iran has flatly rejected a call on Monday by Britain, France and Germany on "Iran and its allies to refrain from attacks that would further escalate regional tensions and jeopardize the opportunity to agree [to] a ceasefire [in Gaza] and the release of hostages."

The utter hypocrisy of the US and its NATO allies was highlighted by newly installed Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian in a phone conversation with

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. As reported by the official IRNA news agency, Pezeshkian told Starmer that the West's silence about the "unprecedented inhumane crime" in Gaza and Israeli attacks in the Middle East, was "irresponsible" and encouraged Israel to put regional and global security at risk.

In reality, the fascistic Israeli regime has repeatedly demonstrated its contempt for ceasefire talks as it wages its genocidal war in Gaza that has slaughtered at the very least 40,000 men, women and children. Indeed, the assassination of top Hamas political leader Haniyeh was calculated to sabotage any ceasefire negotiations. Neither the US nor any of its allies has condemned the murder. The latest round of talks slated to begin tomorrow are almost certainly destined to fail.

In a provocation aimed at further inflaming tensions in the Middle East, far-right Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir led hundreds of his followers on Monday in breaching longstanding protocols by singing Jewish hymns and performing religious rituals at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound—the third-holiest site in Islam. He emphatically opposed any ceasefire negotiations, declaring: "We must win and not go to the talks in Doha or Cairo."

Responding to the call by the European powers, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani declared: "Such demands lack political logic, are entirely contrary to the principles and rules of international law, and represent an excessive request.

"It is necessary to punish Israel," he said, but added: "Tehran is not interested in escalating the regional conflicts."

In April, Israel carried out a provocative attack on the Iranian embassy in the Syrian capital of Damascus that killed two senior generals of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC), as well as at least five military officers. By international convention, the embassy is considered Iranian territory. Iran's response sought to avoid any escalation: Its missiles and drones were directed at an Israeli air base and telegraphed in advance to Washington enabling the US, Israel and other allies to shoot most down.

Whatever Iran's response to the latest provocations, the Israeli military is on high alert and preparing to go on the offensive. Defense Minister Yoav Gallant stated on Monday that "we have been devoting our time both to strengthening defences and to creating offensive

options in response, and also as an initiative if required, anywhere and in any region."

Also on Monday, Israel's Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi held a meeting with top military and intelligence officers that approved battle plans for "the various fronts." According to a military statement, "The chief of staff emphasised the continuation of high readiness and assessment efforts for attack and defence."

Under the cover of empty appeals for de-escalation, the US and its allies are undoubtedly holding talks with their Israeli counterparts to coordinate their war plans.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact