

Stop the US war drive against Iran!

By the WSWs Editorial Board
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The *World Socialist Web Site* condemns the military and political provocations with which the Bush administration is laying the foundations for an attack on Iran. We call on all working people and student youth to oppose the brutal and insane warmongering of the Washington pyromaniacs. A politically conscious class-based movement—unconnected to and independent of the pro-imperialist parties of big business and the political establishment—must be built if war is to be averted.

This is no time for complacency and illusions. Barely three months after the American people went to the polls and delivered an overwhelming popular repudiation of the war in the Middle East, the Bush administration is not only escalating its military operations in Iraq, but recklessly plunging towards a new war against neighboring Iran.

There is an unmistakable acceleration in the tempo of events. In the aftermath of the election, the Bush administration dismissed out of hand the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group to hold negotiations with Iran and Syria. Instead, in announcing his “surge” in Iraq on January 10, Bush accused Iran and Syria of arming and training anti-US insurgents in Iraq and declared that the American military would “seek out and destroy” such support networks. Day after day Bush officials, aided by a complicit media, have maintained a steady drumbeat of menacing accusations against Tehran for “meddling” in Iraq and aiding the killing of American soldiers—all without providing a shred of evidence.

Within the past week, shadowy Pentagon officials have presented “evidence” that some of the bombs used against US patrols are manufactured in Iran. They and others in the administration have claimed certainty that the “highest levels of the Iranian government” are involved. That the Pentagon officials who presented this purported evidence spoke only on condition that they be neither named nor recorded is indicative of the trumped-up character of this search for a *casus belli* against Tehran. Indeed, within barely 48 hours of the presentation of the “proof” in Baghdad, General Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, admitted that the military had no knowledge of Iranian government involvement in arms shipments to Iraqi Shiite militias.

Nonetheless, these accusations against Tehran have been widely parroted by the media, which for the most part is content to play the same perfidious role as a conduit for false war propaganda about threatening weapons and terrorist links that it played in the run-up to the US invasion of Iraq four years ago.

The trumped-up case against Iran has been accompanied by blatant provocations on the ground, including military raids against Iranian government offices in Iraq and the armed abduction of Iranian diplomats.

The military buildup in the Persian Gulf, meanwhile, is proceeding apace. By the end of February, an American armada of 50 warships will be stationed in the area, including two carrier strike groups for the first time since March 2003. There are reports that a third such battle group may be on the way. Backed by warplanes that have been positioned at a network of military bases throughout the region, the US military will have the capacity to conduct round-the-clock bombing using cruise missiles and hundreds of warplanes. Batteries of Patriot anti-missile systems are currently being installed in the Gulf states to defend vital US military assets and reassure nervous allies against potential Iranian reprisals.

Alongside these military preparations, Washington is engaged in intense diplomatic activity. Senior Bush officials have crisscrossed the Middle East in the past weeks seeking to consolidate an anti-Iranian alliance, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. The closest American ally in the region, Israel, has already threatened Iran with “severe steps” if it fails to shut down its nuclear programs.

The trips of Vice President Dick Cheney, the prime mover in the Iraq invasion, take on a particular significance. His one-day visit last November to personally meet with the Saudi monarch has been followed by a steady increase in Saudi oil output and fall in world oil prices, which not only undermines the Iranian economy but provides a cushion against the economic shock of war. This month Cheney is to visit Australia and Japan to line up support from these close allies for US plans on Iran.

Every attempt is being made to provoke a war. “They intend to be as provocative as possible and make the Iranians do something [America] would be forced to retaliate for,” Hillary Mann, the Bush administration’s former National Security Council director for Iran and Persian Gulf Affairs, told *Newsweek*.

Cheney’s “year of Iran”

The *Washington Post*, meanwhile, reports, “Some senior administration officials still relish the notion of a direct confrontation. One ambassador in Washington said he was taken aback when John Hannah, Vice President Cheney’s national security adviser, said during a recent meeting that the administration considers 2007 ‘the year of Iran’ and indicated that a US attack was a real possibility.”

Senator Christopher Dodd (Democrat, Connecticut), meanwhile, acknowledged in a television interview Sunday, “There are certainly those who are in favor” of war with Iran. “We’ve seen that in the past that they would like nothing more than to build a case for that.”

Similarly, *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman wrote in a Monday column warning of an attack on Iran, “There are indications that, at the very least, a powerful faction in the administration is spoiling for a fight.”

More and more, the descriptions of the foreign policy and internal dynamics of the Bush administration resemble nothing so much as the machinations of the state in Nazi Germany or imperial Japan. It is increasingly evident that Washington's policy is being driven largely by a criminal, war-crazed camarilla that is setting into motion forces that make another US war of aggression almost inevitable.

As in the lead-up to the US war on Iraq, President Bush continues to declare that the US has no immediate plans to attack Iran. The denials are simply not credible. The most generous interpretation that can be placed on the Bush administration's actions is that by menacing Tehran it hopes to force the Iranian regime to capitulate to all of its demands. Such thuggery, however, has a logic of its own that can easily spiral out of control into all-out military conflict—whatever the initial intentions. Moreover, the overwhelming evidence of the past six years is that Bush's aims are far from benign. The neo-cons, who articulate the views of the most militarist layers of the American ruling elite and in the White House, continue to press for "regime change" in Tehran as part of a broader strategy of refashioning the Middle East under US domination.

The *Wall Street Journal*, which most closely reflects the outlook of the right-wing layer in control of the White House, carried an editorial Tuesday accepting the Bush administration's accusations against Iran as good coin and calling for the US to "send Tehran the message that it will not be allowed to kill Americans with impunity." It urged an immediate bombing campaign, including "hitting Revolutionary Guards targets, or Iranian weapons factories."

A disturbing warning of what is in preparation emerged in the February 1 testimony of former US national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Deeply troubled that Bush's policies are heading the US towards disaster, Brzezinski denounced the war in Iraq as "a historic, strategic and moral calamity." He bluntly predicted that if the US "continues to be bogged down in a protracted bloody involvement in Iraq, the final destination of this downhill track is likely to be a head-on conflict with Iran and with much of the world of Islam at large."

In a biting critique of Bush's entire "war on terror," Brzezinski described as "a mythical historical narrative" the attempts to equate Islamic extremism and Al Qaeda with the threat posed to US imperialism by Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. "To argue that America is already at war in the region with a wider Islamic threat, of which Iran is the epicenter, is to promote a self-fulfilling prophesy," he declared. "Vague and inflammatory talk . . . is breeding intensifying anti-Americanism and is increasing the danger of a new long-term collision between the United States and the Islamic world."

In the most chilling passage of his statement, Brzezinski outlined "a plausible scenario for a military collision with Iran." It would, he suggested, involve "Iraqi failure to meet the benchmarks; followed by accusations of Iranian responsibility for the failure; then by some provocation in Iraq or a terrorist act in the US blamed on Iran; culminating in a 'defensive' US

military action against Iran that plunges a lonely America into a spreading and deepening quagmire eventually ranging across Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan."

In the course of his testimony, Brzezinski suggested that the White House was not only following this scenario, but was capable of manufacturing "some provocation in Iraq or a terrorist act in the US" as the pretext for launching a war against Iran. These comments from a man with decades of experience in the top circles of the American state apparatus are the sharpest indication that the Bush administration is rushing headlong towards military conflict with Iran with complete disregard for the far-reaching ramifications of its actions.

Any war on Iran would immediately have tragic consequences for the country's people, who have already had to endure a bloody conflict throughout the 1980s with Iraq, encouraged and abetted by the US. The use of atomic bombs against Iran is actively being debated in top American and Israeli circles, raising the prospect of a nuclear conflagration for the first time since the US incineration of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

The implications of a US attack on a country of 70 million people—three times the size of Iraq—go well beyond Iran itself, however. The conflict would inevitably have a profoundly destabilizing effect throughout the Middle East and Central Asia and potentially draw in the major European and Asian powers, all of which have a vital stake in the huge energy reserves of the region.

Increasingly, the conduct of the Bush administration bears an uncanny resemblance to reckless acts of aggression that gave rise to the first and second world wars. In the 1930s, Germany and Japan marched troops into one country after another, terrorizing their populations and installing puppet regimes on the basis of brazenly fabricated pretexts and in complete contempt of international law. Similarly today, world politics appears more and more to be in the grip of madmen and megalomaniacs hell-bent on triggering a worldwide conflagration.

The roots of American militarism

There is an inexorable logic to this madness, however. The underlying causes of the eruption of US militarism are to be found in the frantic efforts of the ruling elites to overcome the fundamental and irresolvable contradictions of the profit system itself: between world economy and the outmoded capitalist nation state system, and between socialized production and the anarchy of the market based on private ownership. Falling rates of profit and a deepening crisis of the global economy are pressing the major powers into a relentless competition for markets, cheap labor and resources that can ultimately only be settled by military means.

Nowhere do these processes find a more concentrated expression than in the United States itself. In the aftermath of World War II, the American ruling class was able to utilize the vast economic resources at its disposal to prop up the world capitalist order that had been wracked by three decades of

war and depression. The subsequent economic decline of America against its European and Asian rivals, underscored by its conversion from the world's largest creditor into the largest debtor nation, has transformed the US into the most destabilizing factor in global politics. In a desperate attempt to offset its economic weakness, Washington has increasingly resorted to its residual military might to maintain its position as global hegemon.

The reasons why Bush is preparing for war against Iran have nothing to do with Tehran's alleged nuclear weapons programs or claims that it is "meddling" in Iraq. While Washington has maintained an economic blockade of Iran since the overthrow of its loyal ally Shah Reza Pahlavi in 1979, it has been compelled to look on as the European powers along with Russia, China, Japan and India have signed lucrative economic deals with the Islamic republic, particularly to exploit the country's energy reserves. Unable to establish its dominance economically, the Bush administration is seeking to use its military muscle to assert control over what are the world's second largest reserves of natural gas and the third largest of oil.

The greatest political mistake would be to believe that saner layers in ruling circles, whether in the US or internationally, will prevent the slide towards war with Iran. The universal silence that has greeted Brzezinski's warnings in the American media and political establishment confirms once again that the Democrats, having given the green light for the illegal invasion of Iraq, will do nothing to prevent Bush and his cronies from playing Russian roulette with the world by attacking Iran. Brzezinski's own proposal for a US withdrawal from Iraq and a regional solution involving all of the major powers points to the underlying reasons. Such a plan would inevitably mean an erosion of US imperialism's dominance in the Middle East and therefore globally, an outcome that is completely unacceptable to the American ruling elite.

Those who place their faith in the European Union, Russia, China or the United Nations acting as a brake on the Bush administration's war drive are certain to be disappointed. After protracted maneuvering to protect their own economic interests, all of the major powers lined up in December behind a UN Security Council resolution that declared Iran's nuclear programs to be a threat to world peace and condemned Tehran for failing to shut them down. As it did prior to the invasion of Iraq, the US will undoubtedly exploit the UN resolution, whatever its precise wording and legal caveats, to justify an attack on Iran. As for the UN, its top officials remain completely mute in the face of the US military build up in the Persian Gulf.

A war with Iran will have profound political consequences in the United States. The Bush administration's blatant disregard for the outcome of the November election has placed it on a collision course with the American people. A US attack on Iran will be accompanied by an all-out assault on democratic rights at home as the White House seeks to stamp out any opposition to its deeply unpopular policies. In the event that the Congress seeks to impede Bush's plans, however timidly, there is no guarantee that the US

administration will abide by established constitutional procedure. Bush has repeatedly asserted his "rights" as commander-in-chief to override longstanding democratic and legal norms.

The Bush administration's rapacious policies abroad serve the interests of the same parasitical corporate elite that has been piling up huge profits at home through systematic restructuring, downsizing and outright financial looting operations. An immense social gulf now exists between an obscenely wealthy few and the majority of the population who, if not living in abject poverty, are struggling to get by. The interests of working people in the United States do not lie in supporting the war plans of Bush but rather in uniting with the vast mass of humanity around the world who, like them, aspire to peace, a decent standard of living and basic democratic rights.

The opposition of the WSWS to the imperialist onslaught against Iran does not imply political support for the reactionary clericalist regime of President Ahmadinejad. The Iranian government represents an unstable coalition of bourgeois capitalist interests that employs religious demagoguery and occasional anti-imperialist sloganeering to maintain a tenuous grip on mass support. It fears above all the renewal of a independent movement of the Iranian working class, which has a long history of revolutionary socialist struggles. The repressive policies of the clerical regime are aimed at suppressing the resurgence of a genuine democratic, socialist and anti-imperialist movement of the Iranian masses.

But a settlement of accounts with the bourgeois regime in Iran is the task of the Iranian working class. In fact, the warmongering of the Bush administration provides the Ahmadinejad government with the opportunity to divert popular attention from pressing social needs within Iran itself. Moreover, an assault on Iran by the United States would have as its aim not the creation of a democratic regime, but rather the installation of a another puppet government and the reduction of the country to the status of a semi-colonial American protectorate.

For a socialist program against war

The only means for opposing the eruption of American militarism is the construction of a broad independent political movement of the working class around the world opposed to war and its root causes that lie in the capitalist system itself.

The independent strength of working people must be mobilized in support of definite demands, including the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, the removal of the armada of US warships from the Persian Gulf and the dismantling of the web of military bases that the Pentagon has established throughout the Middle East and Central Asia.

The demand must also be raised for all those within the US administration responsible for conspiring to carry out an unprovoked war of aggression against Iraq—and who are

now preparing another war based upon lies against Iran—be held politically and legally accountable for their actions.

Working people must also resolutely oppose any attempt in the US or elsewhere to impose military conscription in order to compel working class youth to serve as cannon fodder for these wars.

The struggle against war must also be directed against the definite class and profit interests that promote it. The immense US military-industrial complex must be taken out of private hands and turned into a public utility, redirected to peaceful production. The vast public resources—some \$470 billion budgeted for the Pentagon this year alone—spent for war must be redirected to solve the pressing social problems of working people in the US and internationally.

Similarly, the energy conglomerates—ExxonMobil, Chevron, Conoco-Phillips, etc.—all of which have reaped windfall profits off of the death and destruction in Iraq, must be placed under public ownership and control.

The fight to put an end to the continuing war in Iraq and

the threat of a new and even bloodier assault on Iran cannot be advanced by means of the existing big business parties and state institutions in the United States or any other country. It requires uniting the struggles of working people all over the world based on the perspective of building a mass international socialist movement. This is the task undertaken by the parties of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

The WSWs strongly supports the emergency conference convened in the United States by the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE) and the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) under the slogans “End the occupation and withdraw all US forces from Iraq! No to war against Iran!”

This conference, to be held on March 31 and April 1, at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan, will serve as an indispensable forum for mobilizing students, youth and working people in the United States and internationally against imperialist war and the capitalist system that creates it.

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