



USS Stark

Reports in European newspapers confirm this impression. For example, in May, the French newspaper *Le Monde* revealed that in the UN Security Council, Washington, London and Paris had worked against maintaining a firm resolution to halt the Gulf war, due to conflict between their national interests, which has the effect of hamstringing major new initiatives. On the one hand, England was flattering Iran by approving the Security Council resolution urging a ceasefire along the front where the forces of the two sides are now situated. France vetoed this resolution as it includes a paragraph for an arms and economic embargo on both sides; this would affect the French arms sales to Iraq. On the other hand, the US vetoed this resolution as it «did not want history to record that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council had maintained unified work.» However, more recent developments show that it may be forced to accept such unified work.

The outcome of the Venice Summit showed that the seven major capitalist nations are concerned about securing their respective national interests, rather than about ending the Gulf war. Although these states are the real decision-makers, capable of ending the war if they so choose, they were content with issuing statements. They produced a statement on the Gulf demanding «effective measures» by the UN Security Council to stop the war, while pledging to keep open the vital oil routes and maintain freedom of navigation in the Gulf.

Iran, for its part, refuses to halt the war and rejects all actions taken by the UN Security Council. According to the statement of the Iranian foreign minister, Ali Akbar Vilayyati, at a press conference held in Abu Dhabi on May 31st, the precondition for ending the war is the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime. With this stance, Iran is providing the excuse for increased US involvement in the Gulf.

US—IRAQI COOPERATION

Brandishing the slogan of self-defense against deliberate or accidental attacks, the US Defense Department decided to add three more warships to its five-vessel force in the Gulf. One of these is the destroyer Fox and another is the aircraft carrier Saratoga. The attack on the Stark initiated an effective US-Iraqi cooperation on the military level, decisively ending thirty years of economic and political boycott which has anyway eased in recent years. US Navy Rear Admiral David Rogers led a nine-man delegation to Iraq soon after the accident to investigate the matter. On May 29th, Rogers declared a preliminary Iraqi-US agreement to develop relations and maintain effective cooperation in order to minimize the possibility of future accidental attacks. On June 2nd, the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al Qabbas* reported that the US investigation committee advised the Reagan Administration to form an American-Iraqi committee based in Baghdad, to specialize in exchanging urgent information with respect to US navigation in the Gulf.

Washington also exploited the Stark attack, and the Iranian threats to obstruct navigation, in its efforts to seek the formation of a joint naval force for the Gulf along with its NATO allies. The US is moreover working to enhance the role of the reactionary regimes in the region, mainly Saudi Arabia, so that they can execute US policy in the Gulf and the whole Middle East. On June 4th, US Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger met in Nice with Amir Sultan Ben Abdel Aziz, secretary of the Saudi defense ministry. Reuters reported that their discussion focused on a US proposal about whether to permit US aircraft to utilize the airports of the Gulf Cooperation Council states, and/or to have US aircraft participate in protecting airspace over the Gulf, and/or permitting US reconnaissance planes to use Gulf air bases.

Warning the Saudis to follow US wishes even more closely, the Reagan Administration withdrew its proposal to sell twelve F-15 fighters and 1600 Maverick missiles to Saudi Arabia, after the sale met opposition in the Congress. Congressmen pointed to the Saudi refusal to intercept the Iraqi aircraft that fired on the Stark, but the real background for their opposition is long-standing Zionist lobbying against major arms sales to Arab countries generally. The Reagan Administration will present its proposal again in the context of drawing the Saudis into even closer military cooperation. Already the monarchy had agreed to extend joint air surveillance with the AWACS. In its latest move, the US has ordered the battleship Missouri to sail for the Gulf. This ship is equipped with Tomahawk cruise (nuclear) missiles, and its presence in the Gulf will again up the military ante. At the same time, Saudi Arabia has agreed to sweep Gulf waters for mines, while providing facilities for wounded US servicemen.

All facts attest to the Reagan Administration's determination to escalate its military presence and interference in the Gulf. The worse the Iraq-Iran war gets, the more pretexts US imperialism will gain to do just that. This imperialist aggression will only be subdued by a unified regional and international effort to stop this irrational war. ●