

US Intervention in the Gulf

With over 85,000 American troops in Saudi Arabia or on warships patrolling the region, the Gulf crisis has reached unprecedented proportions. The massive US intervention has overshadowed the Iraqi-Kuwaiti dispute which precipitated it. This dispute has been removed from the realm of Arab politics and turned into a global contest between the Arab people and imperialism.

by Farida Al Asmar

Though the outcome of the current confrontation is far from predictable, it has already elicited dramatic new alignments in Arab politics. As the crisis concerns global energy politics and comes in the age of perestroika, it will have lasting ramifications for the upcoming reintegration of Eastern and Western Europe, US-Soviet relations and the balance between the US, Europe and Japan. It will also impact on other conflicts, such as the one between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus, and last but not least, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

New hegemonic crusade

The US intervention, the largest overseas deployment of troops since the war on Vietnam, has now become the central issue. The US administration saw in this regional dispute a golden opportunity to reinforce its military presence, and consolidate its political and strategic control in the Middle East. In the prevailing international situation, the US can work to assert its hegemony without having to worry about an adverse reaction from the Soviet Union. The antagonism between the US and the Soviet Union has given way to the contradiction between imperialism and the third world. The Bush Administration has pointedly singled out the third world as the primary target for potential US military intervention. In the administration's national security strategy report, it was stated: «The growing technological sophistication of Third World conflicts will place serious demands on our forces» (Associated Press, March 21st). The global military build-up and low-intensity warfare strategy cultivated under the Reagan Administration has blossomed into what can only be termed high-intensity aggression.

Why all this fuss over Kuwait? Is Washington really that concerned about the Kuwaiti people? And why

has the US done nothing in the face of 23 years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights? Is concern for human rights, democracy and recognized borders the real motive for sending thousands of soldiers and the latest military technology to the Gulf?

It is not difficult to answer these questions if we study the record of US military crusades whether in Vietnam, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama or elsewhere. Although this aggression was carried out in the name of lofty principles, the real question was always the naked pursuit of interests - maintaining channels for exploitation and strategic control of resources and territory.

In the case of the Gulf, the US intervened for two major reasons. The first is to exert unconditional control over the oil fields. The second is to maintain the degree of stability in the area needed to protect Israel. Israel is itself charged with protecting the oil fields for imperialism by checking the growth of the Arab national liberation

USS Wisconsin entering the Gulf, equipped with cruise missiles



movement and development in the Arab world. However, in the current crisis, this job is too big for Israel, especially in view of its being tied up with combatting the intifada on the one hand, and the strength of the Iraqi army on the other.

The Israeli role

The participation of Israel in US-sponsored aggression or subversion cannot, however, be ruled out. This will depend on the ensuing course of events. Colonel Rod Paschall, former strategic planner for the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, says: «We'd better start thinking about subversion as soon as we can...and if we want to topple the [Iraqi] regime, we should work with the Israelis to do it» (*International Herald Tribune*, August 9th). The Israeli leadership appears to be mitigating for a military solution to the Gulf crisis. Speaking on Israeli television on August 15th, Housing Minister Ariel Sharon said, «The circumstances necessitate a serious move and very quickly...any move which does not cause immense damage to Iraq, does not eliminate this danger against Israel, and this can only be done through a military strike.»

The first week in August, Israel made it clear that any Iraqi move into Saudi Arabia or Jordan would be considered unacceptable. Based on the Zionists' historical disregard for Arab land and borders, this can only be viewed as a threat of an Israeli invasion of Jordan, if given the least excuse.

Typical of the imperialist-Zionist double standard is the projection that Iraq moved into Kuwait in the midst of a totally peaceful, acceptable situation in the Middle East. The reality is that the chances of war in the area had been building up for some time, mainly due to Israeli sabotage of the PLO's peace initiative and even US attempts to start an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. A major direction of Israeli political strategy for some time has been to divert attention away from the intifada and resurrect the idea that Israel is threatened by «bloodthirsty» Arab armies, not children throwing stones and waving flags. The crisis also presents the Zionists with a golden opportunity to stop the discussion that had been raised among US policymakers concerning the disproportionately large amount of military and financial aid given to Israel.