

COMMENT

Targeting Iran

THE DANGER OF A US-ISRAELI WAR on Iran is escalating rapidly. The US and its allies are ramping up their all around assault on Iran, including new crippling sanctions, and openly threatening to attack. Ground is being laid daily in the headlines and statements by politicians of every stripe in mainstream US politics calling for aggression against Iran—all justified by unsubstantiated assertions that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons. In case of Saddam's Iraq it was 'weapons of mass destruction'. They used an excuse and they are trying to convince the world that they have one.

Whether or not Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons technology (and there is no proof they are), this US narrative and framework is an outrageous effort to turn reality upside down—the reality of which of the clashing oppressive forces in the region is the dominant threatening oppressor and bully.

Iran is a non-nuclear, Third World country. Unlike India, Israel and Pakistan Iran has signed NPT. The US is the world's most powerful nuclear weapons state with over 4,000 warheads. It's the only country to ever use nuclear weapons, killing 150,000-240,000 people in the 1945 bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan (with many more dying of the effects of radiation for years after). It's the main backer of the one country in the Middle East that actually does have nuclear weapons—Israel.

Now the US and its allies have launched a massive, all-around campaign of aggression against Iran in the name of stopping the spread of nuclear weapons. These weapons are horrible, and they should be banished from the earth. If the US rulers were really against these tools of mass murder they'd insist everyone get rid of them— but they're not. They and their media mouthpieces aren't saying word one about getting rid of their nukes, or Israel's nukes, or Britain or France's nukes. They maintain double standards to pursue their geo-political interests and it is nowhere so naked as in the case of nuclear gambling with Iran. Earlier it was Iraq. Tomorrow it might be Pakistan or India.

In yet another threatening move, the US recently sent an aircraft carrier through the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow passageway of water that connects the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea and then the Indian Ocean. The Strait of Hormuz borders Iran, as does the Persian Gulf. The Iranian military commander then "recommended" that the US not return this aircraft carrier to the Persian Gulf. The *New York Times*, on January 4, termed this the latest and "most aggressive" move in the increasingly intense manoeuvring between the US and Israel on the one hand—which are menacing Iran with the threat of an attack and carrying out covert military activities against it even now—and Iran.

The name of the aircraft carrier that the US sent through the Strait of Hormuz is *John C Stennis*. Then who is John C Stennis? What are the boons and benefits for humanity accomplished by this John C Stennis such that he came to have his name emblazoned on a US Navy aircraft carrier?

Stennis was the US senator from Mississippi from 1947 to 1988—41 years. During the majority of his tenure, Black people in Mississippi did not have the right to vote. Indeed, during his time in office, Black people in Mississippi were often lynched—including the notorious lynching of Emmett Till, a 14-year-old Black youth visiting from Chicago who was taken out and murdered in 1955 for the crime of allegedly whistling at a white woman and whose killers sat laughing in the courtroom as they were acquitted and then sold their story to *Look* magazine. During John C Stennis' reign in the Senate, numerous people were murdered for the offence of attempting to register Black people to vote or otherwise fighting for basic rights—including Medgar Evers, who was assassinated for organising a boycott of local stores in Jackson, Mississippi (an incident which is included in the popular book and movie *The Help*), as well as the civil rights organisers James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, not to mention dozens of unsung and unmentioned Black activists working in local areas of Mississippi.

Meanwhile, the bombs found in Bangkok and Tbilish (Georgia) are similar to the ones used in India's capital. Iran has refused to “accept” or “deny” its role in the New Delhi metal bomb attack, in the face of allegations levelled by Israel. India, however, is promoting exports to Iran, exploiting international sanctions on Iran and boosting bilateral ties with the Teheran regime despite US pressure. Then India is not China. How long the mandarins in New Delhi will be able to withstand US bullying tactics is anybody's guess. □□□