



[The American Military Deployment in the Gulf Raises Tensions in the Region](#)

The United States' recent deployment of ships, aircraft, and troops to the Persian Gulf has the potential to push tensions to a boiling point in the region. This new strategy being implemented by the Biden administration runs contrary to multiple U.S. administrations (including his own) stated intention to decrease the U.S. footprint in the Middle East. Deploying more forces is an unnecessary escalation. There are other options that the United States needs to explore before they even begin to consider increasing its presence in the Middle East.

The stated reason for the deployment is to deter Iran's recent seizure of some oil tanks transiting the Strait of Hormuz. Iran began to seize other nations' oil tankers in reaction to the United States doing the same to prevent Iranian oil exports. Not only is this a violation of international law, its implementation was doomed to lead to further escalation. Now the United States cries foul and proceeds to once again escalate a situation that was created by its policies.

The Biden administration is currently considering placing armed U.S. military personnel aboard commercial vessels, something it has not done since World War 2. Doing this not only needlessly risks American lives, but also increases the potential for this limited tit-for-tat exchange to escalate into a much larger conflict. There are also still important questions about the implementation of this policy. The vessels to be protected by this policy are commercial operations with mostly non-U.S. crews and owners. Enacting this policy will do what has become increasingly more common in American politics. It will put the interests of corporations over the interests of Americans.

This policy also has the potential to step on the toes of U.S. partners in the region. The countries have made great strides in decreasing tensions between Iran and their respective countries. To barge in and invalidate all efforts toward de-escalation would be irresponsible and unwise.

Increasing military presence in the Persian Gulf is not the solution. Many other avenues have not been fully exhausted, including multiple diplomatic options. The easiest way to decrease tensions between Iran and the United States would be to simply return the stolen oil tanker the U.S. government seized in April. This would not solve the problem by any means, but it would be an act of goodwill that could create opportunities for new diplomatic approaches. There are still some downsides to this approach. It would create the perception that Iran "won" this exchange and negatively affect our relationship with other countries in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia. However, this perception is not worth the risk of an incident involving an exchange of fire between Iranian and American forces. If an American or Iranian casualty were to result from this, it would push both sides toward greater military escalation.

This policy is also shortsighted. The end goal is to stabilize oil prices, which it might do in the short term, but the widescale conflict it could start would destabilize oil prices far more than a few seized oil tankers. There are also ways for the United States to save face, including the application of further

sanctions. The Biden administration is approaching the issue of Iran's harassment of oil tanks as if military escalation is the only solution. It is not. The United States should first carefully consider the effects implementing this policy could have on the region and instead explore alternatives that could benefit both the United States and the Middle East.