



From Europe to the Persian Gulf: the United States' strategic retreat and the necessary response of Mediterranean Europe

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WASHINGTON – According to an analysis published by the *International New York Times*, the recent hasty evacuation of **12 B-1 bombers from a British air base**, described by the White House as a simple prudent precaution, in fact conceals far more complex dynamics. Although President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio have sought to downplay the incident as a routine Pentagon reallocation of resources, global geopolitical observers stress that the decision represents **the latest example in a series of forced withdrawals seven months after the start of the conflict with Iran.**

Rather than reasserting American military hegemony after the bombing of Iranian nuclear sites in June last year and the operation in Caracas in January, **Trump's war of choice has instead exposed and amplified unprecedented vulnerabilities for U.S. forces.**

The drone threat and the new risk map

The withdrawal of B-1 bombers from the **R.A.F. at Fairford** — a focal point of Anglo-American military cooperation since D-Day in 1944 — was made following **intelligence assessed as credible**. These details indicated that **Iran-backed operatives were planning short-range drone attacks**, launched directly from outside the base perimeter fence.

This tactical pattern recalls recent operations conducted by Ukraine on Russian territory, demonstrating how **relatively inexpensive weapons such as drones and cyber tools are reshaping the modern battlefield**. **Keeping forces beyond the reach of conventional missiles is no longer sufficient** to ensure the safety of troops and aircraft.

Gulf bases unusable and logistical difficulties

The situation appears even more critical in the Middle East theater:

- **Infrastructure damage:** Iranian drone and missile attacks have rendered **as many as 13 major bases uninhabitable or severely damaged** that are used by U.S. forces, including facilities in **Kuwait** (Camp Buehring and Ali Al Salem Air Base), **Qatar** (Al Udeid), **Bahrain** (home to the Fifth Fleet), and **Saudi Arabia** (Prince Sultan).
- **Improvised relocations:** U.S. military personnel have been forced to **evacuate to hotels and offices in the region**. Iran has managed to identify some of these unprotected civilian accommodations, targeting them along with diplomatic facilities.
- **Logistical complications:** The closure and relocation of bases have made operations extremely complex. **Bombers must now depart directly from U.S. soil** (requiring more time and aerial refueling), while aircraft carriers in the Arabian Sea depend on supplies from **Diego Garcia, more than 3,500 km away**.
- **Freedom of navigation at risk:** The United States **has been unable to fully guarantee the security of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea**, historically a central pillar of the American presence in the region.

Political and economic consequences in the United States

While President Trump insists that Iran is on the brink of economic collapse because of the naval blockade, the strategic and economic repercussions for the United States remain severe:

- **Reconstruction costs:** The Pentagon has not yet provided official estimates to Congress, but lawmakers expect the cost of repairing or rebuilding the bases to run into **tens of billions of dollars**. Senator Jack Reed denounced **financial costs that continue to rise every month** and a severe **ammunition crisis**.
- **Strategic message to adversaries:** According to experts such as Dana Stroul (Washington Institute for Near East Policy), these sudden withdrawals send a dangerous signal: **they show Tehran and other adversaries that it is possible to force a superpower to retreat** by striking or threatening its bases.

The southern shore and the strategic imperative: Mediterranean Europe toward Africa and the Red Sea

In the face of the partial U.S. pullback and instability along global maritime routes, there is an urgent need for **Mediterranean Europe** – led by **Italy, France, Spain, and Greece** – to **substantially increase strategic and security cooperation with North Africa and the Red Sea region, extending to the Horn of Africa**.

This repositioning directly answers the urgent appeals of the EU High Representative for Foreign Policy, **Kaja Kallas**, who urged member states to **significantly reinforce the naval mission *Aspides*** with more ships and aircraft to safeguard freedom of navigation and the security of European maritime corridors.

Africa is not merely a geographic neighbor; it is a colossal economic, social, and demographic force that will inevitably shape the next 50 years. For Southern Europe, it is essential to identify and establish stable areas of bilateral and multilateral cooperation across all vital strategic dossiers:

- **Energy dossiers and transition:** Development of hubs for renewable energy, natural gas, and green hydrogen.
- **Migration management:** Equal partnerships for socioeconomic stabilization and combating human trafficking.
- **Critical raw materials:** Sustainable supply agreements for European industrial and technological supply chains.

- **Trade and maritime security:** Joint protection of the sea lines of communication linking the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean.

The evolution of the Middle East crisis and U.S. logistical difficulties demonstrate that Mediterranean Europe must take responsibility for security in its immediate neighborhood, turning the wider Mediterranean and the African continent into a cornerstone of cooperation and stability for decades to come.

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