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End the Re-Invasion of Iraq: 12 Years After the Invasion



Although America “withdrew” from Iraq and “ended combat operations” in December 2011, the US has maintained and built up its presence, most recently sending thousands of troops under the guise of fighting ISIS (the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria). The most prominent symbol of the occupation is the US embassy in Iraq, the largest in the world. On February 11, President Obama asked Congress to pass a new Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) which would allow ground forces to engage with ISIS so long as they were not doing so for an “enduring” time period, a phrase which has yet to be clearly defined. Many in Congress, having seen how the AUMFs of 2001 (after 9/11) and 2002 (allowing war against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq) have been used for endless warfare, are reluctant to give another “blank check” to the military. And while ISIS does pose a serious threat to Iraq, it is US involvement that serves as a recruiting tool for that and other militant groups, including various off-shoots of Al Qaeda—some of which share the US goals for “regime change” in Syria and the defeat of ISIS.

RENEWED BOMBING, MILITARY BUILDUP

Even though combat operations supposedly ended in 2011, the US began bombing Iraq again on August 8, 2014, less than two months after ISIS seized considerable Iraqi territory and the President announced he was sending more troops. The US and its allies started bombing inside Syria for the first time on September 22, with over 1600 airstrikes total as of early January.*¹ There have been numerous reports of civilian casualties caused by the US and its allies, including 9 Iraqis killed in Al Qaim in February.*²

While only 250 American Troops were in Iraq as of January 2014*³, there are now over 2100 there primarily as supposed “advisors.”*⁴ In addition, 4000 troops from Colorado were recently deployed to nearby Kuwait,*⁵ in what many think is a prelude to a US ground invasion to repel ISIS from the territory it seized since June 2014. (Meanwhile, the previously announced complete withdrawal of troops in Afghanistan by 2016 is being slowed down.*⁶)

BUT WHAT ABOUT ISIS?

It is true that ISIS militants are killing civilians, taking hostages and destroying ancient relics. However, the 1991 US war on Iraq (the “Gulf War”) and the concurrent and subsequent sanctions and “no-fly zone” bombings killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis*⁷, while civilian deaths since the 2003 invasion have totalled at least 136,000*⁸. A report released March 19, 2015 puts the total dead at one million.*⁹ So America is hard-pressed to claim the moral upper hand in this debate.

In September, Phyllis Bennis of the Institute for Policy Studies put forward a number of non-violent ideas to reduce the influence and capabilities of ISIS, including ending the flow of arms to the region, increasing diplomacy with Syrian allies like Russia and Iran, and cutting off the flow of funds to ISIS.*¹⁰ Yet it was not until February 2015 that the United Nations finally established sanctions on those buying oil from ISIS, and at that, the drop in oil prices and increase in other cash flowing to the militant group meant the move came far too late.*¹¹ (continued)

Belying 'No Boots on Ground' Promises, Number of U.S. Troops in Iraq Set to Double

Obama's authorization would bring number of military personnel and "advisors" to over 5,000 by Deirdre Fulton, staff writer



\$1.6 billion of the latest request for funding would be used to train Iraqi soldiers, the Pentagon said. (Photo: the U.S. Army/Allyric/c)

CommonDreams, November 8, 2014

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WORLD WAR III: YOU'RE SWIMMING IN IT

Though it may not be recognized until far into the future, the endless wars since 9/11 have led to the battles now raging in Iraq and Syria, the ongoing (if slightly diminished) US war/occupation of Afghanistan, and, among others, the internal war for control of Libya after the 2011 US intervention there. The US has been joined by Arab countries such as Jordan and the United Arab Emirates in bombing Syria, while the Iranian military has been taking leadership in the fight against ISIS in Iraq. This has led to a serious dilemma for the US, which refuses to coordinate militarily with Iran, to the point where US forces did not provide air support for the battle of Tikrit in March 2015.*¹² One can only imagine what will happen if Iranian troops inadvertently kill an American or vice-versa. Meanwhile, as the US supports a questionable regime in Ukraine as part of its efforts to bolster NATO and Western presence in the former Soviet Union, tensions with Russia continue to climb. (It is notable that in World War II, despite differences in political and economic worldviews, the US and Russia were allied against the Axis powers, though that partnership devolved into the Cold War in the years following.)

The US has also used drone strikes to kill people in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, albeit the number of strikes in the latter three countries fell from over 120 in 2010 to about 50 in 2014.*¹³ As noted by Nobel Peace Prize winning Pakistani Malala Yousafzai, the use of these robotic warplanes by the US to kill from afar is only helping to recruit more people to engage in violence to achieve their political ends.*¹⁴ And like the US occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, Israel's 47-year-old occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is often cited as a source of unrest, which could easily be resolved by ending the mistreatment of Palestinians that has been the subject of dozens of UN Resolutions.*¹⁵

And while hundreds of people have flocked to join ISIS, including some Americans who were arrested by the FBI for attempting to do so,*¹⁶ some American former soldiers identifying themselves as Christians are flying to Iraq to help repel ISIS.*¹⁷ Unlike people going to fight alongside ISIS, these "holy warriors" are not being targeted and prosecuted, so it seems the US is selective on which citizens get to join the battle as volunteer militants.

JUST SAY NO TO MORE WAR AND OCCUPATION

The good news, such as it is, is that Americans have a chance to voice their concerns and to end the war on the people of Iraq and Syria. The President's request for a new AUMF for war on ISIS has stalled. Many of those opposed are concerned that there are no geographic boundaries and that the terms are so vague as to allow warfare to go on for years, including ground troops. Despite their reluctance to vote for or against a statement of war, Congress has been appropriating funds (at least \$5 billion in this fiscal year*¹⁸) for the President's warfare, which continues regardless.*¹⁹ It is important for Americans to speak up and call for peace in this nation that has now been at war in Iraq for over 24 years since 1990 (sanctions)/1991 ("Gulf War"), and for 12 years since the 2003 Iraq War began.

More information on how to speak out about the AUMF can be found at <<http://www.pjw.info/noaumf.html>>.

Obama's Request for Authorization Stalls, But War in Iraq and Syria Marches On

White House pleads for Congress to grant war-making powers, as bombs continue to fall on Syria and Iraq
by Sarah Lazare, staff writer



Members of CODEPINK and Witness Against Torture protest Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Wednesday, March 11, 2015. (Photo courtesy of CODEPINK)

A Code Pink protestor interrupts hearings on the AUMF, with a sign that reads "There is no military solution," CommonDreams, March 12, 2015

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The Iraq Affinity Group is committed to educating the public about the effects of U.S. policy on the people of Iraq, and other areas including SW Asia, North Africa, and the "Middle East."
Regular meetings usually 2nd Wednesdays, 7 PM.