

US Bombs and Troops Still in Syria, Nine Years Later... After 22 Years, USA Mostly Gone from Afghanistan

Sep. 29,
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On September 23, 2014, the US began bombing **Syria** ostensibly to fight the Islamic State (ISIS). This date was very close to the thirteenth anniversary of when the US invaded **Afghanistan** following 9/11 on October 7, 2001. While there are no US troops in Afghanistan any more, America keeps an “over-the-horizon” presence, claiming the right to interfere militarily at its discretion. The US exercised its self-proclaimed right to bomb Afghanistan in July, 2022, when a drone used a missile armed with knives to kill an alleged Al Qaeda leader in Kabul (PCMag, August 2, 2022). In Syria, roughly 1000 US troops are stationed in **at least 24 military sites** in a country that did not invite American presence (New Arab, May 24). US warfare in Syria has led to a number of near-direct confrontations with Russia, such as a series of six incidents in July where Russian fighter jets struck US drones (Associated Press, July 26).

America also continues to **hold about \$7 billion of Afghan assets** in its banks and refuses to turn the funds over, despite widespread hunger and poverty racking the nation’s people (PBS, August 15).

US bombs Syria targets after deadly drone attack



The US has about 900 troops operating in southern and eastern Syria

By Rafi Berg, BBC News

BBC News
March 24, 2023

The US has carried out air strikes against Iran-linked groups in eastern Syria after a drone attack killed a US contractor, the US defence chief said.

The US Continues Its Presence in Syria without Authorization

By continuing its presence in Syria **without Congressional or UN Authorization**, the US is engaged in illegal warfare. Syria has objected to the US presence including at the United Nations in September, 2022. But the UN takes no action against the 800-pound gorilla which also launched a war in Iraq based on fraudulent evidence, and continues to conduct airstrikes in Somalia and Yemen. In addition, response to the massive earthquake that hit Syria early in 2023 was delayed due to US sanctions (Middle East Eye, July 26).

America has been killing people in Syria, with a helicopter raid targeting an alleged ISIS leader as recently as April (Associated Press, April 17). In June, 22 US troops were injured in a “helicopter mishap,” underscoring the question of why they are there in the first place (US Central Command, June 12).

The US military bases in Syria are explicitly there to protect access to oil, though another stated goal is to suppress “terrorism.” The Syrian government considers the mostly Kurdish militias supported by the US to be terrorists, which goes to show how that word ultimately has no meaning. In fact, some of the militants funded and trained by the US are now fighting one another instead of the central Syrian government (The Cradle, September 2). The US has also put sanctions on one such Syrian group and another based in Turkey (Responsible Statecraft, August 22).

As a side note, **Israel has also bombed Syria hundreds of times**, frequently targeting its airports and other infrastructure and killing soldiers and others (Agence France Presse, August 28).

Syria has been engaged in what’s categorized as a civil war since 2011, with proxy fighting supporting the state from Russia and Iran, Turkish military incursions by land and air against Kurdish militants, and interference by the US and its allies. The people of Syria need diplomacy and assistance, not bombs.

A Very Quiet Meeting in Doha: US Officials Meet With Taliban Representatives

With little fanfare, U.S. and Taliban delegations met this week in Doha. Their agendas are telling in their differences.

On July 30-31, a U.S. delegation, led by U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West, met with Taliban representatives and “technocratic professionals” in Doha, Qatar.

Close watchers of Afghanistan noted the meeting, which appears to be the first official talks between the United States and the Taliban since August 2021.

Jonathan Schroden of the CNA Corporation remarked on Twitter (X): “The fact that the (seemingly) most substantive talks between the US & the Taliban since the signing of the Doha deal in 2020 didn’t even register as a news item here makes clear where Afghanistan stands on the US list of priorities these days.”

The Diplomat
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The Afghan War, 22 Years Later

On October 7, 2001, the US invaded Afghanistan in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington DC. Although US troops were withdrawn in August, 2021, **America’s war has continued** militarily, diplomatically and economically. Even when direct diplomatic negotiations occur between the Taliban government of Afghanistan and US officials, the takeaway is starkly different. The US gives strong lectures about human rights concerns, and the Afghans express that they need the country’s own money which is being held in US banks to stave off the worsening humanitarian situation there (Reuters, July 31).

One remnant of the Afghan war which has not been resolved is the continued operation of the prison camp at the US Naval Base in **Guantanamo Bay, Cuba**. After a detainee was released in April, only 30 people remain there, many of whom have also been cleared for release (The Hill, April 20). Only a few of the original 770+ inmates have been convicted of any crime. In September, lawyers filed suit on behalf of a detainee against psychologists who designed the torture program at Guantanamo (Middle East Eye, September 20).

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Syria After Nine Years, Afghanistan After 22 9/29/23 (continued)

Also, the **2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF)**, which was intended to target Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, remains in place. Among other international military actions, it has been used to justify **US attacks on Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya**. A separate 2002 AUMF allowing the American assault on Saddam Hussein's regime in **Iraq** remains on the books, despite several congressional efforts to repeal it. The Senate voted 66-30 to repeal the AUMF in March, 2023, for instance (NPR, March 29).

The wars that began in 2001 are estimated to have **killed over 7000 Americans and at least 940,000 people** in or from other countries including 432,000 civilians. The financial cost to the US including weaponry, military personnel, veteran care and the broad spying infrastructure set up in the wake of 9/11 is estimated at **over \$8 trillion** (Brown University Costs of War project, August 2023).

One reason the US remains so invested in Afghanistan: there are an estimated \$1 trillion in minerals under Afghan soil, including lithium needed for electric car batteries. China has expressed an interest in these resources (Washington Post, July 20). At this time the US has pivoted much of its interest from the Middle East to **confronting China and Russia** (Middle East Eye, March 23).

But Wait, There's More

The US invasion of **Iraq** in 2003 has kept that country in turmoil ever since. Iraq was without a fully functioning government from October 2021 to October 2022. In 2017, the US launched massive airstrikes to wrest control of parts of Iraq from the Islamic state, destroying much of the City of Mosul. Since then, while most US troops were withdrawn, 2500 troops remain (Reuters, March 7).

'First movers' only: US, China, UK left off UN climate guestlist

Only five of the G20 major economies made the cut for Antonio Guterres' Climate Ambition Summit in New York, despite pressure from big powers



UN head Antonio Guterres witnesses hurricane damage in Antigua and Barbuda in 2017 (Photo credit: UN photo/Rick Bajornas)

By Joe Lo and Sebastian Rodriguez

Climate Change News, September 20, 2023

UN chief Antonio Guterres left big players off the lineup for his Climate Ambition Summit on Wednesday, putting climate credibility above power politics.

Over 100 governments expressed an interest in speaking at the summit in New York but only 34 made the cut, with slots restricted to what the UN called "first movers and first doers".

America also continues to bomb **Somalia**, with somewhere between 13 and 40 such strikes in 2023 alone (Airwars.com, retrieved on September 24). These attacks also allegedly target "terrorists" but often result in multiple civilian casualties.

US airstrikes in **Yemen** seem to have slowed down, with only one strike this year reported on June 22, and four others suspected to be US-led. There have been over 180 such actions since 2017 (Airwars, June 22). Despite previous Congressional efforts to get the US to end its military involvement in the war between Yemeni rebels and Saudi Arabia supporting the officially recognized government, the country remains in conflict. Fortunately, the fighting has been much less intense since a ceasefire deal in 2022.

The US also continues to send mixed messages to **Iran** after President Trump withdrew from the "nuclear deal" in 2018. A deal was enacted in September to release five Americans held captive in Iran for five Iranians imprisoned in the US. As part of that deal, the US agreed to ensure \$6 billion of Iran's own money would be transferred to Qatar so Iran could use the money for humanitarian aid (Reuters, September 11). Yet almost immediately, the US also imposed more sanctions on Iran (CNN, September 15). The US continues to support **Israel**, which also favors an attack on Iran, despite Israel's ongoing illegal occupation and repeated bombardment of **Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza**. The US and Israel are planning joint military operations to simulate an attack on Iran (Times of Israel, August 30).

How Do You Want Your Tax Dollars Sent?

At the time this fact sheet was published, the US was on the brink of another government shutdown. The House and Senate mostly agree that they want to spend **\$886 billion on the military**, their disagreements have to do with whether those funds can be used for certain socially progressive programs. Congress is prepared to exempt the military when all other government workers stop receiving paychecks (Military Times, September 22). Meanwhile, the US has already approved or sent **over \$113 billion to Ukraine** since February 2022 (CNN, September 21), which is nearly twice Russia's annual military budget. Meanwhile **in America, millions of people go without health care, housing, education and other basic human needs**. **Climate change** wreaks havoc on the planet, with the US being excluded from speaking at a UN conference for not being serious enough about preventing disaster (Reuters, September 19). Despite President Biden's strong rhetoric condemning Russia for its invasion and occupation of part of Ukraine, there has been no acknowledgment that many of America's military adventures—including its presence in Syria, and its invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan—also violate international law.

It is far past time to cut military spending, bring the troops home, and stop attacking, threatening and interfering in other countries!

This flyer was prepared
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Contact us about our meetings!
Meetings usually 2nd or 3rd Tuesdays, 7 PM; next one is Oct. 17.