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WAR OF LIES: Why are US Troops Still in Iraq?

On March 19, 2003, following some of the largest protests in global history, the United States launched a military campaign dubbed “shock and awe,” then sent in troops to invade and occupy the country of Iraq. After thirteen years of some of the most stringent sanctions in history, Iraqis had limited access to electricity, medicine and food, problems which still persist sixteen years after the invasion. Tens of thousands of Iraqis

died in the invasion and fighting both at the hands of the US coalition and militant groups emboldened by the destabilization of the nation. Although the US declared “Mission Accomplished” on May 1, 2003, the war in Iraq continues today.

Beginning with the “Gulf War” in January 1991, continuing through the invasion in 2002 and the war against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) which began in August 2014, the US has never really stopped its attacks in Iraq. In 2002, Congress approved an Authorization for Use of Military

Force, designed to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Although that goal was accomplished, the 2002 AUMF remains in effect today and was used to justify the war on ISIS. The US claimed victory after the “liberation” of the Iraqi city of Mosul in late 2017, which caused the deaths of roughly 9600 civilians (Associated Press, December 20, 2017). Despite the defeat of ISIS, the US has no plans to withdraw its roughly 6000 troops from Iraq.

Trump wants to keep troops in Iraq to 'watch' Iran

BY BRETT SAMUELS · 02/03/19 08:17 AM EST

THE HILL



Iraqi president hits back at Trump over US army presence

AP QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA
Associated Press 4 February 2019



Headlines from the Hill (February 3, 2019) and the Associated Press (February 4, 2019) show President Trump's motivations and Iraq's response

In February, President Trump declared that US troops would stay in Iraq in order to “watch Iran,” prompting a backlash from the Iraqi government. While President Barham Salih did not object to the US presence to “fight terrorism,” he noted that Iraq seeks good relations with Iran and told the US not to “overburden Iraq with your own issues” (The Guardian, February 4). When Trump visited American bases at Christmas 2018 without a customary meeting with the Prime Minister (Reuters, December 26), it provoked the Iraqi parliament to seek ways to expel all US troops (Kurdistan 24, February 10).

In late 2011, President Obama followed up on a pledge made by President Bush to withdraw US combat troops, but left about 500 military personnel there as “advisors” and to protect the US embassy in Iraq— the world’s largest. The fight against ISIS led that number to swell to roughly 9000 under Presidents Obama and Trump. In the efforts to push ISIS out of Mosul, the US damaged or destroyed all of that city’s bridges and hundreds of homes. The “good news” is that while in 2017, the year of the mass bombing of Mosul, 36,898 people were killed in Iraq, “only” 7201 were killed in 2018 (Antiwar.com, January 1). So far in 2019, at least 663 more people have been killed or found dead (Antiwar.com, February 1 and 28). That means just since 2014, 197,766 people were killed in war-related violence in Iraq— equivalent to almost 1/3 the population of Portland.

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WAR OF LIES: Why are US Troops Still in Iraq? 3/19/19 (continued)

Not all the news is bad, though: In December, the “Green Zone,” the area that includes the US embassy, was opened to the public for the first time in 15 years at the direction of Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi (Al Jazeera, December 22). Abdul-Mahdi moved his own offices outside the compound in October in an effort to be “closer to the people” (Associated Press, October 25).

Nonetheless, the drop in the world’s oil prices means that rebuilding Iraq in the wake of the sanctions, invasion and the war on ISIS is becoming more difficult, as Iraq’s deficit climbed to \$22 billion in late 2018 (Associated Press, January 1).

The control of the world’s oil was one of the main reasons the US attacked Iraq in 1991, though ostensibly to eject Saddam Hussein’s troops from Kuwait. Donald Trump told NBC in January 2017: “We should’ve kept the oil when we got out”— as if the US had the right to take Iraq’s oil. Now the US is setting up Venezuela to be the next Iraq, demonizing the elected President Nicolas Maduro and trying to provoke a military conflict, bypassing the United Nations to send in humanitarian aid (Reuters, February 6). Venezuela has the world’s largest known oil reserves, more than Saudi Arabia, Iran or Iraq.

A seventeen year old war continues in Afghanistan, where Trump said he would withdraw troops soon— but now the military is giving a timeline of five more years (The Hill, February 28). Trump also said he would pull US troops out of Syria, which without Congressional, UN or Syrian approval were supposedly there to defeat ISIS, but backtracked under pressure and has now agreed to leaving 200-400 military personnel there (NPR, February 22, and NBC, March 5).*-1 The US continues to support Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in their war on Yemen, even with the House having voted to end such support in February and the Senate in March— not to mention the international outrage at the Saudi murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Since Trump took office, the US has tripled its airstrikes in Somalia from 14 to over 40 per year (The Nation, February 25). And while the number of US drone strikes in Pakistan have gone down precipitously— the last one reported was in mid-2018 (Radio Free Europe, July 4), there have been 550 such strikes in Libya since 2011 (the Intercept, June 20).*-2

The estimates of America’s costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are about two trillion dollars, which doesn’t include treatment for over 600,000 US veterans who are now listed as disabled (Lobelog, February 17, 2018). At least 4568 American soldiers and 183,000 Iraqi civilians (with an estimated 100,000 more Iraqi combatants) died as a result of the invasion and subsequent wars (icasualties.org and Iraq Body Count, March 13).

The US is also engaged in diplomatic conflicts indicating they could start wars in Iran, North Korea and maybe Russia. The military budget proposed by President Trump is over \$750 billion as he plans once again to cut social safety nets (National Priorities Project, March 12). Supposedly one of the wealthiest nations on earth, America’s infrastructure is crumbling and thousands of people have no homes or health care. Join Peace and Justice Works in the call to bring all the troops home now!

* -1 On the other hand, it was reported in March that the US transferred weapons and vehicles from Iraq to Syria in late 2018 (Al Monitor, March 4).

* -2 Peace and Justice Works also notes that March 19 marks eight years since the US attack on Libya unleashed turmoil in that country.

Pentagon struggles to explain civilian casualties in air campaign against Islamic State SUNSENTEL April 11, 2017



A U.S. airstrike in the Iraqi city of Mosul killed at least 105 civilians, the Pentagon has concluded

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Peace and Justice Works Iraq Affinity Group

**PO Box 42456
Portland, OR 97242
(503) 236-3065**

Meetings usually 2nd Mondays, 7 PM; next one is April 8.

**iraq@pjw.info
www.pjw.info/Iraq.html**
Contact us about our meetings !