

END THE AFGHAN WAR

* Stop Bombing Iraq & Syria*: The Invasion of Afghanistan 13 Years Later

October 7,
2014

October 7, 2014 marks 13 years after the US invasion of Afghanistan. The initial invasion of Afghanistan was based on the premise that the country was harboring Al Qaeda in the days after 9/11, but even after Al Qaeda dispersed to other countries, the US changed its goals and ousted the Taliban-run government. The country has been in turmoil ever since. Sadly, there has been war in Afghanistan at least since the 1979 Soviet invasion, and it does not seem that US policy will help that war end any time soon.

President Obama previously promised to withdraw troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, but now it appears 9800 troops will remain there indefinitely. About 1000, or 1/10 of those troops, will be from the Oregon National Guard (Oregonlive, February 15)[1].

Elections held earlier this year finally yielded results in September with the naming of a new President, Ashraf Ghani. Under a brokered agreement, he will share power with the runner-up Abdullah Abdullah through a new position called the “Chief Executive” rather than “Prime Minister” (The *Telegraph*, September 29).[2] Both candidates had pledged to sign a security pact with the US granting immunity to American troops. It was the lack of this kind of immunity agreement that led the US to pull out all but a few hundred of its troops from Iraq in 2011. Ghani signed the agreement on September 30 (*Washington Post*, September 30).[3]

Afghanistan: No justice for thousands of civilians killed in US/NATO operations



Amnesty International's report documents the failures of accountability for US military operations in Afghanistan.
(source: amnesty.org August 11 2014)

And while we often hear about US drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, the US continues to conduct airstrikes and drone strikes in Afghanistan, frequently killing civilians including children, as recently as September 10th (Agence France Presse, September 10).[4] An ongoing US presence is likely to perpetuate the violence in Afghanistan, rather than quell it.

From the time of the invasion in 2001, there has been speculation about Afghanistan as a route for an energy pipeline across SW Asia. More recently it has come to light that Afghanistan also sits on a reserve of rare minerals worth at least \$1 trillion (Live Science, September 5).[5]

Iraq/Syria:

After the US “withdrew” from Iraq in late 2011, the President urged Congress to repeal the 2002 Authorization for Use of Military Force in Iraq, yet in early August, he ordered bombs and missiles to be dropped on that country. On September 22, the President began bombing inside Syria, a nation which has never attacked nor threatened to attack the US. While these attacks are ostensibly “targeted airstrikes” against the Islamic State (or ISIS) from human piloted aircraft, cruise missiles and drones, there are already reports of civilian deaths in Syria (Yahoo News, September 30) [6]. These attacks could accidentally— or deliberately— end up hitting a Syrian government facility, triggering a much broader conflict. Iran has troops on the ground in Iraq fighting ISIS, and Iran and Russia are stalwart allies of Syria.

The US ramped up quickly to attack ISIS without taking action to work non-violently to end that group’s military assaults against the governments and people of Iraq and Syria. As noted by analyst Phyllis Bennis, they could work to stop the flow of arms to the region (after all, the US is now bombing Humvees and weapons it supplied to Syrian rebels and the Iraqi military), cut off the flow of funds to ISIS (including the black market sales of oil, rather than bombing a Syrian oil refinery, which they did in September—CNN September 25),[7] diplomacy with Russia, and more humanitarian aid (Democracy Now!, September 15). [8]

(continued)

Citations:

- [1] http://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/index.ssf/2014/02/oregon_guard_soldiers_continue.html
[2] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/11127443/Ashraf-Ghani-sworn-in-as-Afghanistan-president.html>
[3] http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/us-afghanistan-sign-security-pact-to-allow-american-forces-to-remain-in-country/2014/09/30/48f555ce-4879-11e4-a046-120a8a855cca_story.html [4] <http://news.yahoo.com/afghan-officials-us-air-strike-kills-11-civilians-111311322.html>
[5] <http://news.yahoo.com/1-trillion-trove-rare-minerals-revealed-under-afghanistan-114520215.html>
[6] <http://news.yahoo.com/white-house-exempts-syria-airstrikes-from-tight-standards-on-civilian-deaths-183724795.html>
[7] <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/25/world/meast/us-airstrikes/index.html> [8] <http://m.democracynow.org/stories/14644>

Just days before the bombing of Syria began, the House voted 273-156 and the Senate 78-22 to train so-called "moderate" rebels in Syria, including every member of Oregon's delegation except Rep. Peter Defazio [9]. There was little discussion that ISIS would not exist if the US hadn't invaded Iraq, nor any moral contemplation that blowing people up with bombs is just as much murder as cutting off their heads.

Ukraine/Russia:

Tensions in Ukraine signal a renewed military standoff with Russia after the US ended a 50 year "cold war" that drove foreign and military policy. The President's saying the US does not recognize borders when going after "terrorists" seems hypocritical in light of its posture against Russia's intervention in Ukraine.

Drones/Pakistan/Yemen/Somalia:

The US continues dropping bombs from drones in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia. In fact President Obama has used more drone strikes than George W. Bush did. While the world's attention has been on Iraq and Syria, the US bombed Yemen on August 16 (*Guardian*, August 16), [10] Somalia on September 1 (*Guardian*, September 2) [11] and Pakistan on September 24 (CNN, September 24). [12]

Libya:

Libya's situation remains unstable due to US intervention, with violent internal struggles for power prompting the evacuation of the American Embassy there. However, the US decided to keep its personnel in Iraq amidst similar unrest, giving it the excuse to intervene militarily once again.

Israel/Palestine:

This summer, US Senate unanimously approved a resolution supporting Israel's recent incursion into Gaza, which killed hundreds of civilians. (To be clear, it was by "Unanimous Consent," meaning nobody voted against the resolution, though only 78 Senators affirmatively signed onto it—*Haaretz*, July 20 [13]) It is often said that unless the situation between Israel and Palestine can be resolved, there will be no peace in the broader "Middle East."

War economy/Oil dependence/Environment:

America spends more on the military than any other nation as its infrastructure crumbles and the gap between rich and poor widens. These wars are all driven by the fight for resources and access to them, primarily oil. As we work to end climate change, we must note that the US military is one of the largest consumers of fossil fuels on the planet, and the largest consumer in the country (Daily Energy Report, January 3, 2011). [14]



This residential area of Syria was bombed by the US. The UK Daily Mail reported at least 19 civilians killed by Sept. 27

**ACTIONS:
BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW!
SAY NO TO WAR DOLLARS AND
AUTHORIZATIONS FOR USE OF
MILITARY FORCE**

Take action by urging the President to bring all the troops home now! You can also sign a petition supporting a City Council resolution to "bring the war dollars home" (www.pjw.info/DraftCouncilResolution2014.html) And/or write a letter asking Congress to repeal the Authorizations for Use of Military Force (AUMFs) from 2001 and 2002 regarding September 11 and Iraq, and not to pass a new Authorization. The Senate has plans to create a new AUMF after the November elections (The Hill, September 18) [15]. See www.pjw.info/noaumf.html for info.

This fact sheet prepared by/for more info:
Peace and Justice Works Iraq Affinity Group

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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."

Contact us about regular and emergency meetings!
Monthly meetings usually 2nd Wednesdays, 7 PM.

Citations:

- [9] House: <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll507.xml>
Senate: http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=113&session=2&vote=00270
- [10] <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/16/yemen-air-strikes-kill-seven-suspected-militants>
- [11] <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/02/us-attacks-al-shabaab-in-somalia>
- [12] <http://www.cnn.com/2014/09/24/world/asia/pakistan-violence/index.html>
- [13] <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/1.606183>
- [14] <http://www.dailyenergyreport.com/how-much-energy-does-the-u-s-military-consume>
- [15] <http://thehill.com/homenews/senate/218200-senate-democrats-to-hold-isis-vote-after-the-election>