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Why is Oregon's National Guard Headed to Syria 10 Years into the US War?

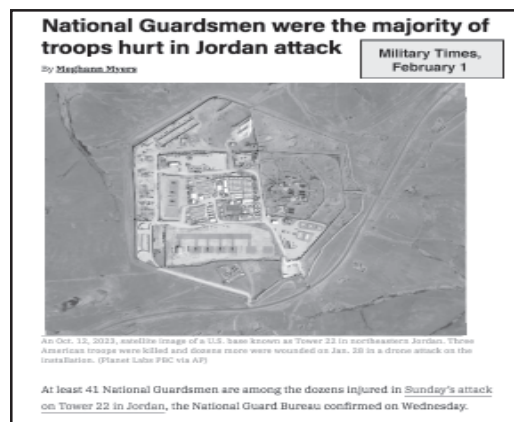
In early August, **230 members of the Oregon National Guard** headed to Oklahoma to train for a **deployment to Syria and Iraq**, two countries with which the US is not technically at war. It has been ten years since the US began bombing Syria on September 22, 2014, after which they have set up as many as two dozen bases (New Arab, May 24, 2024). One base is called "Mission Support Site Conoco," showing that **America's presence is really about access to oil**, not freedom or democracy. Eight US troops were injured in an attack on a US base in Syria in August (Reuters, August 13). Both President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have made statements that the US has no troops in combat zones, yet a **rocket attack** hit "Mission Support Site Conoco" in July (*The Cradle*, July 27). Seven **US troops were injured** in a raid conducted with Iraqi troops against militants in August (Associated Press, August 2). Also, the day Harris made that statement during a debate was the third day in a row that US troops **dropped bombs on Yemen** (Arab News, September 9 and SABA, September 10). So why are Oregonians heading into unauthorized combat zones, 10 years into the US war on Syria?

Make no mistake, this is not a criticism specific to the Democratic Party. **War is a bipartisan issue. With a defense budget of around \$880 billion**, the US spends more on its military than the next 10 countries combined. Former President Trump dropped "the mother of all bombs" on Afghanistan, razed the Iraqi city of Mosul to the ground, and twice vetoed efforts to end US support for the Saudi war on Yemen.

Troops In Combat Zones

There is **no specific congressional, United Nations or Syrian authorization for US troops to be stationed in that country**. The US bombed Syria in 2014 as it expanded its war against the Islamic State in Iraq. **There are roughly 900 US troops stationed in Syria (Reuters, September 6)**. The US conducts bombing raids killing alleged terrorists, including on August 23 (Associated Press, August 23).

Meanwhile, there are **2500 US troops in Iraq**, who are supposed to be there to train the Iraqi military and not taking part in military operations (UPI, December 9, 2021). Yet in addition to the August raid, **the US has bombed Iraq** several times after American bases there were attacked, including **dropping 125 bombs in February** (The Intercept, February 5). Since the Authorization for Use of Military Force in Iraq that passed congress in 2002 was about getting Saddam Hussein out of power through the 2003 invasion, and Iraq is ostensibly a US ally, there is also no congressional authorization for troops in Iraq.



Fears that Oregon's Guard members may be hurt or killed are warranted: in January, **three American reserve military personnel were killed in a drone strike in Jordan, and 41 National Guard members were wounded** (Military Times, February 1).

On August 22, 2024 eleven Oregon-based groups sent a **letter to Governor Tina Kotek**, asking her not to deploy National Guard troops to undeclared war zones (pjw.info/troopshomecampaign.html). There has been no reply from the Governor's office.

US warfare in Syria has led to a number of **near-direct confrontations with Russia**, such as a series of six incidents in 2023 where Russian fighter jets struck US drones (Associated Press, July 26, 2023). Syria has objected to the US presence including at the United Nations in September, 2022. But **the UN takes no action against the US**— the country which launched the 2003 war in Iraq based on fraudulent evidence, supports the Israeli genocide in Gaza financially, vetoes nearly every UN resolution condemning Israel, and has its hands on the second largest nuclear arsenal in the world (roughly 700 fewer warheads than Russia's 6200).

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Conflict in Syria

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. **Israel has also bombed Syria hundreds of times**, frequently targeting its airports and other infrastructure and killing soldiers and others, including one strike that killed 25 people in early September (The *Guardian*, September 9).

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.**

On that note, American media often describe various actors such as Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen and Hamas in Gaza as **"Iran-backed."** But they don't describe the **Israeli Defense Forces, which receive over \$3 billion a year in American taxpayer money, as "US-backed."**

Other US-Supported Warfare

This time of year also brings the **anniversary of the US invasion of Afghanistan** on October 7, 2001, following the attacks on US soil on September 11 of that year. US troops withdrew in 2021 following an agreement made between President Trump and the Taliban. So far, only one incident of American violence has been reported since then, where the US used a drone to kill a supposed Al Qaeda leader in Kabul in July 2022. **America 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, 2023).

The US also continues to bomb Somalia, with somewhere between 15 and 47 such strikes in 2023 and four to nine in 2024 (Airwars.com, retrieved on September 19). These attacks also allegedly target "terrorists" but often result in civilian casualties.



Since January, 2024 the US has been conducting airstrikes in Yemen in retaliation for attacks on ships in the Red Sea. At least 40 people have been killed in these strikes. However, **the US has admitted the airstrikes are not effective** in changing the intent of the Yemeni attacks (Bloomberg, March 26). What they fail to admit is that if they truly negotiated a ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians, which is the reason the Yemenis are attacking, the situation would resolve itself.

The US turned a blind eye when **Israel assassinated a Hamas leader who was visiting Iran** earlier this year. Perhaps that is because the US feels that such assassinations are reasonable, since President Trump killed a top Iranian general who was in Iraq in January 2020. Trump also withdrew from the "Iran nuclear deal" in 2018. Though there have been mixed messages about trying to revive that deal now that Iran has a new president, **it's likely there are more calculations being made about the upcoming presidential election in the US than actually negotiating peace in the Middle East.**

Time to Change US Policy

The **bipartisan push for more war** became clear in September when Republicans put forward a proposed spending bill that would delay increases to the military budget for six months, prompting Democrats to cry foul and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to declare that would "tie the military's hands behind their backs" (*The Hill*, September 10). This was the same thing the US said about conducting its disastrous and murderous war on Viet Nam in the 1960s and 70s.

Here in the US, millions of people go without health care, housing, education and other basic human needs. Climate change wreaks havoc on the planet. 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**, as do Israel's actions in Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Iran. The US continues to fund the war in Ukraine rather than push for negotiations there, while building up its military presence against China and taking other actions that could trigger a full-blown third world war.

We must redirect military money to benefit the people of the US, bring home all the troops, including Oregon's National Guard, and end American military, economic, electronic and psychological warfare on other nations.

This flyer was prepared
in September, 2024 by the

Peace and Justice Works Iraq Affinity Group

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

Meetings usually second Mondays at 5 PM; next one is Oct. 14.

**iraq@pjw.info
www.pjw.info/Iraq.html**

Contact us about our meetings!