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Obama Vows ‘Long-Term’ War in Iraq

By Jason Ditz

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Since his Thursday night announcement that he had authorized US airstrikes in Iraq, the US air war in the country has picked up considerably, and President Obama’s latest comments are laying the stage for a “long-term project” in the country, with further escalations likely along the way.

In his interview with the New York Times, President Obama lamented the comparative brevity of his war in Libya, saying his decision to attack Libya and impose regime change was “the right thing,” but that the US should’ve had a longer “follow-up” mission to prop up a new government there.

It is that regret that is informing his new Iraq War, and his talk of a military goal of preventing the creation of an Islamic caliphate in Iraq and Syria is only part of a protracted nation-building mission that is rapidly forming around what he presented Thursday as an emergency humanitarian intervention.

Obama was quick to dismiss any talk of any time frame for the new war, saying only that it “is going to take some time,” and answering a question about whether that meant months or years by saying only that it wouldn’t be a matter of weeks.

Yesterday's expansion of the "red lines" inside Iraq to include ISIS getting near either Irbil or Baghdad were also expanded further today, with Obama saying a key portion of the war now was also meant to prevent ISIS from getting ahold of "key infrastructure" all across Iraq.

The political goals of the war were also laid bare today, with Obama promising to see Iraq's Sunni Arab minority feeling "connected to and well-served by a national government" in the long term."

Another telling aspect of the president's latest talk is that, while he had long bragged about having 'gotten the US out of Iraq,' he openly spurned the label today, insisting the pullout was "not my decision" and was only done because President Bush had reached a status of forces agreement which expired under his watch.

Ultimately, the new Iraq War is shaping up to be even more ambitious than the 2003 mis-adventure, with President Obama imagining not only the ouster of ISIS from the nation's west and from Syria's east, but also the creation of a new, more "inclusive" Iraqi government.