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The bombing of Syria and unending US war

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24 September 2014

Once again, the US military machine has fired cruise missiles and dropped bombs upon a defenseless country in the Middle East—this time Syria. As with “shock and awe” against Iraq in 2003 and the “humanitarian” war for regime-change in Libya in 2011, Washington is hurling the American people into a war of aggression based upon lies.

What perhaps distinguishes this latest eruption of American militarism most strikingly is the absolutely perfunctory manner in which the president of the United States announced that Washington had attacked yet another country.

Barack Obama spoke for barely three minutes Tuesday before he boarded a helicopter on the White House lawn. His cursory remarks, beginning with praise for “the finest military that the world has ever known,” made it clear that the American ruling class no longer feels obliged to even explain, much less defend, its military interventions. The public is simply expected to accept them as a permanent fact of life.

As for Congress, it scurried out of town for a five-week pre-election recess, getting well away before the bombs started falling. It has effectively renounced its constitutional power regarding the waging of war while working to prevent this most vital question from becoming an issue at the ballot box.

With even the pretense of democratic control and popular support dispensed with, it is increasingly clear that all the real decisions are being taken by the most powerful branch of the state, the vast military-intelligence apparatus. Significantly, the first public announcement of the Syrian war came not from the White House, but the Pentagon.

Obama serves merely as a mouthpiece for this murderous machine, and his repeated promises not to deploy ground troops will soon be waved aside as the generals implement their strategy.

There is in these events the sense that the launching of war against yet another country has become almost routine, an unending and continuous feature of America's political landscape. This unbridled militarism is an instrument not just for pursuing US imperialism's global interests, but also for regulating social instability, projecting outward the immense tensions building up in this, the most socially polarized of the advanced capitalist countries.

In his brief statement Tuesday, Obama declared himself "proud to stand shoulder to shoulder" with "our friends and partners—Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain, and Qatar," which played minor supporting roles in the US blitz against Syria.

By their friends ye shall know them. Washington goes to war against "terrorism" "shoulder to shoulder" with the royal parasites and whoremasters of the Middle East, who until recently served as the principal paymasters of the now targeted "terrorists."

The only states that Obama could marshal behind the US war are four monarchies that are little more than subsidiaries of the big oil conglomerates, including Saudi Arabia, whose routine beheadings serve as an inspiration for ISIS, and a fifth—Jordan—that functions as a client state of Israel. This sordid collaboration, hailed by the media as a "coup" for Obama, only exposes the thoroughly corrupt and illegal character of Washington's new war.

Few in the corporate-controlled media have bothered to point out that this latest intervention comes precisely one year after the Obama administration was compelled to back off from previously planned air strikes against Syria that were to be launched on the basis of an entirely different pretext—the subsequently discredited lie that the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had employed chemical weapons against his own people.

Faced with popular opposition, a vote in the British Parliament that deprived him of international cover, and the refusal of the US Congress to vote in favor of war, Obama was forced to accept a deal brokered by Moscow involving the chemical disarmament of Syria and renewed talks on Iran's nuclear program. Since then, the White House and Pentagon have been recalibrating their war plans, now justified with a new set of lies parroted by the corporate media about terrorist threats.

The only valid starting point for making a sober evaluation of this new American war is the premise that nothing said about it by the White House, the Pentagon, the State Department or the media is true.

Having repeatedly stated in recent weeks that the main target of the US air strikes—the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—represents no imminent threat to the US, the administration has suddenly announced the presence in Syria of a hitherto unknown terrorist cell, the “Khorasan Group,” whose plots were supposedly in an “advanced stage” and posed just such an imminent danger. The television talking heads and paid security experts have responded in lockstep, decrying in Orwellian fashion the alleged Khorasan danger as though it had long been common and indisputable knowledge.

The reality is that the present war grows directly out of the catastrophic consequences of the previous US imperialist interventions in the region. Those include both the devastation of Iraqi society and the murder of hundreds of thousands of the country’s people during more than eight years of war and occupation, and the similar destruction wrought upon Syria by three years of a sectarian civil war for regime-change that was fomented and sustained by Washington and its allies.

ISIS is to an immense extent the direct product of the US intervention in Syria, which, as in Libya before it, has relied heavily on sectarian Islamist militias as its ground troops in the war for regime-change. US intelligence knows the leading personnel in ISIS and has worked with them. Their crimes and atrocities bear the hallmarks of the CIA’s dirty wars.

When the operations of this militia intersected with the rebellion of the Sunni population in Iraq, leading to the disintegration of the US-trained Iraqi security forces and loss of control over much of the country, the agenda of ISIS cut across that of Washington.

Nonetheless, the principal objective of US intervention remains what it was a year ago, the toppling of the Assad government and the imposition of a US-controlled puppet regime, with the aim of bolstering US hegemony over the strategically vital and oil-rich Middle East and preparing for even more catastrophic wars against the principal allies of Damascus—Iran and Russia.

The same administration that has launched the bombing campaign against Syria is simultaneously initiating a \$1 trillion program to upgrade Washington’s nuclear weapons stockpile in preparation for war with Russia and China.

These developments are part of a resurgence of imperialist militarism on a scale not seen since the onset of World War I and World War II. The widening of the present conflict has the potential of dragging mankind into a catastrophic third world war.