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These Are Obama's Wars Now

By Joshua Frank

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On Monday the Democrat controlled House voted 226-202 to approve a rushed \$106 billion dollar war spending bill, guaranteeing more carnage in Iraq and Afghanistan (and lately Pakistan) until September 30, 2009, which marks the end of the budget year. The Senate voted overwhelmingly in favor of the bill's first draft last month, with the final vote on a compromised version to occur in the Senate sometime in the next couple of weeks.

The majority of opposition in the House came from Republicans who opposed an add-on to the bill that would open up a \$5 billion International Monetary Fund line of credit for developing countries. This opposition in the House led Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid on Tuesday to quip, "It'll be interesting to see what happens here. Are my Republican colleagues [in the Senate] going to join with us to fund the troops? I hope so."

No longer can the blame for the turmoil in Iraq and Afghanistan rest at the feet of George W. Bush alone. This is now Obama's War on Terror, fully funded and operated by the Democratic Party.

The bill that passed the House on Monday, once approved by the Senate, will not be part of the regular defense budget as it's off the books entirely. Following the attacks on September 11, 2001, Congress has passed similar emergency spending bills to finance US military ventures in the Middle East. The combined "supplementals" are fast approaching \$1 trillion, with 30% going to fund the war in Afghanistan.

In addition to the latest increase in war funds, Obama is also asking for an additional \$130 billion to be added on to the defense budget for the new fiscal year starting on October 1. The president is upholding his campaign promise to escalate the war in Afghanistan, which also means increasing the use of remote controlled drone planes in neighboring Pakistan that are to blame for hundreds of civilian deaths since Obama took office last January.

Despite Obama's historic (albeit rhetoric filled) speech in Cairo, the new Commander in Chief is still not about to radically change, let alone reform, the US's long-standing role in the Middle East. A master of his craft, Obama is simply candy coating the delivery of US imperialism in the region. Given the lack of opposition to Obama's policies back home, it is becoming clear that he may well be more dangerous than his predecessor when it comes to the US's motivations internationally.

Had Bush pushed for more military funds at this stage, the antiwar movement (if you can call it that) would have been organizing opposition weeks in advance, calling out the neocons for wasting our scarce tax dollars during a recession on a never-ending, directionless war. But since Obama's a Democrat, a beloved one at that, mums the word.

Certainly a few progressive Democrats are dismayed by what the Obama administration is up to, but how many of these Democrats that are upset now will be willing to break rank and oppose their party when it matters most, like during the midterm elections coming up next year? Obama had the majority of antiwar support shored up while he ran for the presidency, with absolutely no demands put on his candidacy. And not surprisingly, antiwar progressives have little to show for their fawning support.

All this begs a few questions: If not now, when exactly will Obama's policies be scrutinized with the same veracity that Bush's were? When will the media end its love affair with Obama and hold his feet to the fire like they did Bush once the wheels fell off the war in Iraq? When will progressives see their issues as paramount and oppose Obama and the Democratic Party until they embrace their concerns?

If these questions are not answered soon, we are in many more years of war and bloodshed, funded by US taxpayers and approved by a Democrat controlled White House and Congress.