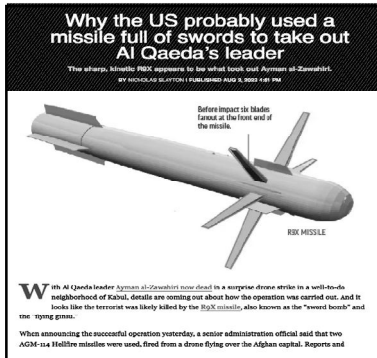


Oct. 7, 2022

Send Aid, Not Bombs: End the US Wars in Afghanistan and Syria

On October 7, 2001, the US invaded **Afghanistan** in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington DC. Although US troops were withdrawn in August, 2021, America's war has continued militarily, diplomatically and economically. Meanwhile in **Syria**, following initial bombing campaigns in September 2014, the US now has roughly 900 troops in three bases in the northeastern part of that country, despite there being no United Nations, Congressional or Syrian authorization for their presence.



The Afghan War Continues, 21 Years Later

In late August 2022, nearly 50% of Americans polled said it was a mistake to invade Afghanistan, up from about 33% in 2019 (Defense One, August 31). When withdrawing troops, the US used drones to attack what they at first said was a convoy of terrorists, but turned out to be civilians who were wrongly targeted. Once the military was out of the country, the US continued to talk

about an “over-the-horizon” presence as a threat to continue using force in Afghanistan. Indeed, in late July, America launched a drone missile with six knife blades to assassinate Ayman al-Zawahiri, considered to be a leader in Al Qaida, without consent from the Afghan government (PC Magazine, August 2). In September, the US began raising the alarm that more terrorists were present in Afghanistan (VOA News, September 28), perhaps as a precursor to sending more troops or weapons back in.

One remnant of the Afghan war which has not been resolved is the continued operation of the prison camp at the US Naval Base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. At least 36 people remain there, many of whom have been cleared for release. Only a few of the original 770+ inmates who have been convicted of any crime.

Also, the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF), which intended to target Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, remains in place. It has been used, at least, to justify US military actions in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya. A separate 2002 AUMF designed to allow the US to attack Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq was been repealed by the US House as recently as July 2022, but not the Senate (Friends Committee on National Legislation, July 15).

The wars that began in 2001 are estimated to have **killed over 7000 Americans** and **at least 800,000 people** in or from other countries. The financial cost to the US including weaponry, military personnel, veteran care and the broad spying infrastructure set up in the wake of 9/11 is estimated at **over \$8 trillion** (Brown University Costs of War project, September 2021).

At the time the Taliban took over Afghanistan in August, 2021, the US was holding \$7 billion in Afghan funds, which it has refused to release despite widespread poverty and illness devastating the country. At first, President Biden proposed setting aside half the funds for 9/11 survivors— even though not a single person who allegedly took part in those attacks was from Afghanistan. Several 9/11 families objected, and a US court ruled that America cannot keep Afghanistan's money (Middle East Eye, August 17 and 27). But rather than get the money where it is needed, the US released the funds to a third-party bank in Switzerland (The Cradle, September 14).

One reason the US remains so invested in Afghanistan: there are an estimated \$1 trillion in minerals under Afghan soil. China has expressed an interest in these resources, and at this time the US has pivoted much of its interest from the Middle East to confronting **China** and **Russia**. The US has continued sailing warships through the Strait of Taiwan as a “message” to China, including on August 28 following a diplomatically questionable and provocative visit from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (CNN, August 28).

The US Expands Its Presence in Syria, Eight Years Into the War

The US military bases in Syria are explicitly there to protect access to oil, though another stated goal is to suppress “terrorism.” 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. Just before the US opened its third base in Syria (Xinhua, September 3), attacks on American troops led the US to use helicopters to kill “suspected Iranian militants” (NBC, August 24).



(continued, over)

End the US Wars in Syria and Afghanistan 10/7/22 (continued)

At the United Nations in September, Syria called for the US to leave its country (Middle East Eye, September 26). Despite President Biden's strong rhetoric condemning Russia for its invasion and occupation of part of Ukraine, there was no broad acknowledgment that many of America's military adventures also violate international law.

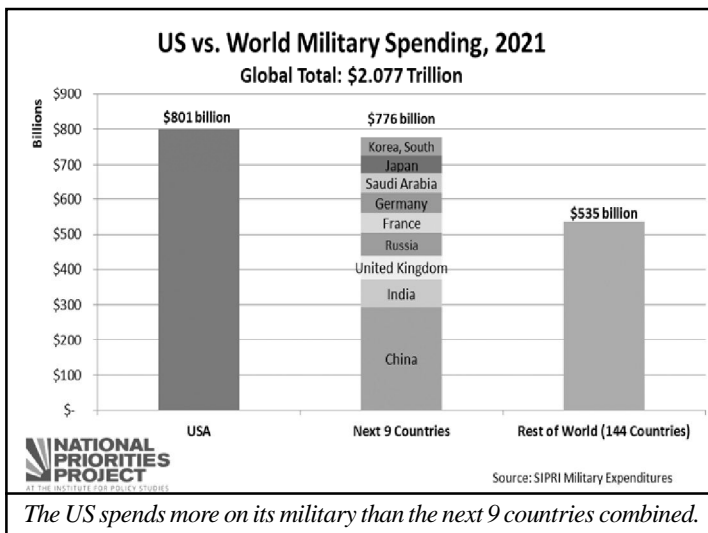
Syria has been engaged in what's categorized as a civil war since 2011, with proxy fighting supporting the state from Russia and Iran, Turkish military incursions by land and air against Kurdish militants, and interference by the US and its allies. The people of Syria need diplomacy and assistance, not bombs.

Other US Interventions

The US invasion of **Iraq** in 2003 has kept that country in turmoil ever since. Iraq has currently been without a functioning government for roughly one year, with fighting escalating from nonviolent disagreements over Parliament to people being killed in the streets. And while most US troops were withdrawn following the devastating 2017 US/Iraqi attacks on Mosul to end the take-over by the Islamic State, 2500 troops remain. Of scores of countries where the US has a military presence, the number in Iraq is the ninth highest (24/7 Wall Street, August 18).

America also continues to bomb **Somalia**, including at least three times in August and September (Washington Examiner, August 11, Antiwar.com, August 17 and September 21). These attacks also allegedly target "terrorists" but often include multiple civilian casualties.

While US airstrikes in **Yemen** seem to have slowed down, with only one suspected strike this year, there have been 181 such actions since 2017 (Airwars, retrieved October 1). The US has continued to support **Saudi Arabia's** role in the war between a Houthi government in Sanaa and the ousted leadership which is holed up in Saudi Arabia. Fortunately, the warring sides have had a cease fire in place for most of 2022, but now the "old guard" factions supported by **United Arab Emirates** and those with Saudi ties are fighting one another. Legislation to get the US to stop supporting the war in Yemen has 116 cosponsors in the House and 10 in the Senate (Congress.gov, retrieved from HJ Res 87 and SJ Res. 56, October 1).



Meanwhile, negotiations to revive the "nuclear deal" with **Iran** have been stalled for most of 2022, with the US continuing to impose more sanctions rather than finding a way to de-escalate tensions. President Biden has spoken of wanting "other options," which clearly implies military action (Reuters, September 8). The US continues to support **Israel**, which also favors an attack on Iran, despite Israel's illegal occupation and repeated bombardment of **Palestinians** in the West Bank and Gaza.

Where Does Your Money Go?

In late September, the Senate approved another \$16 billion in aid to **Ukraine**, most of which is for weapons and US military mobilization. This brings the total sent to that country since Russia's February

invasion up to **\$67 billion**, which is \$2 billion more than Russia's annual military budget. The US has set aside **over \$800 billion** for "defense," while millions of people go without health care, housing, education and other basic human needs. The environment continues to deteriorate due to climate change, with hurricane Ian devastating Florida in late September as just the most recent example.

It is time to cut military spending, bring the troops home, and stop attacking, threatening and interfering in other countries. At the very least, the US could choose to send aid, rather than bombs, into countries which have been torn apart by violence— in many cases due to the actions of American decision-makers.

This flyer was prepared
in October, 2022 by the
Peace and Justice Works Iraq Affinity Group

PO Box 42456
Portland, OR 97242
(503) 236-3065
Meetings usually 2nd Tuesdays, 7 PM; next one is Oct. 11.

iraq@pjw.info
www.pjw.info/Iraq.html
Contact us about our meetings !