

# Remembering the Relentless Bombing of Iraq Since 2003

March 22,  
2024

On March 19, 2003, the US launched a massive **invasion and occupation of Iraq**, based on George W. Bush's false assertions of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and leading to widespread devastation from a "shock and awe" bombing campaign. Though most Americans believe that America has withdrawn its service members from Iraq, **at least 2500 troops remain there today, 21 years later.**

In 2011, **President Barack Obama** withdrew most of the troops. In 2014, Obama sent more US military back into Iraq to engage in warfare against the Islamic State. In 2017, **President Donald Trump** stepped up the bombing, destroying most of the Iraqi city of Mosul. In 2020, Trump ordered the assassination in Iraq of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani, leading to a **vote by the Iraqi Parliament to eject all US troops.** In December 2021, **President Joe Biden** decided to leave 2500 American military personnel in Iraq despite the Parliamentary vote.

After the Israelis launched retaliatory warfare against Gaza for Hamas' incursion on October 7, 2023, **US forces in Iraq became the target of over 55 attacks** as of late January. (In the same time frame, the 900 US troops in Syria were attacked over 85 times.) These attacks are largely **due to American support for Israel's bombardment of Gaza.** The US has conducted what it says are defensive retaliatory strikes, which Iraq sees as a violation of its sovereignty. **On February 2, 2024, the US launched 85 airstrikes in Iraq and Syria in retaliation for attacks which killed three American National Guard members in Jordan.** At least 16 people were killed in Iraq (Al Jazeera, February 3) and 23 in Syria (Middle East Eye, February 2). A few days later, an American drone strike killed a militia leader in Baghdad (Associated Press, February 7).



The world seems to respond differently to **Russia's invasion of Ukraine** and **Hamas' attack on Israel** when compared to **Israel's disproportionate response** and the **US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan** or countless other military and economic acts of warfare. Some say the US' disregard for international law has opened the proverbial floodgates.

Iraqis have been subject to US interference by war, sanctions and occupation since August, 1990 after Iraq invaded Kuwait. Iraq's infrastructure has never fully recovered from the 1991 "Gulf War," the 2003 invasion and other American-led actions. **Even if the discussions to get the US to completely remove its troops succeed, their influence— and the world's largest embassy— will remain in Baghdad.**

## US ENDLESS WAR

**Every single President starting with George HW Bush launching the "Gulf War" in 1991 has bombed Iraq. Bill Clinton** continued bombings in so-called "no-fly zones" in the north and south and launched massive strikes outside those zones in 1997 to distract from his impeachment hearings.

**Russia has pointed to the hypocrisy of the US** condemning their invasion of Ukraine by pointing not only to the 2003 Iraq war, but also the US interventions in Yugoslavia in 1999, Afghanistan in 2001 and Libya in 2011 (Fox News, March 3, 2023). **The "Gulf War"** was prompted by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. At the time, the response to Iraq complaining that the Kuwaitis had been slant-drilling for oil under their border was US Ambassador April Glaspie saying the US had "no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts." Many took this as a green light for Iraq to invade. **America's fierce response to Iraq in 1991 is considered by many a message to the world (and to Russia): following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the US can do what it wants militarily.** Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis died as a result of war and sanctions. Regarding the deadly sanctions, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told Leslie Stahl of 60 Minutes that the death of half a million children was "worth the price" (May 12, 1996).

**The 2003 US-led invasion killed tens of thousands of Iraqis**, destroyed civilian infrastructure and led to destabilization which remains to this day. And technically, there is still authorization for American Presidents to bomb, since the 1991 authorization of the "Gulf War" and the 2002 authorization for the Iraq war are still on the books... despite efforts by congress to end them.

As with the war on Iraq, there was also a **false pretext for the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.** The US said the government there was harboring Al Qaeda members who plotted the events of 9/11. Even if that were true, **no Afghans attacked the US**, so the war can't be seen as self-defense as defined in the UN Charter. The majority of people engaged in the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, DC were from Saudi Arabia. The US continues to support Saudi Arabia, including indirect support for its war against Yemen, its terrible human rights record, and the murder of American journalist Jamal Kashoggi in 2018.

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# The Relentless US Bombing of Iraq 3/22/24 (continued)

After Houthi rebels began attacking commercial ships in the Red Sea **in early 2024**— also in response to the US-backed Israeli attacks in Gaza— **President Biden began launching airstrikes in Yemen**. Members of both parties in congress called into question whether these attacks are legal, since they are not in self defense (Middle East Eye, February 27).

In early 2022, the US speculated the Russians would engage in a “false flag” operation to justify invading Ukraine. Looking at history, **America lied** about one of its **warships coming under attack in the Gulf of Tonkin** in 1964, then used that as an excuse to enter the war in **Viet Nam**. As part of the build-up to the “Gulf War,” the US shared a **false story about Iraqis dashing Kuwaiti babies in incubators to the ground**. In February, 2003, **Secretary of State Colin Powell told the United Nations there were WMDs in Iraq to gain support for the US war**. So, the US suspected Russia of subterfuge because that is how America makes war.

## DISCUSSIONS TO END THE OCCUPATION STALLED

War is the way the United States seeks to control oil and other resources in the region. After the invasion of Iraq, the US built the world’s largest embassy in Baghdad, even though Iraq is the 36th largest country by population and 58th largest in size.

**Discussions to finally get US troops out of the country began on January 27**, just days before the incident in Jordan led to America’s massive retaliatory strikes inside Iraq’s borders. Efforts to figure out a way for the troops to depart were underway as recently as mid-March (UAE National, March 19). However, there is speculation that talks will not wrap up until after the American election in November (Reuters, March 12).

## WAR AND “TERRORISM”

**Following 9/11, the US engaged in a global “war on terror,”** using drones and conventional aircraft to **bomb Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya**. In 2014, the US also began bombing Syria, later sending in ground troops without that country’s permission.

America also continues to impose sanctions and make **military threats against Iraq’s neighbor, Iran**, alleging that Iran is trying to build nuclear weapons. As recently as February 2023, the CIA stated that Iran is not building nuclear arms (The Cradle, February 26, 2023). American ally Israel has occupied the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights since 1967 and itself has dozens of undeclared nuclear weapons. The US has also chosen to **move many of its military assets in order to confront China and Russia** rather than the Middle East (the so-called “pivot to Asia”), including sending warships through the strait of Taiwan and into the Black Sea, actions seen as provocative.

## MONEY FOR HUMAN NEEDS

The Iraqis are still making efforts to recover from 13 years of strict sanctions followed by 21 years of war and occupation. The country would have had more of its own money to rebuild if not for the United Nations making them pay reparations to Kuwait for the invasion, a process that only ended in February 2022— thirty one and a half years later. Iraq’s water, sewage and electrical plants were destroyed by the US in both 1991 and 2003 and there are still issues providing those services to all Iraqis.

The US recently passed its largest military budget ever— \$886 billion. **US military spending outstrips the next ten highest spending nations combined**, including both China and Russia, while people in America continue to live in the streets, face environmental disaster, and lack health care and education.

## CONCLUSION

In the UN General Assembly in 2022, Iraq was one of 35 nations to abstain from condemning Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, stating: “Iraq has decided to abstain because of our historical background and because of our sufferings resulting from the continuing wars against our peoples.” As the world court contemplates whether to hold Israel to account for genocide in Gaza, there are many Americans who also need to be brought up on charges for what the US has done to Iraq. The Iraqis have not been free from US interference by war, sanctions and other means since August of 1990. The US must end its attempts to undermine Iraq’s sovereignty once and for all.



### Iraq Slams US Airstrikes as 'Unacceptable Violation' of Sovereignty

The Iraqi government called the latest round of U.S. bombing "a clear hostile act."



The Iraqi government on Tuesday accused the U.S. of an "unacceptable violation" of national sovereignty after the Biden administration launched a series of airstrikes purportedly targeting a militia group that's seen as an Iranian proxy, a move that critics warned would further inflame tensions in the region and raise the risk of all-out war.

Article: [Commondreams.org](https://www.commondreams.org) 12/26/23; Map: [Carnegie Institute](https://www.carnegie.org)

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Meetings usually 2nd Mondays, 5 PM; next one is April 8.

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Contact us about our meetings!