

Six years of Washington's war in Iraq

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Today marks six years since Washington launched its "shock and awe" campaign against Iraq, raining bombs and missiles on Baghdad. Despite the massive opposition of the American people to this war and the change from the Bush to the Obama administration, the US war in Iraq continues, with no end in sight.

This anniversary is both tragic and infamous. It marks the beginning of a war of aggression based upon lies. Launched in the name of "liberating" the Iraqi people, it has inflicted a catastrophe of world historic proportions upon their country and constitutes the greatest crime against humanity of the 21st century.

In six years, the Iraq war has, by the most credible estimates, claimed the lives of over 1 million Iraqis, while leaving countless others wounded and maimed. Nearly 5 million people have been driven from their homes, either forced into exile or displaced in Iraq by US repression and sectarian violence.

The US government and media have extolled the "improved security" situation in Iraq and the "return to normalcy." Such claims can only be made in comparison to the bloodbath that was carried out beforehand.

Just within the past week the following incidents have been reported:

- On March 16, a 12-year-old Iraqi girl riding in a car with her father was killed when US troops fired on the vehicle as it approached them near the northern city of Mosul.
- On March 15, American forces shot a woman dead during a raid in the Hamdan district of western Mosul.
- On March 13, US troops killed two farmers in the Jallam district of Samarra in Saladin Province. Witnesses told the Iraqi press that the troops shot the men without provocation.

Scores of others died in bombings and shootings across the country, many of them linked to the low-

grade sectarian warfare that continues to rage as a result of the US takeover and Washington's attempts to dominate the country by means of divide-and-rule tactics.

And on March 16, Gary L. Moore, a 25-year-old Army specialist from Oklahoma, died from wounds suffered when an explosive device struck his vehicle. His death brought to 4,259 the number of American troops who have lost their lives in this dirty colonial war.

A recent survey conducted among Iraqi women by the aid group Oxfam provides a glimpse of how the US war has driven an entire society brutally backwards.

- More than 55 percent of the women said that they had been victims of violence since 2003, and 30 percent said that family members had suffered violent deaths. Also, 55 percent said they had been forced from their homes at least once since 2003.

- Nearly 25 percent said they had no daily access to drinking water and half of those who did have access said that the water was not potable.

- One third of those surveyed said that they had electricity for three hours a day or less, while two thirds had six hours or less. Fully 80 percent said that access was either the same or worse than the previous year.

- Forty percent said that their children were not attending school.

US reconstruction efforts have done little or nothing for Iraqis, serving instead as a vast arena of corruption, providing billions of dollars in profits to politically connected contractors and fortunes for embezzlers. As Stuart Bowen, the inspector general for Iraqi reconstruction, acknowledged in a recent television interview, "Thirty-two billion dollars later, we don't know a whole lot about what's happened to that money."

Meanwhile, nearly 30,000 Iraqis remain detained, most of them without charges, in US and Iraqi prisons,

where torture continues.

The majority of the American people opposes this war. Despite the relentless propaganda from the government and the media, they concluded that it was a predatory act based on lies. However, their repeated attempts to end it by means of the ballot box have proven futile, including with the election of Barack Obama as president last November.

During the campaign, Obama postured as an opponent of the war and criticized his rival for the Democratic nomination, Hillary Clinton, because of her vote to authorize the invasion. Once in office, he kept on all those who had directed this war—Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Central Command chief Gen. David Petraeus, and Iraq occupation commander Gen. Raymond Odierno—while making Clinton his secretary of state.

Obama's so-called withdrawal plan envisions the continued occupation of Iraq by tens of thousands of US troops for years to come, and there are growing indications that even the limited withdrawals agreed to under the status of forces pact signed with the puppet Maliki government in Baghdad will not be fulfilled. Maliki himself this week declared that despite a June deadline for withdrawing US combat troops from Iraqi cities, none of them would be removed from any city in which there remained a potential for conflict.

To the extent that troops are withdrawn from Iraq, it is to send them to Afghanistan, where the Obama administration is launching a major escalation.

Both these wars—initiated on the phony pretext of the "war on terrorism"—are aimed at establishing US dominance in oil and gas-rich regions of the world in order to secure an advantage over American imperialism's economic rivals. They both have their source in the historic decline of US capitalism, now expressed in the deepest economic crisis since the 1930s. With the United States having lost its preeminence as the world's manufacturing center, the American ruling elite has turned increasingly to financial parasitism on the one hand and militarism on the other in an attempt to maintain its hegemonic position.

Just two months after taking office, Obama has emerged as the front man for the military and Wall Street, while the aspirations of millions who went to the polls to vote against war have been repudiated. Such is

the degenerated state of America's capitalist two-party system.

The fight to end war is a class question, bound up inseparably with the struggle against the capitalist profit system that gives rise to militarism. It requires the independent political mobilization of the working class based on a socialist and internationalist program, including the demand for the immediate withdrawal of all US troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and the holding of those who conspired to initiate these wars of aggression accountable for their crimes.

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