

Obama responds to Iraq debacle with military escalation

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In the face of the unfolding debacle for the United States in Iraq, the Obama administration is preparing yet another escalation of violence. Like all of the other actions taken by American imperialism in Iraq and the broader Middle East, this too will lead to nothing but more death and destruction.

The humiliating collapse of the US-backed military forces in Iraq in the face of an offensive by the Sunni-based Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has put that tortured country once again in Washington's gunsights.

The Pentagon announced Saturday that Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel had ordered the aircraft carrier George H. W. Bush into the Persian Gulf, accompanied by two other warships. President Obama has declared that some form of military action is imminent, saying Friday, "there will be some short-term, immediate things that need to be done militarily."

The possible operations reportedly range from shipping emergency supplies of weapons and ammunition to Iraqi forces, to drone missile attacks, to air and missile strikes from US naval forces in the Persian Gulf.

While the White House has publicly ruled out the dispatch of ground troops, a Pentagon spokesman pointed out that there are 35,000 US soldiers, sailors and airmen in the Middle East who provide unstated "options" for the commander-in-chief. Numerous commentaries urging the deployment of US Special Forces or combat "advisers" with Iraqi units have appeared in the American press.

A further military intervention will do nothing more than intensify a catastrophe for which the US and its allies are entirely responsible.

Iraq has been devastated by a quarter century of imperialist violence and oppression: two wars that killed one million people, an economic blockade that

killed another half million, and the installation of the corrupt, sectarian police state of Nouri al-Maliki.

One of the cradles of human civilization going back to ancient Mesopotamia has been destroyed as a functioning society. The disastrous situation that now exists is the product of the tragic encounter of the Iraqi people with American imperialism.

One should neither underestimate the cruelty of the American ruling class, nor overestimate its intelligence. The foreign policy of the United States is a mass of contradictions, within which it is difficult, if not impossible, to discern any rational plan.

The Obama administration is now threatening to carry out military strikes against Islamic fundamentalist forces armed with weapons that were acquired, in part, in Syria, with the encouragement of the United States, as part of a supposed "revolution" against Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. At least for the time being, in opposing these forces in Iraq the US is allied with Iran, a country it has repeatedly threatened with war.

Every one of the military operations the United States has launched—in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya—has ended in disaster.

The one consistent element in US foreign policy is ruthless plunder in the interests of the American ruling class, combined with a total lack of accountability. No one has been held responsible in the White House, which has directed one war after another; the military brass, which has carried the wars out; Congress, which has sanctioned them; or the media, which has promoted them.

Now that the popular hatred of Maliki in the Sunni-populated third of the country has erupted in violent rebellion, the Obama administration and its apologists are seeking to blame the US puppet for the debacle.

The *New York Times*, which played a key role in

promoting the Iraq war lies, has taken the lead in this campaign, publishing two columns Sunday, one by Nicholas Kristof and the other by Thomas Friedman, absolving the United States for the worsening catastrophe in Iraq.

Kristof writes: “The debacle in Iraq isn’t President Obama’s fault. It’s not the Republicans’ fault. Both bear some responsibility, but, overwhelmingly, it’s the fault of the Iraqi prime minister, Nouri Kamal al-Maliki.”

Friedman pronounces: “Maliki had a choice—to rule in a sectarian way or in an inclusive way—and he chose sectarianism. We owe him nothing.”

What a grotesque exercise in buck-passing! Who installed Maliki? His regime was the culmination of the supposed transformation of Iraq into a “democracy.” His election was hailed as a great success, first by George W. Bush, who launched the war, and then by Obama, who completed it on the schedule laid down by his predecessor.

The US military and media suppressed reports of Maliki’s repressive methods. Throughout, the United States deliberately encouraged sectarian divisions.

The resurgence of violent conflict in Iraq has produced the spectacle of discredited war criminals offering their prescriptions for the best policy to be pursued by Washington in the Middle East. Thus, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who left office as a political leper, made a series of press appearances on the weekend calling for military intervention in Iraq. He denounced as “bizarre” any suggestion that those who organized and led the US-British invasion and conquest of Iraq in 2003 had any responsibility for the disaster now unfolding in the country and region.

The only thing that can be called “bizarre” is that Blair has not yet gone before a war crimes tribunal, along with Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Powell, Rice and all their successors in the Obama administration.

What terrifies Blair and his political counterparts in the US, along with their media stooges, is the prospect of someone stating the obvious—that it is indeed their fault. They are criminally responsible for a war that has produced tens of thousands of casualties among US and allied forces and killed over one million Iraqis.

If the perpetrators of these crimes believe that their actions have gone unnoticed, or that they can, by

sleight of hand, remove themselves as targets of the groundswell of popular outrage being created by their policies—above all in the United States—they are hopelessly deluded.



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