Detroit workers oppose return of US forces to Iraq

A WSWS reporting team
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The Obama administration announced last week that it is dispatching 300 military "advisors" to Iraq in preparation for a possible resumption of bombings and other military actions. The eruption of sectarian civil war in the country is being utilized to intensify military operations throughout the Middle East, including preparations for war against Syria.

The Obama administration's military escalation in Iraq has led to growing popular opposition to the administration and its policies. According to an NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll conducted last week, only 37 percent of the population approves of Obama's handling of foreign policy—the lowest level on record—while 57 percent disapprove. Overall, Obama's approval rating has hit 41 percent, tied for the all-time low.

The WSWS spoke to workers and young people at Detroit's Eastern Market over the weekend.

K.T., who teaches art and gardening in the city of Detroit, said, "I am against this war for many different reasons. My brother flies a helicopter for the Air Force Reserve. He has been to Iraq and Afghanistan six times. I found out from him that one of the reasons we are in Afghanistan is because of the lithium reserves in the mountains. Both Russia and China have attempted to control these reserves. It is not about democracy or freedom. It is about a struggle for resources."

She spoke about the growing danger of an ethnic war in Iraq and across the Middle East. "The US started it. It doesn't seem like we care about democracy. We are not putting money into hospitals and schools. If we were really trying to do good for people in other countries we would stop killing them and telling them their ways are wrong."

She referred to the treatment of Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, the US soldier recently freed by the Taliban who has been the target of ferocious right-wing attacks by the US media for his anti-war views. "Bowe Bergdahl is being observed 24 hours a day. Whenever someone speaks up and stands against the war it is seen as a challenge to the morale of all the soldiers. But, to a lot of us, what he did was a positive thing."

Milo Marshall, a warehouse manager in Detroit and a US military veteran, said he was opposed to the redeployment of US troops to Iraq. "I have a nephew in Afghanistan and a brother in Korea. I come from a long line of military people in my family going back to the Spanish American War.

"It is the same old crap. I was in the First Gulf War in special operations. I did whatever they told me and I saw a lot of things.

"The US helped start the Sunni-Shia conflict. It is about money. It's about oil and money. You have gunboat diplomacy. That has been their game for a long time.

"I tell my kids to keep reading. Don't fall for the lies that they are telling you. The richest 2 percent control this country. It is not a democracy."

Vessy, an urban studies major at Wayne State University, told the WSWS, "I was 11 years old when the World Trade Center was attacked. It came out later about how the intelligence agencies were warned about it in advance. I always thought it was suspicious.

"The same in 2003 when the war with Iraq started. I was against it from the start. I don't think people will buy Obama's moves to send troops back to Iraq. He is portraying it as just sending 'advisors' because everyone is so sick of war and Obama can't talk openly about sending troops.

Johanna, an education major at Wayne State University, said, "When Obama was first running for office in 2008, he was critical of US involvement in

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Iraq and claimed that he would bring all the troops home. Since he came to office the US has been involved in a whole number of military interventions and is now sending troops back into Iraq. Just as the war was fought based on lies, everything the government is doing is based on a lie. They are going into Iraq because they want control of the region and its resources. It is a very scary situation because a world war seems to be imminent.

"The claim that this is for democracy is a total falsification. Look at what is being done. The US has gone into countries and wreaked havoc. They destroyed Iraq, killed over a million people and destroyed the lives of thousands of American soldiers."

Chad, a construction worker who was born in Syria, said he was very opposed to a renewal of US military involvement in Iraq. "They are trying to fool the people. They don't want to give help. They want to sell weapons to the whole world.

"You don't see the sons and daughters of US Senators going to war to fight for oil. It is only the working people who fight.

"I left Syria when I was 29. A hundred and ten percent of what is happening now in Syria is because of the United States. The same with what is happening in Ukraine and in Iraq. People here don't know this."

WSWS reporters also spoke to workers at Chrysler's Jefferson assembly plant on the east side of Detroit about the situation in Iraq.

"It is crazy," was a frequent reaction.

One young worker said, "It was a war that should never have been fought in the first place."

Another young worker added, "The US should not be the policeman for the world. I say, 'bring our troops home!'"

A Chrysler worker spoke about the claims that the US had to intervene in Iraq to stop the resurgence of terrorism. "They say ISIS, the Sunni insurgents, are getting their money from Saudi Arabia. I am interested in finding out more about what is really happening.

"In 2000 my history teacher told me that some of my classmates would end up with a gun in their hands. I did not go into the military, but some of my friends did. Now the lives of so many soldiers have been devastated."

Another Chrysler worker said that it was up to the people to mobilize to oppose war. "As long as the 99 percent don't act they are going to keep on doing what they are doing. Let's face it, Obama is right-wing. We should never have been over there in the first place and now this president wants to send troops back."

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