

# After elections, Washington plans escalation of Middle East war

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President Barack Obama is bringing congressional leaders to the White House today to meet with General John Allen, the former Afghan war commander who is serving as the administration's point man in the US war in Iraq and Syria.

The briefing constitutes the opening act in a drive by both the White House and Congress to sharply escalate this latest Middle East war. A key part of this process is the push to pass a new Authorization of the Use of Military Force (AUMF), which is aimed at preparing a war that will be far wider and even more protracted than those launched over a decade ago.

The *World Socialist Web Site* repeatedly warned that Tuesday's midterm election would be swiftly followed by a major escalation of this most recent US military intervention. It charged that a deliberate decision had been made by Democrats and Republicans alike to postpone any debate on this new war until after the voting was done. These warnings have been vindicated with lightning speed.

In mid-September, both houses of Congress voted by substantial majorities and with virtually no debate to approve \$500 million for the arming and support of US-backed Syrian "rebels," and then quickly went into recess without even considering the broader war itself. The US bombing campaign in Iraq was then over a month old, and the bombing sorties in Syria were just about to begin.

The Obama White House claimed it needed no congressional approval, that authorizations for the use of military force passed over a decade ago—first in the wake of 9/11, ostensibly to pursue the authors of the 2001 terrorist attacks, and then on the eve of the 2003 war of aggression against Iraq—sufficed. Congressional leaders accepted this preposterous alibi for an unconstitutional act of war as they, like Obama, were

determined that it not become an issue in the midterm elections.

In his televised post-election statement Wednesday, Obama claimed that he was now asking for congressional authorization because, "The world needs to know we are united behind this effort and that the men and women of our military deserve our clear and unified support."

This is a grotesque lie. The decisions on war in the Middle East, as well as on potentially even more dangerous acts of military aggression targeting Iran, Russia and China, are being made behind closed doors by the gargantuan US military-intelligence apparatus and the ruling financial oligarchy that it serves. Obama and the Congress are prepared to rubber stamp these decisions.

Any act by Congress to retroactively legalize the war launched three months ago and pave the way for its dramatic escalation will only underscore the totally unrepresentative character of this government, which is despised by an increasingly angry electorate, barely a third of which even turned out to cast ballots on Tuesday.

If such an outcome had been recorded in Syria, Iran, eastern Ukraine or any other area in Washington's gunsights, it would have been seized upon by "human rights" imperialists like US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Powers as a pretext for regime-change.

The process upon which the White House and Congress are embarking is a demonstration not of popular unity behind war, but rather a united conspiracy to foist upon the American people another war based on lies. On the pretext of suppressing the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)—one of the principal Syrian "rebel" militias that the US and its

allies armed and funded—American imperialism is embarking on a new bid to militarily impose its hegemony over the oil-rich Middle East.

In a revealing report published Thursday by the *New York Times*, the determination to preclude the American people from having any influence on the decisions regarding US overseas wars of aggression came through loud and clear.

“Many lawmakers were privately relieved that the White House did not petition Congress before the midterm elections,” the *Times* reported.

The newspaper cited Vermont Democratic Congressman Peter Welch as supporting the move for a new AUMF. “Among the issues he predicted would come up would be the deployment of US ground forces, which Obama has ruled out but which Welch said would almost certainly be needed to root out the militants,” the newspaper reported.

“In some ways, it will probably be a better debate,” Welch told the *Times*. “People will have more latitude to consider it on the merits than they would have before the election.”

The obvious question is, whose merits? What he is saying is that it will be easier for members of Congress to approve a measure paving the way for the deployment of ground troops in Iraq and Syria if they don’t have to worry about voters—overwhelmingly hostile to such a war—holding them accountable at the polls. The only “merits” that have to be considered relate to how the legislation conforms to the demands of the military brass and how it serves the interests of the ruling oligarchy.

There has been not even the hint of what a new AUMF will include, only statements to the effect that the old ones from 2001 and 2003 are too narrowly crafted to cover the current global eruption of American militarism.

Language is required to encompass military operations against not just ISIS, but an ever-increasing array of enemies and potential enemies, as well as wars for regime-change and extra-judicial assassinations—including of American citizens—by drone missile attacks ordered from the White House. What is needed is a bill that will provide pseudo-legal cover for a political reality in which war and military violence have become the principal instruments through which US imperialism seeks to advance its

global interests and resolve its deepening internal contradictions.

What the rush to military escalation in the immediate aftermath of the midterm election demonstrates above all is the impossibility of opposing war through the existing political setup. This includes the various pseudo-left organizations that formerly protested against war, but today gravitate around Obama and the Democrats while providing “human rights” justifications for imperialist interventions.

The escalation of a new war in the Middle East and the broader threat of a new world war cannot be stopped outside of the fight for the mass independent political mobilization of the working class. This is the vital political task spelled out in the resolutions adopted by the International Committee of the Fourth International—“**Socialism and the Fight Against Imperialist War**”—and the Socialist Equality Party of the US—“**The Fight Against War and the Political Tasks of the Socialist Equality Party.**”

We urge readers of the WSWS to seriously consider these documents and to become a part of this struggle by joining and fighting to build the Socialist Equality Party and the ICFI.



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