

# Bernie Sanders backs Obama on Syria war

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In a statement to the *Washington Post* Saturday, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders declared his support for the Obama administration's current policy of bombing Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and opposed, for now, the more aggressive intervention proposed by former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, his main rival for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Clinton issued a statement Thursday calling for the unilateral imposition of an American no-fly zone in Syria, directed at both the rudimentary air force of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and the Russian warplanes that last week began airstrikes against US-backed Islamist forces fighting the Assad government.

"We must be very careful about not making a complex and dangerous situation in Syria even worse," Sanders said. "I support President Obama's efforts to combat ISIS in Syria while at the same time supporting those in that country trying to remove the brutal dictatorship of Bashar Assad."

He added, "I oppose, at this point, a unilateral American no-fly zone in Syria, which could get us more deeply involved in that horrible civil war and lead to a never-ending U.S. entanglement in that region."

In directly aligning himself with the foreign policy of the Obama White House in the Middle East, Sanders underscored that he is not running as an "antiwar" candidate or offering any alternative to the policy of increasing military aggression by American imperialism around the world.

His reference to opposing a no-fly zone "at this point" reflected carefully chosen language. He was leaving open the option for supporting such a measure, which could quickly develop into a direct conflict between the US and Russia, some time in the future.

He did not even refer to Clinton's position, suggesting that he wanted to downplay the differences over foreign policy with the Democratic frontrunner.

These statements are in line with previous comments from Sanders. "The entire world has got to stand up to Putin," he said last year, amidst an aggressive campaign against Russia spearheaded by the Obama administration.

In late August, as he began to surge in the polls, Sanders was asked whether Iran or Russia should see his previous record as an indication that he would hesitate to use force as president. "Well, I think they would be making a very, very big mistake," he replied. "I believe that the United States should have the strongest military in the world."

The latest statement of Sanders on war in Iraq and Syria came only hours before a huge rally in Boston, Massachusetts, where he addressed a crowd estimated at 25,000 for more than an hour without making the slightest appeal to widespread antiwar sentiment.

Until recently, Sanders had not commented on any foreign policy question, confining his campaign entirely to domestic issues, particularly the growth of economic inequality.

His web site still makes no explicit reference to the Obama administration's year-long military campaign in Iraq and Syria, except to describe ISIS as one of the "serious threats" facing the United States, adding, "Senator Sanders is committed to keeping America safe, and pursuing those who would do Americans harm."

The site makes no reference whatsoever to one of the principal weapons of the Obama administration, drone warfare, a clear indication that Sanders supports a continuation of the policy of unrestricted assassination of individuals targeted by the White House for extermination.



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