

US planes destroy civilian fuel tankers in raid over Syria

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In the aftermath of the Paris terror attacks, the imperialist powers are seizing the opportunity to step up aerial attacks against targets in Syria and Iraq. On Monday, US war planes and gun ships dropped 500 pound bombs and fired 30mm machine guns on a densely packed convoy of some 300 civilian fuel tankers, destroying at least 116 of the trucks. The attack took place near Deir al-Zour in eastern Syria, close to the border with Iraq. The civilian tankers were allegedly transporting oil on behalf of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

US officials have considered launching such an attack for some time, but American forces have not previously targeted suspected ISIS commercial fuel convoys, supposedly out of concern over killing civilian drivers, according to the *New York Times*.

“Plans for the strike were developed well before the terrorist attacks in and around Paris on Friday,” a US official told the *Times*.

One month after the US intentionally destroyed a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan, Washington is sending yet another signal of its readiness to commit any level of savagery in pursuit of its imperialist aims.

The strikes were part of a new US bombing campaign focused broadly on ISIS’ efforts to generate revenue through the extraction and sale of petroleum. The US campaign has been appropriately codenamed Tidal Wave II—a reference to the bombardment of Romania’s oil industry by US forces during World War II.

While targeting civilian forms of infrastructure and commercial flows is generally considered illegal under international law, the US Defense Department’s recently issued *Law of War Manual* has effectively repudiated such restrictions. The new US military legal guidelines assert that US commanders may attack any

type of civilian object they believe contributes, or could contribute in the future, to an enemy war effort.

In addition to the attack that destroyed 116 trucks, which was counted by the Pentagon as a single strike, the US launched at least 22 other strikes on Monday, according to the Department of Defense.

French imperialism has seized on the Paris attacks to escalate its own military intervention in Syria, launching dozens of strikes against the Syrian city of Raqqa over the weekend and on Monday. French planes carried out at least 30 strikes, more than five times as many as were launched by Paris during the previous seven months of direct French military intervention in Syria.

The French raids were closely coordinated with the US, based on “strike packages” provided to the French military by the Pentagon and flown from bases in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates.

“We will continue the strikes in the weeks to come,” French President Francois Hollande declared to an emergency meeting of the French parliament. France will be “unforgiving toward the barbarians,” Hollande vowed.

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There are signs that the French ruling class is preparing to organize new hybrid ground campaigns drawing on forces from regional allies. “We have to push [ISIS] away from its resources in Syria and Iraq and that means going in on the ground with a regional power,” former French government official Charles Brisard told the *Times* Monday.

US strategists have advanced similarly aggressive conceptions in the wake of the Paris attacks. Brookings Institution analyst Michael O’Hanlon appeared on US television over the weekend to advocate a more

aggressive US military intervention based on new deployments of US and allied special forces to both Syria and Iraq.

In a Brookings report published over the weekend, O’Hanlon called for “ramped-up involvement, including more US, NATO and Gulf Cooperation Council Special Forces on the ground in both countries to conduct raids and better orchestrate aerial attacks.” Calling for a “Bosnia solution,” O’Hanlon implied that the US and its allies would oversee a partitioning of Syria.

Recent days have also seen a significant escalation of fighting on the ground by both US and Russian proxy forces. US-backed Kurdish and Arab militias claimed to have seized control of some 200 villages in northeastern Syria on Monday. A US-backed militia coalition calling itself the “Raqqa Revolutionaries Front” announced that it would launch new operations against IS forces in Raqqa province.

Russian-backed Syrian government forces waged major attacks on the ground over the weekend, seizing the town of Sheikh Miskeen and capturing some 400 kilometers in Aleppo province.



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