

US announces new Iraq deployments

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US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter announced a further escalation of the US war in Iraq to include deployment of at least 200 additional troops, along with Apache helicopter gunships and artillery.

Carter's announcement, made during an unannounced visit to Iraq, is the latest in a steady drumbeat of US escalations in Iraq and Syria, which now occur on a near-weekly basis. This is despite the fact that current troop levels are already well above the Obama administration's official limit of 3,870. US forces are increasingly involved in conventional and large-scale ground combat, making a mockery of Obama's numerous vows to the contrary.

Carter made clear that the deployments are part of a generalized escalation of the US wars in Iraq and Syria, continuing into the indefinite future. "We've gotten approval from the White House every time the chairman [of the Joint Chiefs of Staff] and I have gone to ask for something that we've needed to accelerate. So that really isn't the issue for us, the issue for us is to identify more ways to accelerate the campaign."

The additional US troops and heavy weaponry are being deployed in support of a joint US-Iraqi force overseen by American advisors. This force will use the reinforcements as part of an offensive for control of Mosul, Carter said. The new US forces will perform "training and advising" missions, and will embed themselves in frontline combat commands.

Carter's announcement must be taken as a warning: a massive escalation of war in the Middle East and beyond is being readied for the period after the US elections in November. These plans—and the growing danger of world war—are being deliberately excluded from the election campaigns of both major parties and all of their candidates, including the supposed "socialist" Bernie Sanders.

The financial-corporate elite and the military-intelligence establishment do not want the war drive to

become a topic of discussion in the elections, because they are well aware of the broad antiwar sentiment of the population. The exclusion of this, the most critical of all questions, highlights the antidemocratic character of the electoral process.

The additional US soldiers, drawn primarily from the US Army's Special Forces, will link up with frontline Iraqi units as part of the preparations for "a punishing battle" to retake Mosul from ISIS, the *Washington Post* reported.

The US is also allocating an additional \$400 million to fund Kurdish proxy forces in northern Iraq, which are being organized by US commandos and will be "critical in retaking Mosul," Pentagon spokesman Jeff Davis said.

The Kurdish fighters, acclaimed by the *Wall Street Journal* on Monday as "the US's most reliable partners in the fight against the Islamic State," began carrying out regular airborne raids throughout northern Iraq this year, under the supervision of the "special targeting force" announced by Carter earlier this year.

The US plans to enlist regional states to assist American forces intervening in the ISIS-held regions of northern Iraq once Mosul and other ISIS-held cities are retaken, according to the Pentagon. Over the past year, the Pentagon has repeatedly announced measures to bolster the US military's basing arrangements in Iraq, including the new firebases announced earlier this month as part of the "accelerated campaign against ISIS."

The return of US forces to major combat operations, less than five years after the official "end" of the Iraq war, is aimed at propping up the US puppet regime installed after the 2003 invasion and reinforcing the US military presence in the oil-rich region. Having already lost significant parts of the north and west to ISIS forces, the Iraqi government faces a spiraling crisis, fueled by the fall in world oil prices. Oil exports

account for more than 90 percent of Iraq's revenues.

The decades of war crimes committed by Washington have wrecked Iraqi society nearly "beyond the point of repair," according to a study by the Minority Rights Group International (MRG), which found that more than 8 million Iraqis are in dire need of humanitarian aid and more than 3 million remain internally displaced.



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