

Colonial Iraq: The Reality behind “the End of the Iraq War”

U.S. retains thousands of troops

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“Our war there will be over. All of our troops will be out of Iraq,” President Barack Obama said in his Dec. 17 weekly radio address.

But while combat troops are leaving, for now at least, the U.S. government is creating a staff of 16,000 for its newly constructed embassy in the heart of Baghdad. Although Iraq has only 28 million people, the new U.S. embassy is the largest in the world. It is a massive compound that is one and a half square miles—an enormous complex of 22 buildings and the size of 94 football fields. Half of the 16,000-person staff will consist of a private military army made up of mercenaries under the control of the State Department. The State Department budget for the embassy is estimated at \$25-30 billion over the next five years.

In addition, the Pentagon retains a vast network of bases, sea and air power surrounding Iraq. Washington’s intention clearly is to dominate Iraq for many years to come in a colonial-type relationship. Iraq possesses the second largest oil reserves in the world.

Obama’s speech was the latest in a series of appearances seeking to bolster the president’s re-election prospects by associating himself with “the end of the war in Iraq.”

The dishonesty of this presentation would be considered breathtaking except for the fact that his deception fits exactly into the pattern of lies and deceit practiced by all other Democrats and Republicans who have served as the CEO of the U.S. imperialist state.

While trying to ingratiate himself with the service members, veterans and their families, Obama vastly underestimated the real damage done to them, stating that “tens of thousands have been wounded.”

The official Pentagon figure of U.S. wounded is around 32,000. But a Brown University 2011 study reported that, of the 1.25 million service members who had been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan at that time, nearly half had filed disability claims—in others words, 600,000, a big majority Iraq veterans. Nor did the president mention that many thousands of returning vets are now homeless, living in the streets—a number that grows daily.

No mention either that the war in Iraq has already cost more than a trillion dollars and will likely end up costing more than \$3 trillion in the end due to long-term interest, disability and health cost.

But the most glaring omission was the catastrophic impact of the war on Iraq and its people. “For nearly nine years, our nation has been at war in Iraq,” said Obama. In reality, the war in Iraq has been going on for more than two decades: The 1991 “Desert Storm” destruction of the country’s infrastructure and a lethal 13-year sanctions blockade preceded the 2003 invasion and occupation.

More than two million Iraqis have died as a result of war and sanctions, an estimated 4.5 million have been displaced and an unknown number, but one which must be counted in the millions, wounded. There are over one million widows in Iraq. All this in a country of just 28 million people.

The U.S. occupiers disbanded the entire government and shut down all vital service systems, such as health care and food distribution. The occupation deliberately pitted religious and ethnic groups against each other, using the classic methods of colonial divide-and-rule. This policy greatly exacerbated sectarian violence that took a toll in the hundreds of thousands and continues to plague Iraq today. A once relatively stable society was ripped to shreds.

There is not a single reference in the president’s proclamation about the horrific crimes committed against Iraq. Just colonialist-style statements like, “Iraq’s future will be in the hands of its own people.” As if the U.S. occupation had, instead of inflicting untold destruction, been a training session for the Iraqi people in self-government.

Iraq had been an independent country for 45 years after kicking out the British colonizers in 1958, and was one of the most economically and socially advanced countries in the Arab world prior to the 1991 war.

Despite all that they have suffered, the Iraqi people have a long and proud history of struggle against imperialism and injustice, a struggle that will continue.

For more on the hidden history of Iraq, read [“Our view on modern Iraq: An anti-colonial revolution in perspective”](#)

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