

# Opposition to War In Iraq Can Stop the Next War

Ending Empire and the War Culture that Supports It are as Important as Confronting Wall Street

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*Take action: We can stop the next Iraq War. A majority of Americans oppose a military attack. [Contact Congress tell them to warn President Obama: a military attack violates the Constitution and is an impeachable offense.](#)*

In the last week, there has been a rapid march toward military action in Iraq despite widespread opposition to more war among the US population for a variety of reasons. One concern is that it would require more military spending despite immense and unmet needs for funding in a broad array of areas at home. Unlike any other policy area, there never seems to be a lack of funds for a military attack or even a war. The military-industrial complex has a powerful hold on US lawmakers.

The hawks in Congress are exerting tremendous pressure for military action in Iraq to prevent ISIS and former members of Saddam Hussein's government from taking control. On Thursday President [Obama delivered a statement](#) describing the steps he is taking on Iraq. These include:

- Reinforcing the US Embassy in Iraq by removing some Americans stationed there and adding military troops to protect it;
- Significantly increasing intelligence and surveillance to understand what ISIS is doing as well as what the US can do to counter their influence;
- Increasing support for the Iraq military, including sending 300 soldiers to Iraq to "advise" them and set up joint operation centers in Baghdad and northern Iraq;
- Repositioning additional US military assets in the region so that "going forward, we will be prepared to take targeted and precise military action..."
- And finally, pursuing diplomacy in the region to support stability in Iraq.

While this is not the military attack that hawks are urging, it certainly is a policy that moves in that direction. This week, President Obama told congressional leaders that he did not need any authorization for the use of military force from Congress, but that he would keep congressional leadership informed of his actions.

## Protests around the United States

The American public is sick and tired of war. It is a mistake for President [Obama to decide that he can take military action in Iraq without congressional or UN approval](#). He likely

made this decision because he knows that if Congress were allowed to consider the issue, there would be a tidal wave of opposition from constituents in an election year. If Congress really functioned as a check and balance, it would be warning President Obama that a military attack without congressional approval is an impeachable offense; that the Constitution is clear - only Congress has the power to declare war and a military attack is an act of war. The silence of Congress will mean complicity in another illegal military action and will again reveal the bi-partisan nature of the war machine.

If unchecked, it seems the most likely scenario is that the President will build intelligence to justify further intervention and will then use drones to bomb Iraq. The President, with the [support](#) of groups like Human Rights Watch, acts as if unmanned bombing is a legal military attack even though his drone policy is being questioned by the UN, the legal community and the public. This will ultimately lead to another US war in Iraq.

Perhaps this is the President's desired purpose. The goal of having US military bases in Iraq to control the region, which is the center of the Middle East at a time when oil is desperately needed, has not been achieved. A justification for intervention would provide an excuse to re-occupy those bases.

If we re-occupy Iraq, we can expect a long-term presence. The (currently) most likely next president, Hillary Clinton, has a track record as a hawk. She has already signaled to the military-industrial complex that she is open to more war. [Clinton recently said she was even open to staying in Afghanistan](#) beyond President Obama's already-too-slow exit from that country.

Opponents of war organized opposition quickly. This week [Veterans For Peace \(VFP\) held nationwide protests](#) against war in Iraq along with Military Families Speak Out and other organizations. They also protested the failure to adequately fund the Veterans Administration and to take care of current veterans when they return from war. VFP warned the President that military attacks will just add to the disaster in Iraq, result in the loss of more American and Iraqi lives and create more wounded veterans. They put out [an action alert](#) that included a variety of steps people can take to oppose a military attack in Iraq and that listed the many organizations petitioning the government against war.

[Iraq Veterans Against the War have spoken out](#) against another military engagement in Iraq. They spoke as experienced veterans, writing:

"Many of our members deployed to Iraq during the recent US occupation. Those of us who were there know firsthand that US military solutions in Iraq do not serve the interests of the Iraqi people. We advocate for the self-determination of all people, in this case the people of Iraq. Any solution to this crisis must come from them. When the United States invaded and occupied Iraq, the formerly secular country was destabilized. The United States and the Department of Defense intentionally created and agitated sectarian divisions that would not have otherwise existed. The result of this is what we see today, and Iraqi civilians are paying for it."

Americans are also protesting members of the previous administration. This week [protesters disrupted a speech by Condoleezza Rice](#) at Norwich University in Vermont with a mic check which in part said: "I come here today to charge Condoleezza Rice for having participated in and perpetrated crimes against humanity in the name of the citizens of the

United States.” This is not the first protest against Rice. [She was protested at the University Of Minnesota](#) in April. Also at [Rutgers, students protested Rice being invited to speak](#) at their commencement. As a result of [opposition by students and faculty](#), Rice declined to speak.

As [Robert Brune of the DC Media Group points out](#), the Iraq War was based on lies about Weapons of Mass Destruction and now we see the lie of ‘the successful surge’ being exposed by the current violence. Too many lives have been lost, too much treasure has been squandered and there has been too much intrusion into Iraq and other nations.

Most Americans know that the current violence in Iraq is the result of the US invasion and US strategies that increased sectarian divisions in the country. As a result, we know that more military violence will continue to make things worse.

The chaos in Iraq demonstrates that [those who opposed the war were right](#). Many people predicted that invasion and occupation of Iraq were likely to result in a civil war and ongoing bloodshed as well as anti-Americanism and strengthening those who hate US Empire. The media is trying hard to ignore those lessons by highlighting the voices that were wrong - the people who supported the Iraq War. American people [across the political spectrum](#) are not being fooled. They can see reality despite the media mythmaking.

### **Why Is It So Difficult to Learn from the Failure of War?**

War and militarism are deeply ingrained in the American psyche. We call it War Culture. Youth are taught to admire the heroes of war and are rarely told of the long history of US war crimes. Just this week Occupy.com reported that in Dayton, Ohio youth in K through 12 are being pushed to build drones by the US military. [With this report we added](#) a Disney Junior video of a cartoon glorifying drone characters that spy on people and includes images of youth appearing in its bullseye. These are two examples of many of how early the pro-war brainwashing begins in the United States.

There is a lot of money to be made in war and militarism. The Congress is currently debating the military spending bill. Military spending makes up more than half of all US discretionary spending. This is particularly horrid at a time when the US economy continues to flounder, when there is no full employment program, when there is record poverty, when infrastructure is crumbling and when the country needs to transition to a new energy economy, among many other urgent domestic needs.

It is not only the obvious expensive weapons systems that are always over budget and corporations like Halliburton that make billions rebuilding nations destroyed by the US military - and the deep corruption in those industries, but this week we got a glimpse of another military profit center, the Police Industrial Complex. This is big business and includes [vehicles](#), [weapons](#) and sophisticated [surveillance technology](#). Even corporations are joining in the frenzy. A coal company purchased [drones that fire pepper spray and bullets](#) to be used against protesters. And a private corporation in Brazil received [\\$22 million](#) to provide weapons and gear used against World Cup protesters.

Part of the problem is that the American people are consistently lied to about war. Chelsea Manning, who is serving decades in prison for exposing the truth about the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, wrote a column in the New York Times about the [Fog of War](#). Manning gave multiple examples of how the media is manipulated and controlled by the US military

resulting in the American people being told false information about what is really occurring in wars. Manning reports “The more I made these daily comparisons between the news back in the States and the military and diplomatic reports available to me as an analyst, the more aware I became of the disparity.” Manning also notes there was never more than 12 hand-picked journalists embedded to cover a country of 31 million and more than 100,000 US troops.

The government and media work to manipulate the views of Americans because if the Americans new the truth they would be even more angry at the US war machine. As long-time military writer [Tom Engelhardt writes](#), the United States has a war record of unparalleled failure. What major war has the United States been on the winning side of since World War II?

### **People have the Power to End War**

Thanks to whistleblowers and new media outlets like Wikileaks, the truth is being exposed and propaganda is starting to fail. [Unprecedented efforts](#) by the US and its allies to suppress leaks have taken a toll on proponents of the truth but have largely been unsuccessful. Rather than shrinking, support for whistleblowers is growing.

Julian Assange, publisher and editor-in-chief of Wikileaks, marked [two years of asylum](#) in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London this week. On his behalf, [international organizations](#) are petitioning the United Nations to protect Assange’s human rights. And new organizations to aid whistleblowers, [ExposeFacts.org](#) and the [Courage Foundation](#), were launched this month. A new tool for whistleblowers called Secure Drop is being provided by media outlets such as the New York Times and [The Guardian](#).

People have more power to end war and the destructive empire economy than we realize, although opponents of peace are aware of it. The US Department of Defense has been studying social unrest through its [Minerva Research Initiative](#) since 2008 and [soldiers](#) are preparing to suppress protests inside the US.

We can harness our power by working together across borders and by sharing our knowledge and tools. In a [recent interview](#) by Nafeez Ahmed of former CIA official Robert David Steele, Steele points out that open source technology is a key to defeating corrupt centralized power. Ahmed writes,

“Open source everything, in this context, offers us the chance to build on what we’ve learned through industrialisation, to learn from our mistakes, and catalyse the re-opening of the commons, in the process breaking the grip of defunct power structures and enabling the possibility of prosperity for all.”

We must have a bold vision of what we wish to achieve - a world without war in which people participate in decisions that affect their lives. Movements to achieve these ends are growing globally. Jerome Roos tells us in his [review](#) of a new book on democracy by Marina Sitrin and Dario Azzellini that there are ‘laboratories of democracy’ all over the world. And [World Beyond War](#) is working to create a new global coalition to abolish war.

The growing movement for social, economic and environmental justice in the United States has done much to focus attention on the wealth divide and corrupt economy controlled by Wall Street. Likewise, we must also focus on the Empire economy and the

War Culture that supports it. Through increased awareness and collaborative popular action we can weaken these pillars of power and build a just and peaceful society. We have the power if we choose to use it.

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*This article is produced by [Popular Resistance](#) in conjunction with [AlterNet](#). It is a weekly review of the activities of the resistance movement. [Sign up for the daily news digest of Popular Resistance, here.](#)*

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