

Regime Change in Iraq: Standing in Washington's Way. Why Obama Wants Maliki Removed

By [Mike Whitney](#)

Global Research, August 16, 2014

[Counterpunch](#)

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAQ REPORT](#)

The Obama administration is pushing for regime change in Iraq on the basis that current prime minister Nouri al Maliki is too sectarian. The fact is, however, that Maliki's abusive treatment of Sunnis never factored into Washington's decision to have him removed. Whether he has been "too sectarian" or not is completely irrelevant. The real reason he's under attack is because he wouldn't sign the Status of Forces Agreement in 2011. He refused to grant immunity to the tens of thousands of troops the administration wanted to leave in Iraq following the formal withdrawal. That's what angered Washington. That's why the administration wants Maliki replaced.

Check out this White House statement of support for new prime minister-designate Haider al-Abadi (Maliki's rival) by Vice President Joe Biden just hours after the change (coup?) was announced. The document is titled "Readout of the Vice President's Call with Iraqi Prime Minister-designate Haider al-Abadi".

"Vice President Joe Biden called Iraqi Prime Minister-designate Haider al-Abadi to congratulate him on his nomination to form a new government and develop a national program pursuant to Iraq's constitutional process. The Prime Minister-designate expressed his intent to move expeditiously to form a broad-based, inclusive government capable of countering the threat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and building a better future for Iraqis from all communities. The Vice President relayed President Obama's congratulations and restated his commitment to fully support a new and inclusive Iraqi government, particularly in its fight against ISIL. The two leaders also discussed practical steps towards fully activating the bilateral Strategic Framework Agreement in all of its fields, including economic, diplomatic, and security cooperation. Prime Minister-designate Abadi thanked Vice President Biden for the call, and they agreed to stay in regular communication as the government formation process proceeds." (White House)

Did you catch that part about the "bilateral Strategic Framework Agreement in all of its fields". That's the kicker right there. That's what this is all about. Here's one small section of that document under the heading of "Defense and Security":

".... Iraq Joint Military Committee (JMC),.... addressed issues such as border security, Iraqi military strategy, and engagement of Iraqi Security Forces in regional training exercises. The next JCC likely will be held in Washington this year.

Acting Defense Minister al-Dlimi signed a Memorandum of Understanding on

Security Cooperation with the U.S. Department of Defense. This agreement represents the strong military to military relationship between the United States and Iraq, and provides mechanisms for increased defense cooperation in areas including defense planning, counterterrorism cooperation, and combined exercises.

... The Iraq FMS program is one of the largest in the world and is an important symbol of the long-term security partnership envisioned by both countries. We remain committed to meeting Iraqi equipment needs as quickly as possible.” (US Strategic Framework Agreement, US Department of State)

This is just the camel’s nose under the tent. There’s no doubt that the administration’s ultimate objective is to put US “boots back on the ground” which, by the way, is the reason why Obama is allowing the terrorist militia (ISIS) to seize 30 percent of the Iraqi landmass, capture the nation’s second biggest city, and move to within 50 miles of Baghdad without lifting a finger to help. It’s because Obama wants to create a pretext for boosting troop levels in the country. What better way to redeploy thousands of US combat troops to Iraq, then to scare Iraqi policymakers into submission with visions of bloodthirsty terrorists (ISIS) lopping off heads and slitting throats at every opportunity. It’s all about persuasion. (Note: It’s easy to see that-while ISIS may not be directly under US control-its presence in Iraq certainly serves Washington’s overall strategic aims.)

Independent researcher and journalist, Soraya Sepahpour-Ulrich, appears to be one of the few analysts who’s figured out what’s going on. Check out this clip from Iran’s Press TV from interview with Ulrich:

“America has long-standing plans to be permanently present in Iraq, and in the Persian Gulf region as a whole”, said Ulrich. “Domination of the Persian Gulf is the lynchpin of US strategy...the presence of ISIL helps them in this goal.”

After Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki forced American forces out of Iraq by refusing to sign a Status of Forces Agreement allowing the forces to stay on permanently, US found its way back again, she added.

The government of Maliki refused to grant immunity to thousands of US troops, who were to remain in Iraq beyond 2011 under the pretext of training local forces.

The government had agreed to allow some of the US forces to stay longer for “training” purposes, but refused to shield them from prosecution. As a result, that residual force was never deployed.

According to a 2008 bilateral security accord, known as the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), all the US troops left the country by December 2011.

Ulrich said, “It’s very interesting that ISIL has captured towns and regions that have been vital for the US policy in the region — one is the oil-rich [region], America’s training and funding of Kurds, and Israel in fact started training of the Kurds in 2005 and the thinking that oil from Iraq would go to Israel, and it’s happening.”....

“I don’t believe for a moment that America has given up the idea of having Iraq and Syria and Iran under its full control,” the independent researcher and writer empathized.” (“US raises ISIL specter to stay in Iraq”, Press TV)

Bingo. The “too sectarian” trope is a fraud. This is all about Washington stationing combat troops where the oil is. It always gets back to oil, doesn’t it? U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel summed it up perfectly in July, 2007, when he said:

“People say we’re not fighting for oil. Of course we are. They talk about America’s national interest. What the hell do you think they’re talking about? We’re not there for figs.” (Washington’s blog)

So how does Obama’s bombing of ISIS jihadis outside of Ebril (N Iraq) fit with his earlier comments that he wouldn’t help defend Iraq unless there was movement on the political front? (In other words, until Maliki was removed from office.)

He sure changed his tune fast, didn’t he? But, why?

Oil, that’s why. Let’s put it this way: There are 10 reasons why Obama bombed ISIS positions outside of Ebril. They are:

1-Exxon Mobil

2-Chevron

3-Aspect Energy

4-Marathon Oil Corporation

5-Hillwood International Energy

6-Hunt Oil

7-Prime Oil

8-Murphy Oil

9-Hess Corporation

10-HKN Energy

So what’s the message here? What is Obama telegraphing to ISIS about US policy?

It’s simple. “You can kill as many Arabs and Christians as you want, but if you lay a finger on even one oil well, we’ll nuke you into oblivion.” Isn’t that the message?

Of course, it is. By the way, the reason the US exited Iraq to begin with wasn’t because Obama wanted to keep his campaign promise. Oh no. That was just public relations hype. The real reason was because Obama handed the Iraq Brief over to lunkhead Biden when he first took office, and Biden flubbed the deal. Hard to believe, isn’t it? Take a look at this blurb from the New Yorker:

“When I was profiling Biden last month, his advisers argued ...that they had never favored Maliki, and had backed him because he won the support of a majority in Iraq. But that reading of history underplays Biden’s activism. Biden predicted that Maliki would sign on to a Status of Forces Agreement to

keep U.S. troops on the ground. “Maliki wants us to stick around because he does not see a future in Iraq otherwise,” Biden said, according to the account. “I’ll bet you my vice presidency Maliki will extend the SOFA.”

Neither of those predictions came true. Maliki did not deliver, and U.S. forces left Iraq in December, 2011. As the crisis deepened this spring, the White House did not openly disparage Maliki, but made it clear that it was ready for a change. By all estimates, that sentiment was long overdue, and this week, America’s protracted divorce from Maliki is nearing completion. Obama has returned American military aircraft to the skies over Iraq, authorizing strikes to protect U.S. diplomatic missions and religious and ethnic minorities, and to prevent Sunni militants from advancing on the Kurdish city of Erbil. On Monday, another political sinkhole opened in Baghdad: the President nominated a new Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, to replace Maliki. But Maliki has refused to give up power; on television, he vowed to use legal action to challenge the decision, while security forces loyal to him were seen taking up positions around the city.” ([“Breaking Up: Maliki and Biden”](#), The New Yorker)

Read that passage over again; that’s the whole ball of wax, right there. Biden botched the SOFA agreement, so Obama decided to get rid of Maliki. Soon after, the plan to replace Maliki with Haider al-Abadi was put into motion.

It’s worth noting, that Obama has been blasted in the media for more than a year for withdrawing the troops from Iraq. A simple Google search of “Maliki Status of Forces agreement” will produce hundreds of articles lambasting Obama as the man “who lost Iraq”, or who “abandoned Iraq”, or the man who organized “the tragic withdrawal”. To America’s right wing pundits, the problem was never the war itself, but the way it ended. They blame Obama for everything that’s gone wrong. That’s why Obama wants to remove Maliki and deploy troops back to Iraq. It’s an attempt to placate the right.

Naturally, the fact that Obama, Biden, Kerry and everyone else in the administration has expressed their support for the nearly-unknown Abadi, has led to suspicions that US Intel agencies (and perhaps the State Department) have been acting behind the scenes to depose Maliki. But Obama vehemently denies any involvement. Check out this article in the Guardian:

“American officials have denied participating in a plot to oust Iraq prime minister Nouri al-Maliki, despite a series of phone calls made by Barack Obama and Joe Biden to support the appointment of his successor.....

The Obama administration had become increasingly strident in its criticism of Maliki in recent weeks, accusing him of the current Islamic uprising by failing to govern in the interest of all Iraqis.....Obama had “instructed his diplomats in Washington and Baghdad to find an alternative” to Maliki.(Obama) also dangled the prospect of direct US military support against the Islamic State, the separatists also known as Isis or Isil, if the putative new prime minister Haider al-Abadi succeeds in forming a lasting government.

But officials rejected allegations on Monday that it was encouraging “regime change”, insisting instead that the US was merely supporting a constitutional process rather than favoring individual politicians in Baghdad.”(“US denies role in plot to oust Iraqi prime minister Nouri al-Maliki”, Guardian)

Let’s summarize:

Obama stepped up his criticism of Maliki in the last few weeks.

Check.

Obama blamed Maliki for the “current Islamic uprising” which was nurtured by US Intel agencies that armed, trained and funded the respective wahhabi crackpots who then moved into Iraq.

Check.

Obama says the US will not help to defeat the jihadi invasion unless Maliki is replaced.

Check.

Obama told” his diplomats in Washington and Baghdad to find an alternative” to Maliki.

Check.

At the same time, US “officials rejected allegations on Monday that it was encouraging “regime change”, insisting instead that the US was merely supporting a constitutional process.”

What a joke. If it walks like a coup and quacks like a coup; it’s a coup. It doesn’t matter what Obama says. It doesn’t matter what the media say. It’s painfully obvious that the US is involved.

On top of that, we have this from the New York Times:

“Other senior Obama administration officials said American representatives in Iraq had been increasingly and deeply involved in Baghdad discussions during the last 10 days to settle on an alternative to Mr. Maliki.” (“Iraqis Nominate Maliki Successor, Causing Standoff”, New York Times)

Isn’t that an admission of guilt? If “senior Obama administration officials” had been huddling for the last ten days to decide on a successor to the current Prime Minister, then how is that different than Victoria Nuland plotting the removal of Ukrainian prime minister Viktor Yanukovich for US-puppet “Yats”? It’s the same thing, isn’t it?

Here’s something else from the NYT that’s worth mulling over:

“It was only during the past week that Mr. Abadi became a candidate. He is a onetime ally of Mr. Maliki’s, and because Mr. Abadi is from the same party his candidacy became attractive, as it recognized the legitimacy of the election victory for Mr. Maliki’s bloc in April’s national elections.

This is what “encouraged them to make a coup against Maliki,” said one of the Shiite negotiators, who asked to remain anonymous to discuss internal deliberations.”

Can you believe what they’re saying? So, it wasn’t Abadi’s position on the issues or his views on sectarianism that made him the “preferred” candidate at all. He was chosen strictly on the basis that his candidacy had the greatest chance of success. That’s it. This

isn't democracy; it's a "dump Maliki at all cost" campaign orchestrated by the Obama troupe. That's how desperate these people are.

But maybe Obama is right this time; is that what you are thinking, dear reader? After all, Maliki IS a vicious, iron-fisted tyrant who has fueled sectarian hatred and divisiveness. Maybe it would be better if he WAS gone. Maybe Obama is sincere in wanting (as the New York Times says) "to preserve Iraq's cohesion while helping to stop ISIS' avowed goal of creating a monolithic Islamic caliphate that ignores national boundaries."

If that's what you are thinking, you're wrong. Changing the man at the top, will not change the system. Nor does Washington want to change the system. The US wants a savage, remorseless tyrant, (Have you taken a look at Egypt lately?) they just want one that will follow orders, that's all. Maliki went off the reservation, so now he's getting his pink slip. That's all there is to it.

The idea that Abadi will reunify Iraq is ridiculous. The de facto partitioning of Iraq has already taken place. It won't be reversed. In fact, this is what many in the political establishment (including Joe Biden) wanted from Day 1. A separate Kurdish state that will sell cheap oil to Israel and refuse to pass its oil revenues on to Baghdad, is already a reality, just as the borderless Sunni heartland (that will eventually take shape over the next few years) is a reality. Abadi will not alter these facts on the ground. Iraq is being torn apart by forces too powerful for him to contain or control. His function is merely to sign on the dotted line and allow the US to reopen its bases, redeploy its troops and get on with the business of empire.

The United States does not want a strong, independent Iraq. The US wants oil. The US wants power. The US wants Arabs killing Arabs. The US wants to extinguish Arab identity, culture, pride, literature, science, poetry, etc; anything that could lead to a reemergence of Arab nationalism, anything that could lead to an independent, sovereign state, anything that could impede the looting of Arab countries.

This is just the way that empire's work. Maliki got in Washington's way, so now Maliki is going to vanish. End of story.

Whether he was "too sectarian" or not, doesn't make a damn bit of difference. His fate was sealed the moment he refused to sign the SOFA agreement.

*Mike Whitney lives in Washington state. He is a contributor to [Hopeless: Barack Obama and the Politics of Illusion](#) (AK Press). *Hopeless* is also available in a [Kindle edition](#). He can be reached at fergiwhitney@msn.com.*

The original source of this article is [Counterpunch](#)
Copyright © [Mike Whitney](#), [Counterpunch](#), 2014

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Mike Whitney](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca