

WAR OR NO WAR IN IRAQ? Drones Over Iraq: When is a Pullout not a Pullout?

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Global Research, January 31, 2012

31 January 2012

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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“ ... the enduring power of our moral example, America is back.”
(President Obama, State of the Union address, 24th January 2012.)

First the world was sold imaginary weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, General Colin Powell, at the United Nations in February 2003, asserting: “My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we’re giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence.”

Now it seems the world is sold a withdrawal from Iraq which was not quite what it seemed, as presented by the Panetta-Obama-fest in the Baghdad, Fort Bragg speeches of just six weeks ago. At Fort Bragg: “The war in Iraq will soon belong to history ...” said the President.

Well, not quite.

In an interesting sleight of hand, the State Department, rather than the Pentagon, is operating a fleet of surveillance drones over Iraq.

In: “ ... the latest example of the State Department’s efforts to take over the functions in Iraq that the military used to perform.”(i)

Further, the near Vatican City sized US Embassy in Baghdad is protected by five thousand mercenaries and has a further staff of eleven thousand, a large number, seemingly in a “military advice” capacity, training Iraqi forces – a nation that, ironically, nine years ago the US and UK cited as having a military capability not alone a threat “to the entire region”, but to the West.

Little noticed has been that the State Department has been operating drones in Iraq since last year. Additionally when “Embassy” staff travel, they are escorted by helicopters, frequently with machine gun toting mercenaries “tethered to the outside.” Another Nisour Square massacre (176h September 2007) waiting to happen.

The Pentagon-operated drones, it seems, went out by the front door and returned through the State Department back door.

Whilst it is asserted that the current ones are unarmed, President Obama’s response during an event hosted by Google and YouTube (30th January) seems ambiguous: “The truth of the matter is we’re not engaging in a bunch of drone attacks inside of Iraq. There’s some

surveillance to make sure that our Embassy compound is protected.” The US “protecting” without decimating fire power, seems somewhat of a non-sequitur.

Moreover, bids are being sought for drone operations over Iraq for the next five years. Interestingly “solicitations” for “qualified contractors” for Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Support Services were released on 1st November 2011, less than two months before the US “pullout” from Iraq.(ii) Specifications include: Disseminating threat information for use in route planning, which reads pretty well like “attack mode”, and Response to a security incident at locations remote from the core of operation. Which presumably is: operator safe at console a few thousand miles away deciding who and how many, to kill.

Suitable contracts would be signed within thirty days of tendering.

This “worldwide” undertaking will embrace Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia and US drone bases are now in Ethiopia, the Seychelles and “a secret location in the Arabian Peninsula.”

Whilst Iraqis are enraged and Iraqi politicians say they have not been consulted, with acting Interior Minister Adnan Al-Assadi stating adamantly: “Our sky is our sky. Not the USA’s”, Iraq’s law makers seem to have missed, and the US apparently ignored that formal permission is needed to operate in sovereign air space.

There are also strict criteria for flyover (or flying within) rights. The grantee must be on good terms with the grantor. The grantor must approve of the use of the air space and the grantor could deny them use of the air space if there was an attempt to make war. The potential for the guest to blow nationals of the host country to pieces, sounds pretty well like a “no way.”

Further, large fees can be levied by the grantor – Russia, for example, charges Europe three hundred million euros a year for flyover permission alone.

The deeply divisive, largely mistrusted, increasingly tyrannical US-installed puppet Prime Minister Maliki, could win some much needed popularity if he took a firm stance on the matter – all the legal tools are there for him to use.

However, he looks to be between the proverbial rock and a very hard place. No breath holding.

i.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/30/world/middleeast/iraq-is-angered-by-us-drones-patrolling-its-skies.html>

ii.

https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=adfb3351f5d245aac386fb0f7141f057&tab=core&_cview=1

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