

We Must Oppose Obama's Military Escalation in Syria and Iraq!

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Today Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee to outline a new US military strategy for the Middle East. The Secretary admitted the failure of the US "train and equip" program for rebels in Syria, but instead of taking the appropriate lessons from that failure and get out of the "regime change" business, he announced the opposite. The US would not only escalate its "train and equip" program by removing the requirement that fighters be vetted for extremist ideology, but according to the Secretary the US military would for the first time become directly and overtly involved in combat in Syria and Iraq.

As Secretary Carter put it, the US would begin "supporting capable partners in opportunistic attacks against ISIL (ISIS), or conducting such missions directly, whether by strikes from the air or direct action on the ground."

"Direct action on the ground" means US boots on the ground, even though President Obama supposedly [ruled out](#) that possibility when he launched air strikes against Iraq and Syria last year. Did anyone think he would keep his word?

President Obama claims his current authority to conduct war in Iraq and Syria comes from the 2001 authorization for the use of force against those who attacked the US on 9/11, or from the 2002 authorization for the use of force against Saddam Hussein. Neither of these claims makes any sense. The 2002 authorization said nothing about ISIS because at the time there was no ISIS, and likewise the 2001 authorization pertained to an al-Qaeda that did not exist in Iraq or Syria at the time.

Additionally, the president's year-long bombing campaign against Syrian territory is a violation of that country's sovereignty and is illegal according to international law.

Congress is not even consulted these days when the president decides to start another war or to send US ground troops into an air war that is not going as planned. There might be notice given after the fact, as in Secretary Carter's testimony today, but the president has (correctly) concluded that Congress has allowed itself to become completely irrelevant when it comes to such grave matters as war and peace.

I cannot condemn in strong enough terms this ill-advised US military escalation in the Middle East. Whoever concluded that it is a good idea to send US troops into an area already being bombed by Russian military forces should really be relieved of duty.

The fact is, the neocons who run US foreign policy are so determined to pull off their regime change in Syria that they will risk the lives of untold US soldiers and even risk a major war in the region — or even beyond — to escalate a failed policy. Russian strikes against ISIS and al-Qaeda must be resisted, they claim, because they are seen as helping the Assad government remain in power, and the US administration is determined that “Assad must go.”

This is not our war. US interventionism has already done enough damage in Iraq and Syria, not to mention Libya. It is time to come home. It is time for the American people to rise up and demand that the Obama Administration bring our military home from this increasingly dangerous no-win confrontation. We must speak out now, before it is too late!

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