

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article4918>



USA

Trump's New and Used Middle East War

- IV Online magazine - 2017 - IV507 - April 2017 -

Publication date: Saturday 8 April 2017

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

This statement was issued by the National Committee of Solidarity on 7 April 2017.

Last night, supposedly in response to the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime, President Trump ordered a missile attack on a Syrian air base, the first U.S. military strike directly against the regime (though hardly the first U.S. intervention in the war). As socialists and internationalists, we oppose both imperialist intervention and the atrocities of the Syrian government.

All the external powers intervening in the Syrian catastrophe—the United States, Russia, Iran, Turkey—have told much of the truth about the other side's crimes, while systematically lying about their own.

The Assad regime's chemical attack is a world-class war crime. We discount the unlikely possibility that the Russian cover story that the gas came from an al-Qaeda depot might be true. The context is clear. Assad has used chemical weapons before, bombed humanitarian aid convoys and committed uncountable other atrocities. Russia has aided and abetted them all, especially since directly entering the war in 2015.

Trump talks about the chemical weapons attack in Syria during a press conference with King Abdullah II of Jordan.

The civilians and the children in Khan Sheikhoun suffered horrible deaths. So did the 200 estimated civilians in Mosul, Iraq when the United States bombed a dense residential neighborhood. So will many of the millions of children in Yemen facing starvation and death under U.S.-supported bombing by Saudi Arabia. So did 25 Yemeni civilians who died in the February 9 botched U.S. raid, and the dozens of fleeing Somali refugees bombed from the air by a Saudi military helicopter on March 16. These are just a few of the cases that we know about (and we don't yet know the "collateral damage" in the village next to the bombed-out Syrian air base).

Imperialism creates problems that it cannot solve, and absolves itself of responsibility for the consequences. The children and civilians of Syria, Yemen, Somalia who suffer the consequences of imperialist wars, and in whose name U.S. forces are now expanding those wars, are the same refugees that Donald Trump wants to keep out of the United States by executive fiat.

Arguably, much of Trump's motivation is to build popular support and distract from the failures of his domestic agenda. Overshadowed at least for the moment are the Republicans' internal civil war over health care, the infighting between the Steve Bannon and Jared Kushner power centers in the West Wing, Trump's "budget blueprint" wiping out every government program that actually helps people, and pending "tax reform" to stuff the pockets of the rich and super-rich at the expense of everyone else.

Republicans, except Rand Paul and a few hardline "America Firsters," are rushing to hail Trump's "leadership" in bombing Syria. Most Democrats are too (Hillary Clinton called for an air strike even before Trump did), with the caveat that he should have sought approval from Congress. Mainstream media, including the supposedly liberal outlets, are rushing to build legitimacy for the intervention.

But what comes next? The politicians and thuggish policy "thinkers" rushing to praise Trump's presidential leadership have various conflicting agendas. Some hope that a one-time U.S. air strike will get Russia to bring Assad to serious political negotiations at last. That might be a least-bad-case scenario, but Russia might just as easily double down on

its commitment to Assad, even if Vladimir Putin gives his Damascus client the message that more chemical attacks would be extremely stupid.

Others frankly want not only more extensive bombing of Syria, beginning with the no-fly-zone advocated by John McCain and Hillary Clinton, but a wider war drive aimed ultimately at Iran and wrecking the international nuclear deal with that country. What Donald Trump thinks is an unknown variable that intrigues some pundits and terrifies others. In the end, if the April 6 missile strike is a one-time contained action, it doesn't really change the character of the Syrian disaster or the bleak prospects for ending it. If it's the beginning of a bigger military campaign, it carries the potential for making everything even worse in Syria and beyond.

If antiwar forces in the United States are to play a useful role in this unfolding crisis, we must be unconditionally opposed to U.S. military action, without any sympathy or support for the Assad regime and its Russian and Iranian patrons. And we must resist the pressure to support demands like those the Democrats are putting forward about the need for Congressional approval or international cooperation, which amount to seeking the cover of legitimacy for wholly illegitimate acts.

We also must continue to resist the right's domestic agenda, including by demanding that the United States be open to refugees who want to come here, and provide massive humanitarian aid to those who are internally displaced and struggling to survive. Donald Trump's new and used war can't hide his brutal immigration roundups and deportations, the rise of Islamophobic hate crimes, the Justice Department's enabling of police brutality, and the full frontal assault on civil rights. Bombing other people's countries can't enable this government to get away with looting its own.

Source: [Solidarity](#).

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: < <https://www.paypal.me/IViewpoint>> " class="spip_out" rel="external">Donate then enter an amount of your choice.

One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning.