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www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

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Bill Van Auken
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Trump admits US killed millions in war based on lies

Amid the storm of denunciations—extending from right-wing Republicans to the Democratic Party, the *New York Times* and the pseudo-left *Jacobin* magazine—of his decision to pull US troops out of Syria, President Donald Trump issued an extraordinary tweet on Wednesday in defense of his policy:

“The United States has spent EIGHT TRILLION DOLLARS fighting and policing in the Middle East. Thousands of our Great Soldiers have died or been badly wounded. Millions of people have died on the other side. GOING INTO THE MIDDLE EAST IS THE WORST DECISION EVER MADE ... IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY! We went to war under a false & now disproven premise, WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION.”

Trump’s Twitter account has dominated the US news cycle ever since he took office. Tweets have introduced fascistic new policies on immigration, announced the frequent firings of White House personnel and cabinet members and signaled shifts in US foreign policy.

Last month, amid the mounting of an impeachment inquiry, which the Democratic leadership in Congress has focused exclusively on “national security” concerns stemming from Trump’s July 25 phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, the US president set a new personal record, tweeting 800 times.

Yet the corporate media has chosen to ignore Trump’s tweet on the protracted US military intervention in the Middle East.

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From the standpoint of the bitter internecine struggle unfolding within the US capitalist state, the tweet expresses the sharp divisions over US global strategy. While those around Trump want to focus entirely on preparation for confrontation with China, layers within the political establishment and the military and intelligence apparatus see the continuation of the US intervention to assert its hegemony over the Middle East and countering Russia as critical for American imperialism's drive to impose its dominance over the Eurasian landmass.

But aside from these disputes over geo-strategic policy, the admission by a sitting US president that Washington launched a war under a "false" and "disproven" premise that ended up killing "millions" has direct political implications, whatever Trump's intentions.

It amounts to an official admission from the US government that successive US administrations are responsible for war crimes resulting in mass murder.

Trump acknowledges that Washington launched the 2003 invasion of Iraq on the "false premise" of "weapons of mass destruction." In other words, the administration of George W. Bush lied to the people of the United States and the entire planet in order to facilitate a war of aggression.

Under international law, this war was a criminal action and a patently unjustified violation of Iraq's sovereignty. The Nuremberg Tribunal, convened in the aftermath of the Second World War, declared the planning and launching of a war of aggression the supreme crime of the Nazis, from which all of their horrific atrocities flowed, including the Holocaust. On the basis of this legal principle, Bush, Vice President Cheney and other top US officials, as well as their successors in the Obama and Trump administrations who continued the US intervention in the Middle East—expanding it into Syria and Libya, while threatening a new war against Iran—should all face prosecution as war criminals.

The real basis for the war was the long-held predatory conception that by militarily conquering Iraq Washington could seize control of the vast energy resources of the Middle East—giving it a stranglehold over the oil lifeline to its principal rivals in Asia and Europe—and thereby offset the decline of US imperialism's global hegemony.

The *World Socialist Web Site* described the consequences of the US assault on Iraq and its people as "sociocide," the deliberate destruction of what had been among the most advanced societies, in terms of education, health care and infrastructure, in the Middle East (see: "**The US war and occupation of Iraq—the murder of a society**").

The casualties inflicted by this war were staggering. According to a comprehensive 2006 study done by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and published in the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet*, the death toll resulting from the US invasion rose to over 655,000 in the first 40 months of the US war alone.

The continued slaughter resulting from the US occupation and the bloody sectarian civil war provoked by Washington's divide-and-rule tactics claimed many more direct victims, while the destruction of basic water, power, health care and sanitation infrastructure killed even more. The mass slaughter continued under the Obama administration with the launching in 2014 of what was billed as a US war against ISIS. This war, which saw the most intense bombing campaign since Vietnam and reduced Mosul, Ramadi, Fallujah and other Iraqi cities to rubble, claimed tens if not hundreds of thousands more lives.

Recent estimates of the death toll resulting from 16 years of US military intervention in Iraq range as high as 2.4 million people.

The Iraq war has had its own disastrous consequences for US society as well. In addition to claiming the lives of more than 4,500 US troops and nearly 4,000 US contractors, the war left tens of thousands of US troops wounded and hundreds of thousands suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries.

What of all the families in the United States who lost children, siblings or parents in a war that Trump now admits was based upon lies? Together with the veterans suffering from the wounds of this war, they should have the right to sue the US government for the results of its criminal conduct.

The cost of the US wars launched since 2001 has risen to nearly \$6 trillion, the bulk of it stemming from Iraq, while interest cost on the money borrowed to pay for these wars will eventually amount to \$8 trillion.

These grievous costs to US society are compounded by the social and political impact of waging an illegal war, resulting in the shredding of democratic rights and the wholesale corruption of a political system that is ever more dominated by the military and intelligence apparatus.

The media's silence on Trump's admission of war crimes carried out by US imperialism in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East is self-incriminating. It reflects the complicity of the corporate media in these crimes, with its selling of the lies used to promote the aggression against Iraq and its attempt to suppress antiwar sentiment.

Nowhere was this war propaganda developed more deliberately than at the *New York Times* which inundated the American public with lying reports about “weapons of mass destruction” by Judith Miller and the noxious opinion pieces by chief foreign affairs commentator Thomas “I have no problem with a war for oil” Friedman.

By all rights, the media editors and pundits responsible for promoting a criminal war of aggression deserve to sit in the dock alongside the war criminals who launched it.

The corporate media has also ignored Trump’s indictment of the US wars in the Middle East because it speaks for those sections of the US ruling establishment that want them to continue.

Trump’s cynical nationalist and populist rhetoric about ending US wars in the Middle East is aimed at currying support with a US population that is overwhelmingly hostile to these wars, even as his administration—backed by the Democrats—has secured a record \$738 billion military budget in preparation for far more catastrophic wars, including against nuclear-armed China and Russia.

If the fascistic occupant of the White House is able to adopt the farcical posture of an opponent of imperialist war, it is entirely thanks to the Democrats, whose opposition to Trump is bound up with the concerns of the US intelligence agencies and the Pentagon over his conduct of foreign policy.

While there was mass opposition to the invasion of Iraq, the pseudo-left in the United States, together with the media, worked might and main to channel it behind the Democratic Party, which provided uninterrupted support and funding for the war. Today, it is the most pro-war party, aligned with the opposition to Trump by the likes of John Bolton, Lindsey Graham and Bush.

Trump’s admission about the criminality of the Iraq war only confirms what the *World Socialist Web Site* stated from its very outset. The struggle that it has waged for the building of a mass antiwar movement based upon the working class and armed with a socialist and internationalist program to unite the workers of the United States, the Middle East and the entire planet against the capitalist system provides the only way forward in the struggle against war.

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