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Yes, al Qaeda attacked us because of our aggressive foreign policy

By John Glaser

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In an op-ed published by The Daily Caller on Wednesday, Jamie Weinstein [argued against Ron Paul's analysis](#) that al Qaeda attacked us on 9/11 in response to aggressive U.S. foreign policy. Embarrassingly, his rejection lies in stark contrast to the conclusions reached by the CIA, the State Department, virtually all of the academic literature written on the subject and [al Qaeda members' own explanations of their motivations](#).

Weinstein would have us believe that America hadn't been intervening in the Middle East prior to 9/11. But U.S. intervention there has a long and ugly history. As a [top-secret National Security Council briefing](#) put it in 1954, "The Near East is of great strategic, political, and economic importance," as it "contains the greatest petroleum resources in the world" as well as "essential locations for strategic military bases in any world conflict."

To this end, America needed to prop up brutal dictators that would allow such U.S. imposition. This certainly got us some enemies. And in 2004, the Department of Defense recognized this fact in a [report](#) to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. "If it is one overarching goal they share," the report read, "it is the overthrow of what Islamists call 'apostate' regimes: the tyrannies of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Jordan and the Gulf States" and that "The United States finds itself in the strategically awkward — and potentially dangerous — situation of being the longstanding prop and alliance partner of these authoritarian regimes. Without the U.S. these regimes could not survive."

After the first Gulf War, not only did the U.S. place military bases in Saudi Arabia — something bin Laden described as a grave provocation — but harsh sanctions and a violent no-fly zone were imposed on Iraq. These measures are [widely cited](#) to have directly led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians. Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright famously [said in an interview](#) that this direct contribution to the death of a “half a million children” was “worth it.” In a 2002 message to the American people, bin Laden [pondered](#) why it was that “Iraqi children have died as a result of your sanctions, and you did not show concern.”

Weinstein says “Osama bin Laden wasn’t upset because the Palestinians were given poor treatment: He was upset that Israel exists at all.” The truth is, he was upset about both. Israel is the world’s greatest recipient of American guns and butter, and Israeli military occupation and mistreatment of Palestinians added to al Qaeda’s list of grievances toward America.

And then Weinstein makes his greatest mistake, equating reiteration of al Qaeda’s motivations with justifying the attacks. Nothing could justify the murder of 3,000 innocent Americans. But as long as the denials of the basic facts about 9/11 persist, America will continue carrying out policies which exacerbate hatreds against America, as both Bush and Obama have done. America doesn’t need to be intervening in every corner of the Earth, particularly when the results are death and destruction, for them and for us.