

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: Trump's fight for an imperial presidency

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION INSISTS ON PERPETUATING ENDLESS WAR

The Trump administration made two strong indications this week that it has no intention of reining in our perpetual war footing that has been raging since 9/11, and that perhaps it might even seek to expand it.

Trump himself began the week saying he could end the war in Afghanistan “[in a week](#)” if he wanted to. But if suggesting the possibility of mass murder with nuclear weapons wasn't enough to convince us of his utter disregard for the effects of permanent war, the president on Wednesday [vetoed](#) three bipartisan joint resolutions prohibiting arms sales to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, two countries that—with assistance from American bombs—continue to wreak havoc on Yemen and exacerbate a dire humanitarian crisis.

But the Trump administration's biggest flirtation with broadening our forever wars this week largely flew under the radar, as two senior State Department officials said during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Wednesday that they [would not rule out](#) reinterpreting the legal authorities provided by the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan so that they could apply to Iran. Nor would the two officials—Under Secretary of State David Hale and top (acting and [under-qualified](#)) legal advisor Marik String—fully commit to seek congressional authorization for a potential war with Iran.

String's contention that the Trump administration “to date” does not believe the 2001 AUMF authorizes any military action against Iran—which echoes [a recent letter](#) he sent to the House Foreign Affairs Committee—had many Senators concerned.

“To date,’ is the very operative word in that sentence,” Ranking Member Sen. Bob Menendez said. That caveat, he added, “creates a great deal of anxiety that you are going to interpret this authorization beyond the pale to enter into a military engagement with Iran other than in response to an action that protects our personnel and our military.”

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“You’re keeping the door open” to using the 2001 AUMF to justify war with Iran, Sen. Jeff Merkely observed.

But what’s perhaps even more concerning was String’s extremely broad interpretation of the president’s powers to use military force against Iran in response to attacks on U.S. “interests” or “partners.”

Sen. Chris Murphy wondered about that. “What about the case in which a group not listed in the 2001 AUMF has attacked a partner who’s a partner in the fight against ISIS or the fight against al-Qaeda but has been attacked by an entity that is not listed in the 2001 AUMF?” he asked.

However, String wouldn’t answer. “I prefer not to get into answering very hypothetical questions.” But these aren’t hypothetical situations at all – indeed, that was the [exact scenario](#) in Niger that cost the lives of four U.S. servicemembers.

TRUMP DEFYING A BIPARTISAN CONSENSUS

The tide is turning against Endless War, as the House voted in recent weeks to repeal the [2001](#) and [2002](#) AUMFs, largely because of the Trump administration’s appetite for war with Iran and its signal that it may use these authorities as cover.

And despite the fact that it’s clear these laws [do not authorize war with Iran](#), Congress has felt compelled to go on record saying as much. Indeed, bipartisan majorities in the [House](#) and [Senate](#) recently voted for measures declaring that Congress will not provide funds for any unauthorized war with Iran and that state explicitly that no existing laws allow for the President to attack Iran.

At the same time, it’s also clear that there’s more work to be done in preventing Trump from starting a war with Iran. And we can start by pushing the Congress to keep the measure blocking funds for any unauthorized war in this year’s National Defense Authorization Act.

- READ MORE: [Iran: The Case Against War](#), New York Review of Books, August 15, 2019 issue.

BURIED LEDES

This is the [shady story](#) of a retired U.S. general returning to Iraq to make millions of dollars.

The confirmation of Trump’s new Defense Secretary [was hardly noticed](#) but it’s just the latest example of how his administration embodies “the Swamp.”

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A climate scientist [wrote about](#) how she lost her job “in a climate-denying administration.”

A handful of House Democrats voted against a recent measure to block a war with Iran. [The reason why will not surprise you.](#)

“A [diverse and growing group](#) of military experts, national security scholars, and organizations **agree on the need to close U.S. military bases abroad to save billions of dollars** and, some say counterintuitively, improve national security.”

[A bipartisan House majority](#) passed temporary protections for Venezuelans fleeing violence, oppression and economic insecurity. Check out Rep. Debbie Mucarsel-Powell’s [impassioned speech](#) calling out some Republicans for trying to kill the bill.

Five House Democrats sided with Trump in [continuing to support](#) the Saudi/UAE-led war in Yemen. Win Without War Policy Director Kate Kizer responded: “I think given all the abuses by this president to shield Saudi Arabia and the UAE ... Democratic members at the very least would be united with the rest of their caucus as well as their constituents who want to end the U.S. role in this war.”

And finally, check out this [nifty chart](#) from our friends at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation **comparing the House and Senate versions of this year’s NDAA.**