WIN WITHOUT WAR

Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

DATE: 8/21/2020
SL: Border Militarization, Weapons Sales, and Iran Snapback: 3 Stories You Might Have Missed

The Takeaway:
- A recent DoD Inspector General's report found that the Trump administration did not break the law by sending U.S. troops to the southern border to terrorize migrants and asylum-seekers. But its legally dubious reasoning won't stop us from fighting to demilitarize the borders and ensure justice for all displaced people.
- The State Department may have fabricated a national security emergency in order to push through a weapons sale to Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the UAE. Plus, following the announcement of the Israel-UAE deal, Trump wants to sell the latter killer drones and fighter jets. The arms manufacturers' hold on Washington is strong, but we will break it.
- Just as we predicted last week, the Trump administration lost the UN vote to extend an arms embargo on Iran, and is now trying to invoke snapback sanctions on Iran. We must resist Trump's hybrid war.

3 Stories You May Have Missed This Week

It's been a busy week! Whether you were watching the Democratic National Convention, following the NBA playoffs, or getting arrested on your friend's yacht by the US Postal Service, here are some top foreign policy stories that you may have missed.

The DoD Whitewashes Trump's Border Militarization
In November 2018, Donald Trump authorized U.S. troops to use lethal force against migrants and asylum-seekers at the southern border. This was cruelty for cruelty's sake. It was also a dangerous abuse of power, potentially violating the Posse Comitatus Act's restrictions on the use of military resources for domestic law enforcement. Win Without War, leadership in Congress like Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) and communities across the progressive movement fought back. After a year of relentless campaigning, the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense (DoD) opened an investigation.

The results came out this week and they're disappointing, filled with dubious reasoning in justification of the administration's misdeeds. The report's main flaw is that it seems to find that a DoD *policy directive* gave the authority to violate the Posse Comitatus Act's restrictions. The problem? Posse Comitatus can only be excepted by *statute* (i.e. not a directive). The law it does

cite as providing statutory exception, the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, does no such thing.

In short, the report whitewashes an abuse of power. But what could we expect when the president sidelines any Inspector General that doesn't fall in line? Despite the disappointment, the battle's not over. We'll keep fighting to demilitarize the border, to prevent even more abuses of power, and to build a country that treats those who arrive at its borders with humanity, solidarity, and compassion.

Foreign Policy to the Highest Bidder

Last week, the Trump administration was accused of fabricating a national security "emergency" last year to justify Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's invocation of emergency authorities to sell $8 billion in weapons to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Jordan. At the time of the arms sale, a State Department official claimed that the emergency occurred close to May 20, 2019. Yet a recent State Department Inspector General report found that Pompeo had started the emergency declaration process weeks prior. The report *also* revealed that civilian lives weren't even considered in the sale's decisionmaking process.

That's right: the State Department lied about our national security in order to bypass Congressional authority and justify lining the pockets of weapons manufacturers, all with no regard for the lives those weapons will take or their role in fueling the human-made humanitarian disaster in Yemen. On top of all this, less than a week after announcing a deal formalizing relations between Israel and the UAE, Trump and Kushner are pushing to sell F-35 fighter jets and killer drones to the latter. Yet again, U.S. foreign policymaking is decided by the pursuit of private profits for the war industry and kowtowing to supposed Gulf "allies."

But new legislation could help push back: Rep. Tom Malinowski's (D-NJ) amendment to the Fiscal Year 2021 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations Act would prohibit weapons sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE for one year, buying more time for longer-term measures like Rep. Ilhan Omar's (D-MN) Stop Arming Human Rights Abusers Act, or a recently-introduced bill to block the sale of drones.

Our Snapback Predictions Come True

In last week's Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief, we predicted that the UN would reject Trump's proposal to extend an arms embargo on Iran, which Trump would then use as pretext to call for "snapback" sanctions on Iran. Unfortunately, we were right.

However, having unilaterally withdrawn from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Actions (JCPOA), the United States likely has *no* legal justification to invoke its snapback measures, and the gambit will hopefully be rejected. But the administration's Hail Mary pass shouldn't be ignored: if snapback sanctions are pushed through, not only will the people of Iran be forced to suffer

under even stricter suffocating restrictions, but the remaining framework of the JCPOA would also be critically undermined. We must resist Trump's hybrid war at every turn.

BURIED LEDES

Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta has resigned in the country's second military coup in a decade. Mali's future remains uncertain, but one thing is clear: the country wasn't helped by the unrest unleashed from the disastrous NATO intervention in neighboring Libya.

Russian opposition-leader Aleksei Navalny has been hospitalised as a result of a suspected poisoning. But let's be clear: Putin's repeated crimes are no excuse for war mongering or "Great Power Competition."

Much to the Department of Homeland Security's chagrin, **Donald Trump reportedly regularly ordered then-Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen to drop whatever she was working on to go to the southern border.** To be fair, much of DHS's work is better off abandoned anyway.

Democrats have dropped their (already *extremely* low-bar) pledge to end subsidies and tax breaks for the fossil fuel industry from their party platform. You read that right.

Protests against the corrupt government of Alexander Lukashenko have erupted across Belarus. As progressives, we support the people's demands for a brighter future, but are wary of segments of the opposition calling for intervention and neoliberal reform.

In today's edition of "that shouldn't be legal:" **multinational corporations around the world are preparing to sue governments for taking steps to protect their people from COVID-19.** We join over 600 organizations in calling to prevent it.

Trump's former chief strategist Steve Bannon was arrested… for defrauding donors to a racist pro-border wall campaign… by US Postal Service Agents… while on a yacht… owned by a Chinese fugitive billionaire. The 2020 writer's room sure knows how to keep things interesting.

The right wing has consistently denied the open secret that **U.S. policy toward Israel is often more about appeasing U.S. evangelicals than actually supporting Jewish people.** But Trump, in characteristic candor, just came out and said it.

And finally, **inflatable pants, now for only $1,160**. Enough said.