

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

DATE: 9/18/2020

SL: A blank check for endless war — 19 years later

### **The Takeaway:**

- Today marks the 19th anniversary of the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force — in many ways the beginning of the era of endless war.
- Passed through Congress in the post-9/11 rush for war, the 2001 AUMF has acted as a blank check for war ever since: in Afghanistan, in Yemen, in Somalia, and beyond.
- It's past time to repeal the 2001 AUMF. In its place, we need not another war authorization, but a new paradigm of U.S. foreign policy: one dedicated to accountability, justice, and a positive peace.

## **The 2001 AUMF: 19 Years of Endless War**

19 years ago today, George W. Bush signed the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) into law. In the stroke of a pen, the era of post-9/11 endless wars began. This week, we take a closer look at the notorious 2001 AUMF: what it is, how it's been twisted to justify decades of disastrous militarism, and why Win Without War is fighting not just to repeal it, but to build an alternative foreign policy that puts peace and justice first.

### **A Blank Check**

In the wake of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, many in Congress were hungry for retaliation. Rather than taking time to mourn, analyze what happened and why, and consider how best to use the range of foreign policy tools available to ensure the continued safety and security of the public, Congress plunged headlong into the rush for maximal military action. A mere three days after the attacks, Congress passed the [2001 AUMF](#), authorizing the President to “use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks.” With few specifics, fewer constraints, and no time limits, the 2001 AUMF was, a blank check for global, endless war.

### **A Lonely Fight for Peace**

The 2001 AUMF passed both chambers of Congress on the same day with hardly a word of debate — the final vote in the Senate: 98-0; in the House: 420-1. But against the onrush to war, one leader stood alone: Representative Barbara Lee of California made the sole dissenting vote, [stating](#): “I’m convinced that military action will not prevent further acts of international

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



terrorism against the United States... Let's pause, just for a minute, and think through the implications of our actions today so that this does not spiral out of control." Unfortunately, these words would prove prescient.

## 19 Years of Endless War

Since its passage, the 2001 AUMF has been stretched beyond recognition, [invoked](#) to justify military actions, from all-out invasions to deadly drone strikes, in: Afghanistan, the Philippines, Georgia, Yemen, Djibouti, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia, and more. While abuse of the 2001 AUMF is a bipartisan tradition, under the Trump administration, the endless wars have gotten even worse: from a new front in the drone wars in [Niger](#), to [weakened](#) accountability, to [skyrocketing](#) civilian casualties in Afghanistan. Imperialism, interventionism, and militarism were defining features of U.S. foreign policy long before 2001. But at the heart of the modern, post-9/11 paradigm of endless war lies the 2001 AUMF.

## Repeal...

After nearly two decades, many in Congress are beginning to understand the dire need to repeal this blank check for war. Rep. Lee, continuing the courageous fight she began all those years ago, has consistently put forth both [standalone](#) bills and Defense Appropriations Subcommittee [amendments](#) to do just that. In a monumental step, one such amendment [passed](#) the House last summer. While it languishes in the Republican-controlled Senate, its passage remains a testament to the growing recognition that it's past time to end our endless wars. If a new administration enters the White House in January, it must make repealing the 2001 AUMF a top priority.

## ...Don't Replace

Many who support repealing the 2001 AUMF have adopted a mantra of "repeal and replace," advocating re-authorization for war under stricter conditions and a bound timeline. There's no doubt that this would be an improvement over the status quo. But after nearly 20 years, we must not limit our vision to "narrowing the scope of endless wars." Drone bombings, covert military operations, all-out invasions — the wanton destruction of the post-9/11 war machine has had a catastrophic toll, while utterly failing to ensure security, here or abroad. Our goal is unequivocal: end endless war. That means repealing the 2001 AUMF, and *not* replacing it with an AUMF 2.0.

## Positive Peace

Repealing the 2001 AUMF is necessary for peace — but it alone is not enough. Ending warmaking must also be met with active peacebuilding. We need a new paradigm of foreign policy, one that reasserts Congressional power over war-making, eschews militarism, upholds human rights, and addresses violent conflict at its [roots](#). At the same time, we must reckon with the deadly costs of world-spanning, endless war. That means investigations into how we got here, accountability for those responsible, and reparations for those impacted (read more [here](#) on what accountability could look like, from our own Kate Kizer). 19 years on, the endless war

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



doctrine has clearly failed. But we can still build a more peaceful, a more just, a more secure U.S. foreign policy. Repealing the 2001 AUMF is the start.

---

## **Not To Be Confused With...**

While we've focused here on the 2001 AUMF, we must not forget the other authorization that has recently become another blank check for endless war: the 2002 AUMF. Intended specifically to authorize the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the 2002 AUMF has, like its earlier counterpart, since been [stretched](#) beyond recognition — invoked by the Obama campaign for its military operations in Iraq in 2014, and later by the Trump administration to justify actions in Syria, and even the [assassination](#) of Iranian General Qasem Soleimani. We'll be digging deeper into the 2002 AUMF on its 18th anniversary in October. But, spoiler alert, *it should be repealed too*.

---

## **BURIED LEDES**

**Trump has once again threatened Iran with war, raising [fears](#) of a potential “October surprise.” We've made a [thread](#) of Iran experts we trust** so you can get smart and stay up-to-date (while avoiding the establishment war hawks).

But Iran isn't the only possible target of a pre-election military escalation. The new, one-sided Cold War with China continues as Secretary of Defence Mark Esper **announces plans to [expand](#) the U.S. naval fleet in the Indo-Pacific region.**

**President Rodrigo Duterte has [pardoned](#) a U.S. soldier convicted of murdering a trans woman in the Philippines**, sparking outrage from local activists. Call us radical, but we don't think U.S. soldiers should get a free pass to commit murder...

...or sexual violence. A longstanding, widespread problem, **sexual assault in the military has found renewed attention as a result of the heinous murder of Vanessa Guillen. With the [I Am Vanessa Guillen Act](#), lawmakers seek to address it.**

**A new study has found that U.S. police are [using](#) over \$1 billion in post-9/11 military hardware** — more proof that militarization of U.S. foreign policy and domestic policing are inextricably linked.

**By selling weapons to the Saudi-led coalition in its monstrous war in Yemen, the United States is complicit in war crimes.** We already knew those in charge were morally responsible — a major investigative piece explains how they may be [held](#) legally responsible too.

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



**Reports of ICE's forced hysterectomies are utterly appalling. They're also [nothing new](#) for the United States.**

Your weekly reminder that the **climate crisis is here, it is deadly, and it will [displace](#) millions of people in the United States alone.** We need comprehensive, radical climate action. NOW.

**Anti-Muslim, anti-Arab discrimination is [rampant](#) in the United States** – both a cause and a product of decades of U.S. violence against Muslim and Arab populations abroad.

This year marked a turning point **in the fight to cut the overblown Pentagon budget. Where do we stand now? What's next?** What will it take to win? Our friend Mandy Smithberger [explains](#).

And finally, there's **one place where the future of climate actually looks much [calmer](#): outer space!**