

# Who's MAWO?

Mobilization Against War and Occupation is a coalition of over 50 endorsing organizations and also individual members, most of which are working class organizations, student groups, grassroots organizations, and ethnic communities. This is including Indigenous activists and groups from the third world as well as women, youth and elder fighters for social justice and against war and occupation. We are the people in struggle because we are people that suffer at the hands of imperialism. We have the energy, drive and will for change because it is in our interest to make this change in order to create a better world for all of humanity!

## Get involved



## with MAWO!

Meetings & Forums on Tuesdays - 7:00PM

For location, please visit our website:

**mawovancouver.org**

@MAWOvan

Mobilization Against War and Occupation

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stop the war! stop the occupations!

**www.mawovancouver.org**

# MAWO 58

newsletter

MAY 2016

**mobilization against war & occupation**

## Canada's Hidden War in Iraq

By Janine Solanki

"It will be dangerous. It will be clear that on occasion to defend ourselves or defend those who we are with, we will have to fight" - Canadian Chief of Defense Staff General Jonathan Vance

For those who thought that Canada's recent combat mission in Iraq is over and Canadian troops have been relegated to a milder, friendlier sounding "train, advise and assist" mission, don't be mistaken on the timing of the quote above. The comments by Canada's top general were not in reference to Canada's combat mission in Iraq under the government of Stephen Harper, rather they were made on February 19, 2016. That is, four days after Canada's fighter jets ceased their airstrikes in Iraq, ending Canada's combat mission as determined by the new Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. So if Canada's combat mission in Iraq is over, why is the new "train, advise and assist" mission so dangerous, and why will Canadian soldiers be fighting?

### Canada's War in Iraq – Conservative Style

Before we talk about Canada's "refocused" mission in Iraq, let's understand what Canada's military has been doing in Iraq under the previous Conservative government of Canada. Canada's "Operation IMPACT" began on September 4th, 2014, with the stated aim of fighting Daesh (also known as ISIS) in Iraq and Syria. Most noted, of course, was Canada's six CF-18 Hor-

net fighter jets, CP-140 Aurora surveillance aircraft and the CC-150T Polaris aerial refueller. As of March 22nd, 2016 this air force conducted 2,222 sorties, which included 1378 sorties conducted by the fighter jets, resulting in 246 airstrikes in Iraq and 5 in Syria. Canada also had 69 special-forces soldiers in northern Iraq training Kurdish troops, as well as 600 Royal Canadian Air Force personnel deployed as part of Joint Task Force-Iraq, to "work with other coalition countries to advise and assist



the Iraqi government with their security forces." In 2014 Canada's air force also delivered more than 1,600,000 pounds of military supplies to Iraq, including small arms, ammunition and other military equipment donated by countries allied to the

foreign forces in Iraq.

### Canada's War in Iraq – Liberal Style

Following the election of the new Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Canada's mission in Iraq and Syria was revised with the pretext of stopping Canadian airstrikes and continuing involvement in a "non-combat" military capacity. But is this mission really non-combat, and does non-combat operations really equal a better policy in Iraq and Syria?

While the fighter jets ceased airstrike operations as of February 15th 2016, Canada's aerial refuel-

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## UPCOMING EVENTS ENDORSED BY MAWO:

**LIFT the U.S. BLOCKADE on CUBA NOW!**

**RETURN GUANTANAMO TO CUBA NOW!**

**Monthly Protest Action!**

**FRIDAY JUNE 17 4-5 PM**

**U.S. CONSULATE**

1075 W. PENDER ST.

**FRIENDS OF CUBA AGAINST THE U.S. BLOCKADE VANCOUVER**

NoBloqueoVancouver@gmail.com | @NOBLOQUEOVAN

**WWW.VANCUBAUSBLOCKADE.ORG**

**U.S. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA**

**FRIDAY JUNE 10**

**PROTEST ACTION:**

**U.S. HANDS OFF VENEZUELA! PRESIDENT!**

**5:30-7PM**

**VANCOUVER ART GALLERY**

**ROBSON ST @ HOWE ST**

**DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER, CANADA**

**U.S. CONSULATE**

**4-5PM**

**1075 W. PENDER ST**

**DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER, CANADA**

**Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice (FTT)**

**VENEZUELA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN**

**WWW.FIRETHISTIME.NET**

**MONTHLY ANTIWAR PETITION DRIVE & RALLY**

**CANADA: CANCEL THE ARMS DEAL WITH SAUDI ARABIA!**

**US/UK/CANADA HANDS OFF LIBYA!**

**NO TO WAR ON SYRIA, IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN!**

**SAUDI ARABIA HANDS OFF YEMEN, SYRIA AND IRAQ!**

**CANADA OUT OF IRAQ! CANADA OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!**

**TURKEY OUT OF SYRIA AND IRAQ!**

**NO TO ISLAMOPHOBIA!**

**ISRAEL HANDS OFF PALESTINE!**

**END THE OCCUPATION NOW!**

**END THE BLOCKADE OF CUBA!**

**LIFT ALL SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN!**

**NO TO WAR & OCCUPATION!**

**YES TO SELF-DETERMINATION!**

**SATURDAY JUNE 18 2PM**

**VANCOUVER ART GALLERY**

**ROBSON STREET AT HOWE STREET**

**DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER, BC**

**MOBILIZATION AGAINST WAR & OCCUPATION - MAWO**

**WWW.MAWOVANCOUVER.ORG**



# U.S. HANDS OFF SYRIA!

## US Expands Direct Intervention in Syria

By Nita Palmer

For the past five years, the people of Syria have been battling for their country and for their lives. Since 2011, the country has been torn apart by a so-called ‘civil war’ between the Syrian government and opposition forces and terrorist organizations supported by the US and their allies. Four hundred and seventy thousand people have died (Syrian Centre for Policy Research), and nearly half the country’s citizens have been forced to flee their homes. Over six million are refugees within Syria, still facing the horrors of war, while more than three million others have fled to squalid refugee camps in neighbouring countries or have joined the exodus to Europe. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has called this “the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era”.

### A Regressive Transformation

Just a few short years ago, Syria was one of the most developed countries the Middle East. Syrians had a life expectancy comparable with that of many developed countries, and health care and education systems which were some of the most advanced in the region. Today, life expectancy has plummeted from 76 to 56 years of age, according to the UN. More than 40% of the country’s hospitals have been destroyed or are inoperative, as has 90% of its pharmaceutical industry, which once provided many important medicines for Syrians (The Independent, 2013). Thousands of doctors have fled the country, and remaining hospitals and clinics are overburdened with war wounded. Thousands are now dying of treatable conditions due to the shortage of doctors and medicines, with children and the elderly facing the highest risk. As well, the destruction of sanitation systems has caused an outbreak of diseases such as typhoid and hepatitis, which until now were things of the past.

Syria’s education system has been destroyed as well, with less than 50% of Syrian children able to attend school. Many have already missed several years of schooling. Save The Children reports that Syria now has the second worst rate of school attendance in the world – a drastic drop from an almost 100% enrollment rate before the war. This crisis will impact Syria for years to come, with future generations of doctors, teachers, engineers and other professionals set years behind in education, if they are even able to complete their schooling.

In addition to these horrors of war, many Syrians are living under the reign of terror of Daesh (ISIS/ISIL). Those living in Daesh-controlled areas of the country are in many cases not even receiving basic aid from international organizations, as groups such as Medcins Sans Frontieres have removed their staff over concerns for their safety.

### Civil War or Proxy War?

The current crisis in Syria has been called a ‘civil war’. The West has blamed the Syrian government and President Bashar al-Assad for the crisis, labelling Assad as a brutal dictator who is trying to crush any opposition.

However, from the very beginning this was not simply an internal conflict within the country. The US has been creating and fueling the war by arming and supporting factions in the country who are opposed to the Syrian government and President Assad. Although the \$500 million Pentagon program to support and train the so-called ‘moderate rebels’ was cancelled last year, the New York Times reported in October 2015 that the CIA was still carrying out ‘significantly larger’ programs to arm anti-government forces, including supplying them with anti-tank missiles.

Of course, many of the ‘moderate rebels’ that the US supports are not moderate at all. US allies Turkey and Saudi Arabia have openly supported the al-Nusra front – a group with close ties to al-Qaeda. The Independent reported last year on French intelligence reports which revealed that the US had been deliberately avoiding carrying out air strikes against Daesh when they might endanger fighters from the al-Nusra Front.

The US policy of supporting any group which opposed President Assad regardless of

their ideology resulted in the inevitable rise of Daesh, which currently controls nearly half the country. In fact, a leaked Pentagon document from 2012 reveals that the US ruling establishment was fully aware of the likelihood of an ultra-conservative Salafist terrorist organization such as Daesh coming to rise.

“If the situation unravels, there is a possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist principality in Eastern Syria... and this is exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want in order to isolate the Syrian regime...” the document states. Of course, the US was at the time and continues to be one of the ‘supporting powers to the opposition’, along with Canada, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and other US allies.

### US Expands Direct Intervention

After five years of fomenting this war which allowed Daesh to gain strength, the US has now announced that they will be intervening directly to stop the monster which they have created. On April 25, US President Obama announced the deployment of an additional 250 US Special Forces troops to Syria, increasing the total official number of US soldiers in the country to 300. The announcement came despite earlier promises from Obama that there would be no US ‘boots on the ground’ in the fight against Daesh in Syria. The deployment of these troops comes in addition to airstrikes against Daesh targets which the US and their allies (including Canada) have been carrying out since 2014.

Officially, US forces will not be involved in direct combat against Daesh, but will be there to ‘train, advise, and assist’ rebel forces who are fighting the terrorist group as well as the Syrian government. However, many longtime US military veterans have pointed out that there is little practical difference between ‘special forces’ and ‘combat forces’.

This deployment of troops was condemned by the Syrian government an act of aggression and ‘a blatant violation of Syrian sovereignty’. Indeed, these troops are not there to defeat Daesh – that would be an impossible task for just 250 soldiers. The troops have been sent to Syria to lay the groundwork for further direct intervention by the US, and ultimately a full scale military intervention.

The primary goal of the US government in Syria has never been to defeat Daesh. Before Daesh became established in Syria, the US had its sights set on getting rid of the independent Syrian government and President Assad, as well as to destabilize the country and allow for ongoing intervention. This pattern has been repeated throughout the Middle East and North Africa over the last decade – in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and beyond. US opposition to the Syrian government was never a question of ‘defending human rights’ – look at the human rights crisis which has been created by the US support for their ‘moderate rebels’! The problem with the Syrian government for the US is its status as an independent government which has not allied itself with the United States. Their intervention in Syria – as well as in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere in the region – is part of their plan to regain control over important and profitable trade markets as well as get a strategic upper hand over rising economic powers such as Russia and China.

### What is the US Goal in Syria if Not to Defeat Daesh?

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### What is the Solution?

A resolution to the crisis and internal divisions in Syria cannot come without first defeating the brutal terrorists like Daesh and al-Nusra Front. This can only be accomplished through a military campaign coordinated with the Syrian government. By aiding the ‘rebels’ and demanding the removal of President Assad, the US is destabilizing the country further and creating a vacuum of power which will allow even greater space for Daesh and al-Nusra to expand their influence. The US and their allies should remove all troops from the country immediately and cease air strikes. The people of Syria and the Syrian government must be allowed to determine their own future and with whom they will form an alliance to defeat the terrorists.

If we want to help the Syrian people and stop the expansion of these brutal terrorist groups, we must demand an end to imperialist interventions and US-backed terrorism in their country. No War on Syria!

US Out of Syria Now!

Source: [www.firethistime.net](http://www.firethistime.net)



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ler continues to provide fuel to other coalition aircraft (24,000,000 pounds of fuel as of March 22nd 2016). The two surveillance aircraft continue to “contribute to coalition intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities”. So, although Canadian fighter jets may not be dropping the bombs, Canada is doing the behind-the-scenes work to enable the fighter jets of other countries to drop their bombs!

In terms of military personnel, this number has increased from 650 to 830, which includes tripling the “train, advise and assist” mission in northern Iraq from 69 to 200 special forces. While the mainstream headlines don’t delve much deeper than those basic figures, let’s ask a few questions. Who are these “special forces”? They are made up of the Joint Task Force 2 (JTF2) counter-terrorism unit as well as the Canadian Special Operations Regiment. In 2010 the Globe and Mail described the Joint Task Force 2 as “a shadowy counterterrorism force about which little concrete can be said” and “Canada’s most elite troops – the faceless soldiers who go to places they won’t name, to complete missions they won’t talk about.” How about the claim that the “train, advise and assist” mission is a non-combat mission? The quote at the beginning of this article already explicitly states that the troops will be engaged in fighting. Exactly how close to the front lines these troops are was proved on March 6th, 2015 when Sgt. Andrew Joseph Doiron, from the Canadian Special Operations Regiment, was killed in a friendly fire incident while on the training mission in northern Iraq. Further investigation brought to light that about 20% of the training mission takes place close to or directly at the front lines, which is where Doiron was killed when Canadian troops were mistaken for Daesh fighters. Furthermore, as of March 8th, 2016 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s new “non-combat” military strategy authorized Canadian soldiers to shoot first in Iraq as soon as they detect “hostile intent” from Daesh fighters. So, if Canada’s special forces spend 20% of their time at the front lines, where they will doubtlessly be subject to “hostile intent” and authorized to shoot, how likely is it that Canadian soldiers in Iraq will not be engaged in combat?

### What Liberal government is hiding?

Then there is the question of a bit of simple mathematics. 830 Canadian military personnel in Iraq, minus 200 involved in the “train, advise and assist” mission equals 630 people whom we have very little information about what they are doing. While some of them are part of the continued air surveillance and refueling, the most concrete information to be found via the Canadian Forces Operation Impact website is that they will “support and enable the coalition and Iraqi security forces in the planning and execution of military operations” such as “intelligence operations; social media exploitation; targeting; and command and control.” That command and control is a lot more than a simple footnote. On March 14th 2016 it was announced that Canadian Brigadier-General David Anderson is to command a coalition team working with Iraq’s security ministries in Baghdad, in preparation for a military offensive against Daesh in Mosul and northwestern Iraq.

When faced with this closer inspection, Canada’s role in the war in Iraq is much more than a benign training mission. It is secretive special forces on the front lines, it is keeping coalition fighter jets in the skies, it is the eyes and ears of surveillance and intelligence and it is the decision makers of how this war is conducted. Not only does all the evidence point to this in reality being a combat mission, but it’s even in charge of the “command and control” of much of the combat!

There is another aspect missing from Justin Trudeau’s refocused “Operation Impact”. While this Operation encompasses the war in Iraq and Syria, all we hear about is what Canada is doing in Iraq. So then, what is Canada doing in Syria? Does Canada have special operations troops in Syria? Is Canada involved in training, surveillance, intelligence or delivering arms? What are Operation Impact’s plans for Syria? The simple fact is we don’t know, and mainstream media is not asking these tough questions.

### Canada’s secret war in Iraq

“Ironically, the Canadians indirectly provide more support for us in Iraq than most of those 46 countries that are fully supporting us.” - Paul Cellucci, former US Ambassador to Canada, March 27, 2003

The fact is, Canada’s current participation in the war in Iraq is nothing new. What’s new is only the fact that it is public information. In 2011 WikiLeaks obtained a classified US document, which shows that senior Canadian officials met with American and British diplomats on the same day that former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announced to parliament that Canada would not participate in the war on Iraq. The confidential document from this meeting notes that former Canadian Foreign Affairs official

James Wright “emphasized” that contrary to public statements by the prime minister, Canadian naval and air forces could be “discreetly” put to use during the pending U.S.-led assault on Iraq and its aftermath,” as reported in a 2011 CBC news article.

From what information can be gleaned from these secret operations, Canada’s involvement in the 2003 war on Iraq was quite similar to their current participation. Canada’s navy was instrumental, with about 1,300 personnel on at least five frigates and one destroyer deployed to the Persian Gulf. Canada’s air force also had a role, with surveillance and transport aircraft as well as Canadian Forces members on crews on Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft, which served to guide fighter jets and bombers in airstrikes. Canada also provided airspace to US war planes transporting soldiers to Iraq, which regularly stopped in Newfoundland to refuel and switch crews.

Canada also had a significant role in determining the course of the war in Iraq. In February 2003 during the lead up to the invasion of Iraq, Canada transferred 25 military planners to the US military’s forward command post in Qatar in the Persian Gulf. In 2004, Canadian Brigadier General Walter Natynczyk (former Canadian Chief of Defence Staff) was deputy chief of policy, strategy and planning in Iraq, with 35,000 US, British and Australian troops under his command.

Another way that Canada is truly part of the war machine, is by the production of weapons and arms. Canada was the largest foreign supplier of arms to the US for the war in Iraq. In 2004 Canadian corporation SNC-Lavalin had a 5-year contract to supply the US Army with 300-500 million bullets per year. The most recent controversy is Canada’s \$15 billion deal to supply Saudi Arabia with Light Armoured Vehicles, which despite the deceptive name are a full-fledged, weaponized military machine. The new Liberal government is still going forward with this deal, despite the government’s own rules to curb shipments to countries with a ‘persistent record of serious violations of the human rights of their citizens.’ It is no secret that Saudi Arabia is one of the worst violators of human rights.

### 13 years of war in Iraq

The propaganda machines do a great job of selling the new war in Iraq as a necessary fight against Daesh. But we have 13 years of the war in Iraq to see that the US-led war has brought unimagined death and destruction to Iraq. Over 1 million Iraqis were killed as a result of the Iraq war, according to British polling group Opinion Research Business. Health indicators plummeted following the Iraq war, especially in areas where the US army used depleted uranium which has caused horrific birth defects, high cancer rates and environmental devastation. The World Health Organization has estimated that 70 percent of Iraqis lack access to clean water and 80 percent lack proper sanitation. Before the 2003 invasion, school enrollment rates were nearly 100%. By September 2006, only 30% of Iraq’s 3.5 million students were enrolled in school. These statistics could go on and on, but the war in Iraq didn’t only cause Iraq to have every standard of life worsen. Instability, poverty and sectarianism under US occupation fueled the rise of extremist groups such as Daesh. Now the US and their imperialist allies have a new excuse to carry on another war in Iraq. They have created their own enemy in order to bomb the country again, now in the name of fighting Daesh. While the US and their imperialist allies in Iraq claim to not hit civilian targets, in August 2015 The Guardian reported findings of 52 airstrikes in this new war in Iraq which have killed more than 450 civilians, including 100 children.

### The new era of war and occupation

The new era of war and occupation, beginning with the war in Afghanistan in 2001 to now, has reduced countries to chaos and destruction to the point that they are unlivable. It is imperialist forces such as the US, Canada, Britain and their allies that have caused the world’s worst refugee crisis since World War II. Refugees have made the dangerous journey to Europe from Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Palestine – all countries which have been plagued by the imperialist wars and occupations. While Canada, the US and European countries try to shift the blame, they must take responsibility for this massive human tragedy by opening the doors to refugees and furthermore, by stopping their wars and occupations abroad, the cause for refugees to leave their homelands in the first place.

In a few pages we have given just an overview into the bloody hands the government of Canada has in Iraq, which they are experts at hiding behind words such as “training” “non-combat” and “advising”. For peace and justice loving people in Canada especially, it is our job to hold the government of Canada to account for these crimes and to demand that they end any involvement whatsoever in war and occupation.

Canada out of Iraq!

No to war and occupation!

Yes to self-determination!

Source: [www.firethistime.net](http://www.firethistime.net)