

# Hillary Clinton calls for escalation of US war in Syria, Iraq

By Bill Van Auken  
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In a major foreign policy address Thursday, Democratic presidential frontrunner Hillary Clinton advocated a sharp escalation of the US military intervention in the Middle East in the name of destroying the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Speaking before the Council on Foreign Relations, an influential New York-based think tank led by ex-State Department and military-intelligence officials, Clinton, who served as President Barack Obama's secretary of state from 2009 to 2013, cast herself as significantly more belligerent than Obama in pursuing the aims of American imperialism in the region.

She advocated the imposition of a no-fly zone—an act of war—over northern Syria, saying that Washington must “clear the air of the bombing attacks carried out by the Syrian military, now supplemented by the Russians.”

The call for the no-fly zone represented Clinton's clearest opposition to the policies of the incumbent Democratic president. At a press conference on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Antalya, Turkey on Monday, Obama described any attempt to create such a zone as “counterproductive,” adding that such a zone could be set up only by means of US “ground operations.”

Clinton called for the immediate deployment of US special forces troops in Syria and preparations for augmenting the limited numbers of these forces approved by the Obama administration. She also stated her support for a major escalation of the ongoing airstrikes in Syria.

Declaring that the aftermath of the Paris terrorist attacks was “no time to be scoring political points,” Clinton set out to do just that, employing the political tactic of “triangulation” made famous by her husband, adopting a more aggressive militarist posture than

Obama while criticizing Republicans for their demands that Syrian refugees be barred from the US, or that only Christians be admitted.

The speech was the second major foreign policy address delivered by Clinton in the last two months. In September, at the Brookings Institution in Washington, she made an equally bellicose pledge to prepare for the use of military force against Iran should the nuclear deal concluded by the Obama administration fail to achieve US strategic objectives in the region.

Clinton's remarks Thursday came in the context of a lurch to the right by the entire US ruling establishment, which is exploiting the Paris attacks to further the escalation of militarism abroad and police state measures at home.

As she spoke on Thursday, the US House of Representatives passed legislation requiring a vetting process that would include individual approval by the FBI, Department of Homeland Security and Director of National Intelligence for every Syrian refugee admitted to the US, a procedure that would effectively halt the trickle of refugees presently being admitted. Nearly 50 Democrats joined Republicans in approving the measure, which Obama has vowed to veto.

Obama, meanwhile, invoked the Paris attacks as a reason why his long-delayed promise to close down the US detention camp at the Guantanamo naval base in Cuba would now become harder than ever to fulfill.

In a question and answer period following her speech, Clinton described her policy as “an intensification and acceleration” of the policies currently pursued by the Obama administration.

“We should be sending more special operators, we should be empowering our trainers in Iraq, we should be...leading an air coalition, using both fighter planes and drones” against a “broader target set.”

She added that the 3,500 troops that Obama has deployed to Iraq should be given “greater freedom of movement and flexibility,” i.e., they should be sent into combat with Iraqi government units.

Clinton also advocated stepped-up arming of Sunni and Kurdish forces in Iraq to fight ISIS, with or without the consent of the Shiite-dominated central government, warning, “if Baghdad won’t do that, the coalition should do so directly.”

She also proposed a policy to “retool and ramp up our efforts to equip viable Syrian opposition efforts,” while virtually in the same breath declaring, “There is not going to be a successful military effort at this point to overturn Assad,” and that regime change now could only be effected through a “political process.”

In the question and answer period, Clinton said that she disagreed with Obama on Syria, believing that the administration could have done “more earlier to try and identify indigenous Syrian fighters, and adding, “We could have done more to help them in their fight against Assad.”

In reality, Clinton at the time was warning Congress that US arms sent into Syria could end up in the hands of Al Qaeda. Massive amounts of arms were funneled into these forces by Washington’s principal regional allies—Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar—under the supervision of the CIA.

In a brief moment of discomfort for the Democratic candidate, she was asked to respond to a statement by Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump that US regime change operations in Iraq and Libya had only created disasters. Her response: “It’s too soon to tell.”

More than 13 years after then-Senator Hillary Clinton voted for a US war of aggression against Iraq based upon lies about weapons of mass destruction, presidential candidate Clinton insists that the jury is still out on this criminal war, which slaughtered hundreds of thousands and turned millions into refugees.

She attempted to put a positive spin on Libya, where she played a leading role in promoting the US-NATO war for regime change, using Al Qaeda-linked militias as a proxy ground force, and then obscenely gloated over the lynch mob murder of Muammar Gaddafi: “We came, we saw, he died.”

The Libyan people, she said, “voted twice in free

and fair elections for the kind of leadership they want.”

What nonsense! Libya now has two rival governments, neither of them legitimate and neither of them in full control even of the provinces where they are based, to say nothing of the rest of the country. The economy and every social institution are in ruins, civil war rages between well-armed rival militias, and ISIS has expanded its grip from the city of Sirte to surrounding areas.

Clinton bears substantial guilt for the horrors that US imperialism has inflicted upon the Middle East over the past decade and a half. Her appearance Thursday made it clear that, if elected, she will only seek to “intensify and accelerate” this murderous operation.

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