

Sixteen years after 9/11: lies, hypocrisy and militarism

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The sixteenth anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks that killed more than 2,900 people in the United States were marked once again on Monday with ceremonies at the site of the World Trade Center's demolished Twin Towers, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania where one of four hijacked planes crashed as passengers fought to regain control of the aircraft.

Thousands gathered in New York City for the solemn reading of the names of those who lost their lives to a criminal and reactionary terrorist attack that served only the interests of US and world imperialism, which ever since have exploited the events to justify wars of aggression and attacks on democratic rights the world over.

The genuine emotions of sorrow and remembrance shared by those who lost loved ones on 9/11 once again stood in sharp contrast to the banality and hypocrisy of the official commemorations staged by US officials.

This longstanding dichotomy reached a new level with the main speech of the day delivered by the fascistic billionaire con-man President Donald Trump at the Pentagon Monday. Trump, whose first reaction on the day of the attacks was to brag—falsely—that the toppling of the Twin Towers had made his own property at 40 Wall Street the tallest building in lower Manhattan, delivered remarks that consisted of barely warmed-over platitudes from previous addresses, repeated tributes to the American flag and a vow to “defend our country against barbaric forces of evil and destruction.”

Trump repeated the well-worn cliché that on September 11 “our whole world changed.” The phrase is meant to suggest that the unending wars, police state measures and sweeping changes in American political life over the past 16 years have all been carried out in response to the supposedly unforeseen and

unforeseeable events of September 11, having nothing to do with anything that came before.

That this is a cynical and self-serving lie becomes clearer with every passing year.

On the eve of the anniversary, new revelations emerged linking Saudi Arabia, Washington's closest ally in the Arab world, to the preparation of the September 11 attacks, in which 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudi citizens. The corporate media, which published nothing of any significance on the anniversary, largely blacked out this new evidence. The *New York Times* marked the anniversary with an editorial detailing efforts by the New York City medical examiner to identify human remains.

A federal lawsuit on behalf of the families of some 1,400 of the 9/11 victims has presented evidence that the Saudi embassy in Washington financed what was apparently a “dry run” for the 9/11 attacks in 1999. Two Saudi agents posing as students boarded an America West flight from Phoenix to Washington, D.C. with tickets paid for by the Saudi embassy. The lawsuit states that both men had trained in Al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan with some of the 9/11 hijackers. While on the flight, the two asked flight attendants technical questions about the plane that raised suspicions and twice attempted to enter the cockpit, leading the pilot to carry out an emergency landing in Ohio. Both men were detained and questioned by the FBI, which decided not to pursue any prosecution.

This is only the latest in a long series of revelations that have made it abundantly clear that the events of 9/11 could never have taken place without substantial logistical support from high places. Despite the repeated claims that the attacks “changed everything,” there has never been an independent and objective investigations into how they were carried out. And, despite being what is ostensibly the most catastrophic

intelligence failure in American history, no one was ever held accountable with so much as a firing or a demotion.

What evidence has emerged makes it clear that the 9/11 hijackers were able to freely enter the country and attend flight schools despite the fact that a number of those involved had been subjects of surveillance by the CIA and FBI for as long as two years before the attack. Two of them actually lived in the home of an FBI informant.

Twenty-eight pages of heavily redacted documents released in 2016 after being concealed from the public for 13 years established that Saudi intelligence officers funneled substantial amounts of money to the hijackers in the run-up to the 9/11 attacks, while assisting them with finding housing as well as flight schools to attend.

While Saudi Arabia was the government most active in carrying out the September 11 attacks, the involvement of Saudi intelligence really means the involvement of a section of the American state apparatus. This is not a matter of conspiracy theories, but established fact. It is bound up with very real conspiracies involving the CIA, Afghanistan and Al Qaeda going back to the Islamist group's founding as an arm of Washington's dirty war against the Soviet-backed government of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Far from the attacks having "changed everything," they provided the pretext for acts of military aggression long in preparation. In the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union a decade earlier, the ruling class initiated a policy developed to use US military might to offset the decline of American capitalism on the world arena. Afghanistan and Iraq were targeted to secure military dominance over two major oil- and gas-producing regions on the planet, the Caspian Basin and the Middle East.

This thoroughly criminal enterprise, justified in the name of 9/11's victims, has claimed the lives of over 1 million Iraqis and hundreds of thousands of Afghans and unleashed the greatest refugee crisis since the Second World War.

The invocation of a "war on terror"—passed down from Bush to Obama and now to Trump—to justify these crimes has become not only threadbare, but patently absurd. The results of 16 years of uninterrupted US wars of aggression have included an unprecedented growth of Al Qaeda and related Islamist

militias, largely as a result of US imperialism's utilization of these elements as proxy ground forces in wars for regime change in Libya and Syria.

Moreover, the multiple wars and interventions conducted by the Pentagon and the CIA, from North Africa to Central Asia, can quickly metastasize into a global conflagration, with Washington simultaneously threatening nuclear war against North Korea and pursuing increasingly dangerous confrontations with its principal geo-strategic rivals, Russia and China.

September 11 did not "change everything," but it did mark the beginning of an escalation of what George W. Bush called the "wars of the twenty-first century," that is, escalating imperialist aggression that is leading mankind toward a third world war.

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