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Iraq Embassy Attack Illustrates Dangers of Continued Interventionism

Fortunately, the recent attack on America's embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, ended without loss of life that occurred in the Benghazi situation during the Obama administration and the humiliation of the Teheran hostage crisis during the presidency of Jimmy Carter. On Tuesday, about 6,000 pro-Iranian Shiite militia stormed the embassy, setting fires and chanting, "Death to America." They destroyed a reception area, smashed windows and sprayed graffiti on walls.



In the end, however, as President Donald Trump dispatched additional U.S. forces to the region, and U.S. Marines arrived to defend the embassy, using tear gas, the militia fighters opted to withdraw.

But the attack inside the supposedly well-protected "Green Zone" of Iraq on the \$750 million American embassy illustrates the dangers of intervening in an area of the world where it is difficult to differentiate between friend and foe.

One of the leaders of the assault on the embassy by Kataeb Hezbollah (a faction of the pro-Iranian Popular Mobilization Forces, which stormed the embassy) is Hadi al Amiri, a former minister of transport with then-Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, who was actually a guest of President Barack Obama in the Oval Office in December 2011. Amiri is considered a leading figure in the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) that invaded the embassy. Amiri is also believed to have helped Iran ship arms to Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, now a target for removal by the United States and many other countries in and out of the region. Yet, in the past Assad was seen as somewhat of an ally of the United States. (Syria sided with the United States in 1991 when the first Bush administration formed a coalition to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait.)

For that matter, the United States and Iran were recently on the same side in the campaigns against ISIS. The Iranians helped mobilize thousands of Iraqi Shiite militia in 2014, while the United States provided aid to the Iraqi government to fight and destroy the ISIS terrorist group. The Trump administration declared victory over ISIS in December 2017.

The withdrawal of the Iranian-backed militia from the U.S. embassy certainly does not end the threat of future assaults on American interests there. The present government of Iraq is very sympathetic to Iran, and the PMF forces easily made it past Iraqi government forces, whose job it is to protect foreign embassies in the Green Zone. In contrast, protesters against the close relationship between the Iraq government and Iran have had no success in getting past Iraqi forces into the Green Zone. In fact, hundreds of them have been killed by Iraqi security forces in their efforts to do so.

The Shiite-run PMF assault on the U.S. embassy fits in with the deterioration of relations between the United States and the Shiite-run government of Iran. Since President Trump withdrew from the 2015 Obama-signed Iran nuclear deal, followed by the imposition of sanctions on Iran — targeting their oil



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and banking economic sectors — the Iranian regime has become increasingly hostile to the United States. In May of 2019, four oil tankers, including two belonging to Saudi Arabia, were attacked in the Gulf of Oman, almost certainly at the instigation of Iran's government.

This was followed in June 2019 by Iran shooting down an American surveillance drone over the Strait of Hormuz. Trump considered, but finally rejected, launching airstrikes on Iran in retaliation.

The present rise of tensions was precipitated by the killing of a U.S. contractor working in Iraq, during a rocket attack by Kataeb Hezbollah. In retaliation, the United States conducted air strikes against the Iranian-backed militia over the weekend, killing 25 of their members.

Despite the militia group's decision to pull away from the U.S. embassy, Mohammed Mohy, a spokesman for Kataeb Hezbollah essentially claimed victory, claiming that they did not withdraw because of "news that America will bring Marines. On the contrary, this shows a psychological defeat and a big mental breakdown that the American administration is suffering from."

On Thursday, the United States dispatched hundreds of soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division, bound for Kuwait, which borders Iraq. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper explained, "At the direction of the Commander in Chief, I have authorized the deployment of an infantry battalion from the Immediate Response Force (IRF) of the 82nd Airborne Division to the U.S. Central Command area of operations in response to recent events in Iraq. Approximately 750 soldiers will deploy to the region immediately, and additional forces from the IRF are prepared to deploy over the next several days."

Espy added, "This deployment is an appropriate and precautionary action taken in response to increased threat levels against U.S. personnel and facilities, such as we witnessed in Baghdad today. The United States will protect our people and interests anywhere they are found around the world."

But just what are the "interests" of the United States "around the world?" And why are Americans "around the world" needing protection?

In 2003, the Bush administration made the decision to overthrow Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, no doubt a brutal ruler. (Sadly, Hussein was just one member in the world's "club" of brutal dictators.) This move destabilized the region, removing Iraq as a counter-weight to the authoritarian Iranian regime that now dominates Iraq. Despite Hussein's documented brutality, he did not attempt to impose religious conformity on his country. With him gone, the Christian community inside Iraq has been persecuted relentlessly, and intra-Islamic fighting has been rampant between the Shiites and the Sunnis.

Those who favored the intervention into Iraq (and now agitate for the overthrow of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad) argued that America could make Iraq a "showcase for democracy" in the Middle East. They were the intellectual heirs to those in the Kennedy administration who believed Vietnam could be made a "showcase for democracy" in Asia.

As the present tensions in Iraq demonstrate, however, the best way to protect American "interests" and its people in the region is not to build \$750 million embassies in such boiling cauldrons as found in Iraq. Perhaps it is time to give non-intervention a chance as a better way to protect American "interests."

Image of attack: [Screenshot of video by the U.S. Department of Defense](#)

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