

Anti-Imperialist News Service

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New U.S. Attacks and Pressure Against Syria

On October 1, senior members of the Bush administration met to prepare plans for increased military attacks against Syria.

Amongst other options, the Pentagon is preparing Special Operations forces to carry out strikes inside Syria. In fact, several U.S. officials report that such units have begun intelligence-gathering missions on Syrian territory (see NYT, 10/14-05). Already U.S. forces have repeatedly attacked Syrian troops in "cross-border" operations. In addition, the U.S. is trying to drum up support for international economic sanctions as a way to weaken the current Syrian government.

The U.S. tries to justify this aggression by blaming Syria for the "infiltration of foreign fighters" into Iraq. In an October 6 speech, Bush referred to Syria by saying that the U.S. did not distinguish between those who committed acts of terrorism and those who supported or harbored the perpetrators. Again, Bush has appointed himself the Grand Inquisitor with the power to judge and execute the peoples of the world.

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Democrats and Republicans Request Billions More for Iraq War

On October 7, the U.S. Senate voted 97-0 to provide President Bush with \$445 billion in military spending, including \$50 billion more for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Senate bill added \$5 billion more to a similar bill already passed by the House.

A report by the Congressional Research Service stated that the Pentagon is currently spending about \$6 billion a month for Iraq and \$1 billion for Afghanistan. Since 2001, more than \$350 billion has been directly spent on these two wars.

This latest military appropriation shows that, despite the massive opposition of the American people and the ever-growing Iraqi resistance, the U.S. government plans to continue and escalate the war. This vote also reveals, for the millionth time, that the war is a bipartisan policy carried out by the Republicans and Democrats.

U. S. to Hold More War "Games" in the Philippines

Over 4,500 U.S. troops and about 700 Philippine soldiers will take part in two weeks of joint military exercises starting on October 16th, on the main northern island of Luzon, and in military camps outside Manila.

These war-games, named "Talon Vision," will involve joint amphibious landings and other operations to "improve the interoperability of the two armed forces...and aim at improving the combat readiness of U.S. and Philippine troops," according to Pentagon officials.

Over the last few years, the U.S. has steadily increased its military presence and direct intervention in the Philippines as part of its so-called "war against terrorism." U.S. and Phil-

ippine forces engage in regular "training exercises" and U.S. military advisers take an active role in counter-insurgency operations. Hundreds of U.S. troops have been actively engaged in combat operations in the southern Philippines.

The U.S. military buildup and direct, armed intervention in the Philippines aim both at suppressing the independence movement and popular struggles of the people as well as strengthening the Philippines as a major U.S. military base in Asia.

Such war games are widely opposed by the Filipino people and are seen as an assault on Filipino sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Churches Using Economic Pressure Against Israeli Occupation

The following article is excerpted from an article by Adri Nieuwhof which appeared in "The Electronic Intifada" on October 2, 2005.

On 21 February of this year, the 150 member Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) encouraged member churches to give serious consideration to economic measures as a new way to work for peace. The WCC encouraged their members to explore ways not to participate economically in illegal activities related to the Israeli occupation.

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of approximately 345 churches from Christian traditions in more than 120 countries. The recommendation was brought to the attention of all the member churches and their management in relation to the organization's own investments. The WCC commended the action of the US Presbyterian Church in initiating a process of phased, selective divestment from multinational corporations involved in the occupation of Palestinian Territories.

Sabeel, a Palestinian Christian peace advocacy organization, followed this development in April with a further call for economic pressure on Israel. In their report, "A Nonviolent Response to the Occupation: a Call for Morally Responsible Investment", Sabeel clarified why these measures were justified.

Further, on 9 July 2005, marking the occasion of the first anniversary of the ICJ judgement on Israel's Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, 173 Palestinian political parties, unions, associations, coalitions and organizations issued a call for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until it complied with international law and universal principles of human rights.

Church activities gain momentum

Prior to this major call for boycotts from Palestinian organizations, in June 2005, the New England Annual Conference of United Methodists passed a resolution calling for voluntary, selective divestment from companies involved in the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. A committee was to be formed to prepare a list of such companies within half a year. The Methodist Churches and the New England Conference will later be urged to consider divesting from these companies.

In the same month, the Anglican Consultative Council, a committee of the 75 million-member Anglican Communion, unanimously passed a resolution commending its member churches to consider divesting from companies supporting the occupation of Palestine. The Kenyan Anglican Church announced on 5 July that it backed the call for divestment.

In July 2005, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ (UCC) voted to consider various forms of economic leverage - including divestment - to promote peace. It also called for the Israeli government to stop construction and to "tear down" the Wall. The UCC has 1.3 million members and 5,700 congregations.

Presbyterian Church

In August 2005, the Presbyterian Church of the USA announced five companies that had been selected on the basis of

set criteria as the focus of a divestment campaign. The criteria included activities and products of corporations used to: support and maintain the occupation; establish, expand, or maintain Israeli settlements; support or facilitate violent acts by Israelis or Palestinians against innocent civilians; support or facilitate the construction of the Separation Barrier. The Presbyterian Church will enter into a process of "progressive engagement" with Caterpillar, Citigroup, ITT Industries, Motorola, and United Technologies.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), at its assembly in August approved of a resolution which "urges ELCA to move toward stewarding financial resources - both U.S. tax dollars and private funds - in ways that support the quest for a just peace in the Holy Land."

Finally, the Episcopal Church will consider issuing a resolution on economic leverage regarding Israel and Palestine on the agenda at its coming national assemblies.

WCC on Gaza withdrawal

On 22 August, the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs issued a press release with background information on how to evaluate the Gaza withdrawal. For instance, it formulated its concerns that Gaza land, sea and air links remain open to the outside world, especially to the West Bank. Further, it questioned: how many settlers would resettle within Israel's pre-1967 borders; the route of Israel's barriers versus Palestinian land and water rights and whether Palestinians would have free access to their communities in East Jerusalem while Israel assured the security of its citizens in accordance with international law. Furthermore, it expressed a desire to see construction stop on the barrier wall and that the hundreds of checkpoints and barriers within the occupied territories be removed.

The statement shows that the WCC is looking at the withdrawal from Gaza in the broader context of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and Israel's violation of international law.

It is clear that the withdrawal from Gaza does not provide a reason to ease the pressure. The churches would be urged to continue their efforts towards peace in the Middle East with the tool of economic pressure. The American churches should inspire their colleagues in Europe to follow in their footsteps.

Syria (continued from page 1)

Of course, all the talk about "terrorism" is a transparent attempt to hide U.S. terror and aggression against both Iraq and Syria. In Syria, the real goal of the U.S. is to force that country to accept U.S. dictates or face "regime change." Amongst other things, the U.S. demands that Syria stop its political support for the Palestinian resistance movement and such groups as Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Since beginning its "war on terrorism," U.S. imperialism has, in fact, been dreaming of its direct take-over of Syria. The possibility of a fullscale U.S. invasion is a real danger.