GlobalResearch
Center for Research on Globalization

Crimes of US Imperialism and the Fall of Mosul to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

By Bill Van Auken
Global Research, June 12, 2014
World Socialist Web Site

Region: Middle East & North Africa
Theme: Crimes against Humanity, Terrorism
In-depth Report: IRAQ REPORT

The fall of Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), a group from which even Al Qaeda has broken because of its excessive violence and sectarian fanaticism, constitutes a searing indictment of the crimes carried out by US imperialism in Iraq and throughout the Middle East.

The overrunning of Mosul on Tuesday has been followed by the capture of Tikrit, the hometown of Saddam Hussein, as well as parts of both Samara—barely 75 miles from Baghdad—and Kirkuk to the north. Troops of an Iraqi army created by the US at the cost of some $20 billion have melted away, their commanders first, stripping off their uniforms and throwing down their weapons.

It was reported late Wednesday that Iraqi government special forces troops were forming a defensive line 20 miles north of Baghdad in anticipation of an assault on the capital.

Over half a million people have fled the fighting in Mosul, described by one aid agency as "one of the largest and swiftest mass movements of people in the world in recent memory."

This city, like the rest of Iraq, was devastated by the US war and occupation that began in 2003. Its infrastructure was destroyed and whatever reconstruction efforts took place were mismanaged exercises in corruption that did little to ease the suffering of the population. The city's professionals—doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, journalists and scientists—were either killed or forced to flee for their lives.

A sectarian civil war ignited by the US occupation's divide-and-conquer strategy wrecked the multi-ethnic character of the city, as Sunni, Shia, Kurdish, Assyrian and other populations were driven out of areas where they constituted minorities in a bloody exercise in "ethnic cleansing."

This sectarian policy has been continued under the Iraqi regime of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the leader of a Shia religious-based political party, who was installed under the American occupation. Jailing, exiling and killing prominent Sunni politicians and treating any opposition to his rule among the Sunni population as "terrorism," Maliki has increased the desperation of the population of predominantly Sunni Anbar province, creating a base of support for elements such as ISIS.

The reaction of the US media to the debacle in Iraq has been dominated by stunned disbelief combined with questions as to how this could have happened after all of the

"sacrifices" made by the United States—4,500 troops killed and tens of thousands of wounded, along with trillions of dollars spent.

What hypocrisy! The catastrophe unfolding in Iraq is the direct product of the crimes—both past and present—carried out by US imperialism in its attempt to assert its hegemony over the Middle East and its massive energy reserves.

The US invaded Iraq in March 2003 on the pretext that the regime of Saddam Hussein was developing "weapons of mass destruction" and cementing ties to Al Qaeda, which supposedly raised the imminent threat of a nuclear 9/11.

As the entire world now knows, this pretext was a lie from start to finish. There were no WMDs, and Saddam's regime, whatever its crimes, was secular and opposed to Al Qaeda, which had no presence in Iraq until the US invaded and devastated the country.

The crimes carried out under Bush in Iraq—leading to over one million Iraqi deaths and the destruction of an entire society—have been followed by those of the Obama administration in Libya and Syria, where US imperialism has fostered and armed proxy forces based on Sunni Islamist and Al Qaeda-linked elements to wage wars for regime-change. One result has been an immense strengthening of these forces throughout the region.

These wars have been based on the "war on terrorism" narrative used by the Bush administration and still employed by the Obama White House as a justification for global militarism. Wars launched in response to a terrorist attack carried out by 19 individuals—15 of them Saudis—who were allowed to enter the US and hijack airplanes, have now led to the creation of a de facto Al Qaeda state that straddles the Iraq-Syria border and stretches from Aleppo, near the Mediterranean Sea in the west, toward the border with Iran in the east.

The Obama administration has made the overthrow of the Assad regime in Damascus a central US policy objective. It suffered a humiliating setback last year when it was forced to back down from plans to launch US air strikes on Syria in the face of overwhelming popular opposition at home, internal divisions among policy makers, and lack of support from its principal imperialist ally, Britain. Instead, it was compelled to accept a Russian-brokered plan to secure Syria's chemical disarmament and start talks between the Assad regime and the so-called "rebels."

The result has been a series of strategic reversals for the US-backed "rebels" in Syria, who are dominated by Islamist Sunni militias, including ISIS. Washington is desperate to change the situation on the ground.

There has been an increasingly intense debate within ruling circles over the arming of the "rebels," with the former US ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, writing a column for Wednesday's *New York Times* urging the provision of mortars, rockets and surface-to-air missiles to "moderates" among the Islamist-led militias, as well as placing them directly on the US payroll. Of course, Ford, like other US officials, claims that such aid to the "moderates"—whose organizations are never named—would serve as well to isolate the Al Qaeda-linked elements. This caveat, however, is meant merely to cover up the real criminality of US operations, in which these very elements play the decisive role.

While official Washington publicly wrings its hands over the fall of Mosul, the effect of this development on the US proxy war in Syria may not be all that unwelcome within sections of

the US military and intelligence apparatus.

The fall of Iraqi military stockpiles to ISIS has provided one of the most dramatic increases in the firepower of the forces seeking to topple the Syrian government since the US-backed civil war began. Hundreds of armored vehicles have been captured—enough to outfit a full armored division, according to one source. ISIS has overrun the Mosul airport, gaining access to military helicopters and other aircraft. Huge amounts of arms and ammunition have been seized, and virtually all of it is being sent back across the border into Syria. Thousands of Islamist prisoners have been freed from Iraqi jails to go and fight there.

The demand to provide US arms to the "rebels" has been largely met in practice by the developments in Mosul. The result will be a further escalation of the bloodbath in Syria.

In every case where Washington attempts to utilize militarism to advance US imperialism's interests and offset the economic decline of American capitalism, it is the masses of people who suffer, from the millions killed and displaced in nearly nine years of US war and occupation in Iraq, to the carnage unleashed on the people of Syria, and now the turning of a half a million impoverished residents of Mosul into homeless refugees.

No one has been held accountable for these actions, which indisputably constitute war crimes. Those responsible include not only George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and others in the previous administration. Both major political parties, the media, the corporations and every American institution are responsible for the lies that have pervaded US policy—both foreign and domestic—for the past decade and a half. All of the criminal policies under Bush—aggressive war, torture—have been continued and deepened by the Obama administration. With its "pivot" to Asia and coup in Ukraine, it is preparing military confrontation with Russia and China and laying the groundwork for a nuclear Third World War.

The original source of this article is World Socialist Web Site
Copyright © Bill Van Auken, World Socialist Web Site, 2014

Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page

Become a Member of Global Research

Articles by: Bill Van Auken

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca