

The Forever War in Iraq

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The New York Times [reports](#) that U.S. “retaliatory” strikes in Iraq ended up killing regular Iraqi soldiers and policemen and one civilian:

Iraqi military officials strongly condemned the United States military on Friday for airstrikes launched overnight that they said killed three Iraqi soldiers, two police officers and a civilian worker, and damaged an unfinished civilian airport.

American officials said on Friday that the strikes had hit sites where rockets and other weapons were stored by an Iranian-backed militia, Kataib Hezbollah. But according to multiple Iraqi military officials, who so far have been largely supportive of the U.S. role in Iraq, the bombings killed members of the Iraqi military and police. It was not clear whether they had killed any Kataib Hezbollah fighters.

The U.S. is carrying out attacks inside Iraqi territory against Iraqis in blatant violation of that country’s sovereignty. In this case, it appears that the strikes didn’t even hit the intended targets, but killed several people that had absolutely nothing to do with the rocket attack earlier this week. The Iraqi government is once again predictably furious that our government is committing acts of war that kill their people. A statement from Iraq’s military command denounced the attack:

In a statement released on Friday morning, the Iraqi Joint Command described the attack as “an aggression” that “targeted Iraqi military institutions violating the principal of partnership” between the Iraqi security forces and the Americans.

This attack “cost the lives of Iraqi fighters while they were doing their military duty,” the statement said.

The U.S. claims to value the Iraqi government as a partner, but in practice our government treats them as if they are a colony or protectorate. Our forces attack and kill some of their troops, and when they object we tell them that it was their fault for being there. The head of Central Command blew off Iraqi complaints as arrogantly as possible:

He and other American military officials were dismissive of the Iraqi complaints given that Iraqi soldiers and police officers are often located on bases with Iranian-backed militias like Kataib Hezbollah.

“I don’t know whether the Iraqis are happy or unhappy,” General McKenzie said. “These locations that we struck are clear locations of terrorist bases. If

Iraqi military forces were there, I would say it's probably not a good idea to position yourself with Kataib Hezbollah in the wake of a strike that killed Americans and coalition members."

It takes extraordinary gall to lecture the Iraqis like this when these are their bases in their own country. Iraqi military forces are there because it is their base. Calling it a "terrorist base" may make McKenzie feel better, but it doesn't change the fact that our forces are attacking Iraqi forces on their soil against the wishes of their government. We commit acts of aggression against them and then berate them for daring to say anything about it.

U.S. forces have been bombing and killing Iraqis for most of my lifetime. It is insane that the U.S. is still engaged in hostilities in the same country almost thirty years after Desert Storm. The official reasons for these attacks change, but the results are the same: more dead Americans and Iraqis. These strikes serve no discernible American interest. Our military presence in Iraq is unwanted, but it is also unnecessary for U.S. security. Keeping troops there just makes them targets for no good reason. The U.S. has no vital interests there and nothing that warrants a continued military presence. The U.S. has been waging a forever war in Iraq for decades, and it [needs to end](#) before any more lives are lost.

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