

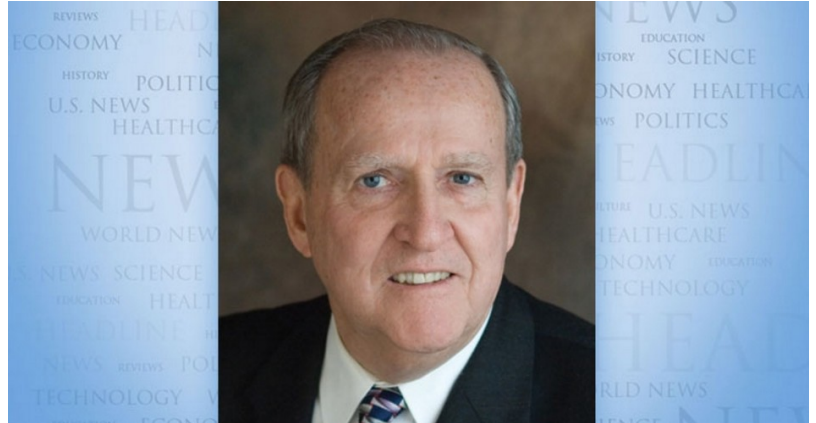


Written by [John F. McManus](#) on April 29, 2016

Yes, the Troops Going to Syria Will Be Wearing Boots

For many years, prominent leaders in the U.S. government have worked to get our country into wars. They seem to know that war always means more government, and they likely also realize that war speeds moral decline which paves the way for assumption of even more power.

Early in his presidency, Barack Obama promised to end America's involvement in Middle Eastern wars, even to reduce America's military presence in the region. Those promises didn't last long.



The U.S. Constitution is very clear about the need for a congressional declaration of war to send U.S. forces into any conflict. That requirement has been in the dustbin of history ever since it was last employed in 1941 immediately after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. Significantly, the struggle known as World War II is the last conflict America won.

Congressional inability or unwillingness to demand adherence to the Constitution's war-making clause led to congressional passage of the War Powers Act in 1973. It said that a president must ask Congress to approve his use of our nation's forces when he wants to or when he already has sent them into any conflict. It was a weak attempt to address government's misuse of military might, and it clearly amounts to congressional willingness to ignore what the Constitution states. But even it has been ignored as recent presidents have obtained authorization for [war from the United Nations](#).

Over the past five years, Obama has sent military trainers to [aid rebel forces in Syria](#) and he has approved [air strikes against ISIS](#) and its control of a portion of that embattled nation. But he has repeatedly stated that he would not put "American boots on the ground in Syria."

In September 2014, Obama said he would continue the airstrikes and expand the battle against ISIS. Air strikes are clearly a tactic of war. But he firmly maintained, "We will not get dragged into another ground war in Iraq." After the terrorist attacks in Europe and America, he announced sending an additional 250 U.S. troops to Syria. "They're not going to be leading the fight on the ground," he insisted. "But they will be essential in providing training and assisting local forces."

Somehow, those 250 additional members of the U.S. military are not to be considered combatants participating in a war zone. What should they do if the forces of ISIS attack them? Or if one of the rebel groups seeking to overthrow Syria's government attacks them? Can they fight back? Shouldn't they expect to be targeted? What will be America's response be if some are killed or wounded? Might the presence of U.S. military forces in this area encourage more terrorist attacks against our nation and others?

"No boots on the ground in Syria," said Obama numerous times. Yet, the 250 who are joining other "trainers" in Syria will surely be wearing boots. And the potential for more Americans to be sent into this region grows almost daily. This piecemeal approach is how the Vietnam War started and grew so greatly before being lost.



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Our nation seems to be heading into another conflict with no constitutional declaration of war. If combatting the military forces of ISIS with U.S. troops is deemed necessary, the only way to proceed is to declare war and then win it. Don't seek authorization from the UN. Don't play semantic games with the lives of those who serve in our nation's military.

Wars should be won, not dragged out with half-measures, political jargon, and a clear unwillingness to rely on the U.S. Constitution. If military action is called for, only a clear intention to declare war with an intention to win is acceptable. The only other course would be to cease having the U.S. be the policeman of the world, bring the troops home from the more than 100 nations where they currently are, start minding only America's business, and [Get US OUT! of the United Nations](#).



John F. McManus is president emeritus of [The John Birch Society](#). This column appeared originally at the [insideJBS blog](#) and is reprinted here with permission.



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