



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on March 10, 2017

Obama Redux? Trump Sends Marines, Rangers Into Syria

President Trump has deployed Marines attached to the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit and soldiers from the U.S. Army's 75th Ranger Regiment to Syria to intensify the assault of American-backed forces on Raqqa, the capital city of the Islamic State (ISIS).

The precise number of Marines and Rangers involved has not been released by the Pentagon, nor has the timing of their deployment been revealed. According to various news reports, the American units began deployment to Syria several weeks ago. The websites of the Departments of Defense and State, as well as those of the Army and Marines, do not mention the actions. Spokesmen for the DOD and DOS did not get back to The New American with additional information before our publishing deadline.



News of the move first appeared yesterday in the *Washington Post*, which [reported](#) that the new Marine mission "was disclosed after members of the Army's elite 75th Ranger Regiment appeared in the Syrian city of Manbij over the weekend in Strykers — heavily armed, eight-wheel armored vehicles. Defense officials said they are there to discourage Syrian or Turkish troops from making any moves that could shift the focus away from an assault on Islamic State militants."

"A defense official would not speak to the size of the detachment deployed to Syria, but said it included elements of multiple artillery batteries, as well as support personnel, including infantry Marines," *Military.com* reported today. "It's the first time American artillery support capability has been on the ground in Syria since the fight against the Islamic State began in 2014."

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The *Military.com* report continued:

The Marines are equipped with M777 155mm howitzers, which can fire high-explosive rounds, effective at a range of more than 14 miles, or GPS-guided Excalibur rounds, which have an effective radius of up to 25 miles. They are there to provide capabilities for the commanders of the joint task force leading the ISIS fight and to support the push into Raqqa, the official said.

This is the second time in just over a year that a Marine artillery detachment has been deployed from a MEU in support of the ground fight against ISIS militants. In March 2016, more than 100 Marines departed the 26th MEU to establish Fire Base Bell, an artillery position in northern Iraq set up to provide support as ground troops prosecuted an assault on the ISIS stronghold of Mosul.

An Associated Press story late today from Beirut [reported](#) that "Air Force Col. John Dorrian said the U.S. force consisting of a couple of hundred Marines that arrived in the region south of the Syrian-Turkish border on Wednesday will not have any frontline roles but will provide artillery fire to support the advance of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces [SDF]."

Col. Dorrian, a spokesman for Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, the coalition prosecuting the ISIS fight, told the AP via a telephone interview that the SDF "made excellent progress and the enemy hasn't been able to stop them from doing the things that they set out to do." Dorrian further added that SDF fighters have so far captured about 6,400 square kilometers (2,471 square miles) of terrain from IS.

"That's excellent progress," Dorrian told AP, noting that SDF fighters have also cut many supply lines used by IS to try to either escape from the city "or to have fighters leave the area and conduct terrorist operations elsewhere away from Iraq and Syria." According to the AP report, "Dorrian said the SDF will need a 'few more weeks' to completely isolate Raqqa and a decision will be made about the timing 'of the liberation battle to begin.'"

During his Joint Address to Congress on February 28, 2017, President Trump [declared](#): "As promised, I directed the Department of Defense to develop a plan to demolish and destroy ISIS — a network of lawless savages that have slaughtered Muslims and Christians, and men, women, and children of all faiths and beliefs. We will work with our allies, including our friends and allies in the Muslim world, to extinguish this vile enemy from our planet."

ISIS is indeed a vile enemy. However, President Trump should be made to answer some very important questions concerning this latest deployment of U.S. military forces to a far-flung corner of the globe, the same pressing questions we directed at previous



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administrations (both Republican and Democrat) that have sacrificed American blood and treasure in foreign wars in the name of fighting terrorism. Questions, President Trump, such as:

- *Did you ask for and receive a declaration of war from Congress, as the Constitution requires?* The question is rhetorical, in that we know no such congressional declaration was made. Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution gives to Congress — not the president — the power “to declare war.” And even though Congress has been criminally remiss in allowing presidents to usurp this power, President Trump is still bound by this crucial constitutional restraint.
- *Did you provide any evidence that, in lieu of a congressional declaration of war, there exists a dire immediate threat from ISIS to America to justify this action?* In the debates of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, as well as in the *Federalist Papers*, the Founders recognized that the president may need to act by executive authority to repel an invasion without seeking permission from Congress. However, we have been offered no argument or evidence that the deployment of troops to Syria is aimed at averting any immediate threat to Americans.
- *Is the charge that ISIS is “a network of lawless savages that have slaughtered Muslims and Christians, and men, women, and children of all faiths and beliefs” sufficient to engage in an undeclared, undefined, open-ended war?* What about al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Hezbollah, Hamas, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Quds Force, and other groups that also fit your description of “lawless savages”? Does this not continue the endless “war on terror” of President Obama and his predecessors that you gave every indication of ending?
- *Will this “temporary” involvement in Syria become another permanent quagmire?* Thousands of American troops, advisers, special operators, pilots, and other military personnel are still stationed in Afghanistan. However, you, President Trump, have indicated that rather than pulling our troops out of Afghanistan, you intend to increase our troop levels there. How much longer will this go on?
- *Will the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) we are supporting in Syria prove any better than the false “allies” we supported in Egypt, Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan?* The SDF coalition is dominated by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has been designated for many years as a terrorist group by the United States, NATO, and the European Union. The other dominant force in the SDF is the People’s Protection Units (YPG), which is merely a militia adjunct to the communist/terrorist PKK. The PKK/YPG are hardcore Marxist-Leninists who for decades called for the establishment of a Marxist-Leninist state and emblazoned the communist hammer and sickle on their red flag. Are these really the “freedom fighters” that are going to save us from ISIS? Will we end up fighting them, as we have many of our other false allies?

Photo: U.S. military forces in Syria, March 7, 2017: Arab 24 network via AP

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