



Empire Update: Afghanistan/Somalia Withdrawal Scam; Trump Weighs WWIII

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Abby Martin: This is Abby Martin with your Empire Update, wrapping up the last week of US imperialism. After hyping up for four years that all troops would be removed from Afghanistan, the Trump administration finally revealed their grand plan to only withdraw less than half of all US troops stationed in Afghanistan and a minuscule five hundred troops from Iraq, bringing US occupation numbers to around twenty five hundred in each country. US troops have been occupying Afghanistan for nearly 20 years, and US forces are in Iraq in defiance of millions of protesters calling for their expulsion since the illegal invasion until today.

Moreover, what about the thousands of private mercenaries that remain in both countries? See Trump increase these killer contractor numbers by sixty five percent. And right now there are actually more mercenaries in both countries than there are troops. This was his plan all along to privatize the war and make it even less accountable than it already was. Once this new round of troops leave, that could very well mean even more contractors take their place. And remember, thousands of troops will still remain. Any amount is a crime, but twenty five hundred is actually a lot. The ironic thing about this grand finale announcement by Trump is it's basically the Obama Biden plan for Iraq and Afghanistan. Withdrawing more regular troops to rely primarily on special ops, CIA and bombings is exactly what the Obama administration wanted. It only took Trump four years to arrive at the exact same policy. And a big problem with leaving a small number of troops anywhere is that it can easily become a large number of troops all over again. Just as Trump ramped up the residual forces Obama left, he leaves the same for Biden to do so.

Our next update is yet another totally overblown and misreported story on troop withdrawals. You may have heard it either celebrated or condemned that Trump is bringing all the troops home from Somalia. So let's get to the bottom of what's really going on here. First of all, this plan is only a proposal at the moment. It hasn't even yet been ordered, so it might not happen at all. Second, and most importantly, if it does happen, the seven hundred troops in Somalia would not be brought home, nor would they stop combat operations on the ground in

Somalia. The current plan being proposed would simply move those troops just slightly over its border to two neighboring countries, Kenya and Djibouti.

Their explicit purpose there would still be to conduct ground combat in Somalia. They'll just have to travel the short distance to do so rather than being housed in the country. Not to mention that the US would still leave CIA forces in Somalia, as well as continued airstrikes and drone attacks in the country. It is important to remember that it was Trump himself who implemented a gloves off policy in Somalia and removed rules designed to protect civilians from collateral damage. And March twenty seventeen, he signed an order declaring Somalia a, quote, area of active hostility which unleashed the US military to send troops on raids and increase reckless bombing. To now credit Trump with any positive change simply because they're now thinking about repositioning some troops to do the exact same thing. Is at best missing the story. US command in Africa, known as AFRICOM, has military bases in at least 14 countries on the continent with troops and CIA and more. This has only been expanding and the latest Somalia plan changes nothing about that trajectory. Also on the African continent, US backed forces just violated a three decade old cease fire. The government of Morocco, a major ally to the US empire, fired on unarmed civilians at a protest in Western Sahara on November 13. That prompted the Polisario Front, the main organization fighting for self-determination of Western Sahara, to declare that the Moroccan government has ignited war and that any further acts of aggression would mean, quote, "the beginning of a new war across the region". Western Sahara is under police state occupation by the Moroccan military. After being a colony of Spain, the Moroccan monarchy replaced fascist Spain as the colonial rulers of the resource rich nation after violently invading and illegally annexing the territory in nineteen seventy five. Since then, the population has lived under a brutal repression of one hundred thousand Moroccan troops, with a population of only five hundred thousand people. Morocco and the United States just signed a ten year military agreement this past October, which, quote, "serves as a roadmap for defense cooperation and shared security goals, especially improving the degree of military readiness". Washington is Morocco's large. Supplier of arms, and it hosts an annual military exercise called African Lion, where US forces train Moroccan soldiers to dominate the region on their behalf. In a new development in pro-Israel policy, the State Department rolled out a new initiative on November 19 to publish a blacklist of organizations that support the Boycott, Divestment and sanctions movement. The announcement of the policy also included the claim that, quote, anti Zionism is anti Semitism, something that flies in the face of a century of progressive Jewish activists condemning attempts by the Zionist movement to displace the Palestinian people. Organizations that are found to be BDS supporters would be barred from receiving funds that originate with the State Department, as well as punished with other unspecified actions. This is just the latest attack on Americans constitutional rights to protect the US attack dog in the Middle East.

In our final update this past week, we got disturbing new insight on just how close we can be to World War Three. Yes, Trump is still hell bent on putting us on a warpath with Iran. Last

week, he asked his military advisers to present him with options for an attack on Iran's military facilities, seriously considering bombing Iran right before he leaves office. Hilariously, it's Iran warmonger, Mike Pompeo, who's reportedly the one talking Trump out of such a strike. While we often hear that the deep state has prevented Trump from ending the wars. The only evidence we have is that the deep state has only stopped Trump from starting new wars. The same was the case with Syria, where it was reported in twenty eighteen, trump eagerly wanted to assassinate Syrian President Assad, but was apparently talked out of it by Warhawk General Mad Dog Mattis. That action, too, could have triggered a new major war. And those are only the ones we know about. It's unclear how the story will end up, but we know Trump has carried out the biggest acts of aggression against Iran in decades. And antiwar forces must stand ready as Trump is often credited for starting no new wars. It seems one is still on the table in his final months.

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