



## **Biden Sells Missiles to Fascists + US Base Destroys Ancient Coral Reef**

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**Abby Martin (AB):** This is Abby Martin with your Empire Update, wrapping up the last week in US imperialism.

The Biden administration has approved its first arms sale to a foreign government, the right wing regime of Chile. On February 5th, the State Department gave the green light to the sale of 16 advanced missiles to the Chilean military, as well as supporting equipment, spares and training for \$85 million. This is yet another indication that Biden intends to continue the Trump administration's policy of supporting the far right in Latin America to prevent the return of the progressive and socialist pink tide governments that swept the region during the early 2000s. The president of Chile, Sebastian Pinera, has an approval rating in the single digits after using deadly force in a failed attempt to suppress an uprising against rampant inequality that broke out in October 2019. The Pinera government deployed the army to crush the protests alleged to have killed or disappeared dozens of protesters, as well as severely injuring hundreds more. Pinera's family is one of the richest in the country. They were key political and economic players during the fascist military regime of Augusto Pinochet, installed by the CIA in 1973. This arms sale comes during a crucial moment for Chile, a constituent assembly to rewrite the dictatorship era constitution, a key victory of the uprising will take place in April. A presidential election to replace Pinera will happen later this year and the Communist party's candidate is currently in first place in opinion polls. Biden's arming to the teeth of this relic of fascism, today employing similar repression is truly disturbing.

In another new arms deal approved by Biden on February 16th: \$200 million worth of missiles were sold to the Egyptian regime, to quote, "support the foreign policy and national security of the United States." In another example of the sheer hypocrisy of the US empire's claim that its foreign policy is guided by the defense of human rights, the State Department's own report in 2019 stated Egypt was committing, quote, "unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings by the government, forced disappearance, torture, arbitrary detention, harsh and life threatening prison conditions, political prisoners, the worst forms of restrictions on free expression, the press and the Internet, including arrests or prosecutions against journalists, substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association. Restrictions on political participation, violence involving religious minorities, violence targeting LGBT persons. Use of the law to arbitrarily arrest and prosecute LGBT persons and forced or compulsory child labor." Wow. But all of that is OK, according to

Washington, so long as they, quote, "support the foreign policy of the United States".

Groups in Okinawa, Japan have launched an official request to President Biden to halt the construction of a major new US military base on the island. In February 2019, Okinawans were given the opportunity to vote on the base construction by a referendum. In that election 72% opposed the plan, showing a clear majority of residents do not want it. Not only are they opposed to the many dangers to residents from pollution to munitions to increased presence of erratic U.S. troops, but they are defending the pristine ecosystem that the US base must destroy to build. Instead of building the base on existing land, the US military is bringing in tons of dirt to fill portions of the islands or a bay, which locals call Okinawa's treasure for its unique biodiversity. See, it's home to the largest rare blue coral colony in the entire world, which has taken over 3000 years to reach its current size. That in its over 5000 unique species, all face peril just for the subscene American base. The United States, which has been occupying Japan with 40,000 troops since dropping 2 nuclear bombs on it in World War Two, already has around 25 military bases in the country. According to the governor of Okinawa, Denny Tamaki, although Okinawa accounts for about 0.6% of the nation's land area, it hosts 70% of all U.S. military facilities in Japan. For years, Okinawans have been staging continued protests against the building of this new base, including blocking construction vehicles by land and taking boats to confront construction at sea. Takashi Kishimoto, head of Okinawa Peace Movement Center, told Stars and Stripes newspaper, quote, We have shown over and over how we feel about this new base and even the public vote showed over 70% of the people of Okinawa do not want the Henoko base. As president of a democratic country, Biden should honor the Okinawans people's wishes. Biden should have no excuse to destroy this treasured habitat in violation of the sovereignty of the Japanese people.

On February 15th, an Iraqi militia launched a major attack on a U.S. base, injuring at least one American soldier and killing a private contractor. It was the opening volley in what's promised to be just the beginning. The Shia group named "Guardians of Blood" stated, quote, "The American occupation will not be safe from our strikes and any inch of the homeland where we promise we will carry out other qualitative operations". This militia is just one of dozens of new groups that have sprung up pledging to drive out the hated US occupation, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki stated of the attack, quote, "As always, the president of the United States and the administration reserves the right to respond and the time in the manner of our choosing". The question is, will these increased attacks lead to a restart of the US war in Iraq that has spanned 30 years now? That's already what the US led NATO coalition is trying to do. And also on February 15th, NATO ministers announced they are reaching an agreement to increase its troop presence from 500 to 5000 in Iraq. That's ten times the size of the current occupation. There will always be an excuse for the US to occupy and bomb Iraq. First Saddam, then insurgents, now ISIS and next, it will be to fight these militias. If history tells us anything, more troops means more bloodshed, which leads to more troops in response. This latest attack is another reminder that as long as the US remains in the country, we teeter on the edge of another full blown war. The only solution to this endless cycle is to completely withdraw once and for all.

Some positive news coming out of Ecuador, where Andres Arauz, the left candidate in Ecuador's presidential election, scored first place in the first round of voting on February 7th. He represents the political forces seeking to return to the policies of the Citizens Revolution, a process of social change carried out by the government of former President Rafael Correa. During the Citizens Revolution, Ecuador was a member of key regional blocs that sought to

challenge the domination of the United States over the region. Correa was constantly the target of regime change efforts by the US government, including a major coup attempt in 2010. In 2017, Correa's Vice President Lenin Moreno became president and undermined his predecessor by approving massive IMF austerity measures, inviting USAID back into the country, collaborating with the Trump regime to give up Julian Assange from its embassy, as well as overseeing an arrest warrant against Correa to stop him from running for president again. Now, a recount is underway to settle a dispute over who will face Arauz in the April 11th runoff election. Right wing banker Guillermo Lasso is currently slightly ahead of Yaku Perez, who ran as a representative of the indigenous and environmentalist movement but has a long history of extensive alliances with the pro US right wing. With the Venezuela and Bolivia coup attempts in mind, Arauz recently went on Democracy Now, where he said he hoped the US would respect the results of the election and that there would be no foreign interference in the results. But the Organization of American States, an instrument of US regime change, is already casting doubt on the legitimacy of the election and issuing calls for transparency, which is always the first step of US operations to overthrow election results in Latin America. Whatever the OAS is planning, activists in the US need to be on alert to organize against the Empire's plans to prevent another left wing election victory.

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