

INTERVENTION HEADSTONES AT OLYMPIA RALLY

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International Day of Action for No War With Iran, January 25, 2020**

The U.S. has been intervening in the Middle East for a very long time. The Marine Corps Hymn “From the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli” is based on interventions in Mexico and Libya in the first half of the 19th century.

But it wasn't until the second half of the 20th century that our current series of endless wars began. That's when the U.S. began to inherit colonial and oil interests from Britain, which had been weakened by World War II and later the Suez Crisis. The two key turning points were in Iran, first in 1953 when the CIA overthrew a democratically elected government that was nationalizing western companies' oil fields, and replaced it with the dictatorship of the Shah.

The other turning point was in 1979, when the Iranian people had enough of the Shah and overthrew him. When a group of Iranians blamed the U.S. by taking over its Embassy, the Carter Administration turned away from Communism as a justification for war and Pentagon spending, and toward the demonization of Shi'a Muslims, which was much more effective. The Carter Doctrine threatened the use of nuclear weapons to defend the oil industry, backed the Saudi royal family and Sunni jihadists in Afghanistan, and began the Central Command, draft registration, and the massive Middle East military buildup we see today.

At that same time, I was working for a group in South Dakota linked to the American Indian Movement. We were discussing how the Wounded Knee Massacre occurred at the same time as Manifest Destiny, the colonization of Native America, was morphing into overseas imperialism in the Asia-Pacific region and Latin America, and eventually into the Middle East. I began to compile a list of all the military interventions since Wounded Knee, and presented it as a workshop at the 1980 Black Hills International Survival Gathering.

Unfortunately, that list grows longer virtually every year, and includes repeated interventions in Muslim countries, specifically Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, the southern Philippines, Niger, and Syria. The enemies of the day often changed in these countries, and the means of warmaking changed -- from troops, bombing, and naval shelling to drones, militarized sanctions, and covert operations. But in each of these wars, the losers were the civilians whose lives were devastated, the U.S. troops who were killed or maimed, and the people who perished on 9/11, when the endless wars came home to American soil.

You can find this global list online by googling “From Wounded Knee to Syria”:
<https://sites.evergreen.edu/zoltan/interventions> To dramatize these endless wars just in the Muslim region, I've drawn out 30 of these interventions from the list, and put them on headstones to dramatize the foreign and American lives that have been lost. I've put an explanation on the back of each headstone. They begin with the Iran Coup 1953, and end with No Iran War 2020. In this way, I hope that people driving by and seeing photos of us better understand the costs of these endless wars for our country and world.

A war with Iran is when this imperial impunity would clash for the first time with a country that could really fight back and cause serious damage to our military and oil economy. The war could spread through ethnic secessions throughout the region, and even lead to a nuclear conflagration. The headstones tell a story: If Iran was the starting point for our massive military expansion, maybe stopping an Iran War is when the American people can finally put our foot down, put an end to this tit-for-tat cycle of violence, and say no more endless wars.

I'm hoping we can get 30 volunteers to take the yellow signs in chronological order from earliest to most recent, and walk up to the 4th Avenue Bridge in that order. We'll have to cross the street to avoid the construction, and then cross again to the left or south side of the bridge, so drivers coming off the roundabout can see us coming into downtown. Please face the signs to the drivers and space yourselves apart along the entire length of the bridge. People with other signs can stand on the right or north side of the bridge, for drivers headed up to the roundabout. Thanks for being a part of this little experiment, and if it works we can do it again at other rallies, hopefully without having to add more headstones.

Coup in IRAN 1953	Bombing IRAQ 1998	Bombing SYRIA/IRAQ 2014-?
Troops in LEBANON 1958	Bombs in YEMEN 2000-02	Troops in NIGER 2017
Coup in IRAQ 1963	UNITED STATES 2001	Troops in SAUDI ARABIA 2019-?
MIDEAST WAR 1973	AFGHANISTAN WAR 2001-?	Sanctions on IRAN 2019-?
Raiding IRAN 1980	Troops in Southern PHILIPPINES 2002-?	Bombing IRAN in IRAQ 2019-20
Bombing LIBYA 1986	IRAQ WAR 2003-11	NO IRAN WAR 2020
Shelling LEBANON 1982-84	SOMALIA WAR, 2006-?	
Naval war vs. IRAN 1987-88	Troops in SYRIA 2008	
GULF WAR 1991	Drones in PAKISTAN, 2005-?	
Sanctions on IRAQ 1991-2003	YEMEN WAR 2009-?	
Troops in SOMALIA 1992-94	SYRIA WAR 2011-?	
Bombing SUDAN/ AFGHANISTAN 1998	LIBYA WAR 2011-?	

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Middle East Interventions Headstones Kit

<https://sites.evergreen.edu/zoltan/wp-content/uploads/sites/358/2020/01/InterventionHeadstones.pdf>

Explanations on back of Intervention Headstones

Coup in IRAN 1953

Nuclear threat:

Soviet troops told to leave northwestern Iran after WWII, 1946.

Command Operation:

CIA overthrows democracy (nationalist Mossadegh government), and installs Shah as dictator, 1953.

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Troops in LEBANON 1958

Troops, naval:

Army & Marine occupation against rebels.

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Coup in IRAQ 1963

Command Operation:

CIA organizes coup that killed president, brings Ba'ath Party to power, and Saddam Hussein back from exile to be head of the secret service.

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**MIDEAST
WAR
1973**

Nuclear threat:
World-wide alert during war between Israel & neighbors;
Soviets warned not to intervene.

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**Raiding
IRAN
1980**

Troops, nuclear threat, aborted bombing:

Raid to rescue Embassy hostages fails; 8 troops die in copter-plane crash.
Soviets warned not to get involved in revolutionary Iran.

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**Bombing
LIBYA
1986**

Two Libyan jets shot down in maneuvers, 1981 & 1989.
Air strikes to topple Qaddafi government, 1986.

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**Shelling
LEBANON
1982-84**

Naval, Bombing, Troops:
Marines expel Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and back Christian Phalangist / fascists,
1982. Navy bombs and shells Lebanese Muslim and Syrian positions, 1982-84.
241 Marines killed when Shi'a rebel bombs barracks, 1983.

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**Naval war vs.
IRAN
1987-88**

Naval jets:

Two Iranian jets shot down over Persian Gulf, 1981.

US intervenes on side of Saddam Hussein in Iran-Iraq War, defending reflagged Iraqi oil tankers, striking Iranian ships and oil rigs. USS Vincennes shoots down Iranian civilian jet, 1988.

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**GULF
WAR
1991**

Troops, jets, naval, bombing:

Iraq countered after invading Kuwait. 540,000 troops stationed in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Israel in Operation Desert Shield, 1990.

Blockade of Iraqi and Jordanian ports, air strikes on Iraq and Kuwait;

200,000+ killed in invasion of Iraq and Kuwait; large-scale destruction of Iraqi military

In Operation Desert Storm, Jan-Feb. 1991. U.S. watches as Saddam suppresses Shi'a uprising, March 1991.

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**Sanctions on
IRAQ
1991-2003**

Bombing, naval:

No-fly zone over Kurdish north and Shi'a south; constant air strikes and naval-enforced economic sanctions on food, medicine, sanitation, etc., which cause high child death mortality rates.

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**Troops in
SOMALIA
1992-94**

Troops, Naval, Bombing:
U.S.-led United Nations occupation during civil war; raids against one Mogadishu faction.

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**Bombing
IRAQ
1998**

Bombing, Missiles:
Four days of intensive air strikes in Operation Desert Fox after UN weapons inspectors allege Iraqi obstructions.

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**Bombing
SUDAN/
AFGHANISTAN
1998**

Missiles:
Missile attacks on camps in Afghanistan, pharmaceutical plant in Sudan,
In retaliation for Al Qaeda attacks on US embassies in East Africa

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**Bombs in
YEMEN
2000-02**

USS Cole, docked in Aden, bombed by Al Qaeda, 2000.
Predator drone missile attacks on Al Qaeda, including a US citizen, 2002.

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**UNITED
STATES
2001**

9/11 hijacker attacks on New York, Pentagon, and jet in Pennsylvania.
U.S. military used to overseas wars, but not prepared to defend homeland.

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**AFGHANISTAN
WAR
2001-?**

Troops, Bombing, Missiles:
Massive U.S. mobilization to overthrow Taliban, hunt Al Qaeda fighters, install Karzai regime, and battle Taliban insurgency. More than 30,000 U.S. troops and numerous private security contractors carry out occupation. Longest-ever U.S. overseas war.

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**Troops in
southern
PHILIPPINES
2002-?**

Troops, naval:
Training mission for Philippine military fighting Abu Sayyaf rebels evolves into combat missions in Sulu Archipelago, west of Mindanao.

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**IRAQ
WAR
2003-11**

Troops, Naval, Bombing, Missiles:
Saddam regime toppled in Baghdad. More than 250,000 U.S. personnel participate in invasion. US and UK forces occupy country and battle Sunni and Shi'ite insurgencies. More than 160,000 troops and numerous private contractors carry out occupation and build large permanent bases.

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**Troops in
SYRIA
2008**

Special Forces in helicopter raid 5 miles from Iraq kill 8 Syrian civilians

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**Drones in
PAKISTAN,
2005-?**

CIA missile and air strikes and Special Forces raids on alleged Al Qaeda and Taliban refuge villages kill multiple civilians. Drone attacks also on Pakistani Mehsud network.

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**SOMALIA
WAR,
2006-?**

Missiles, naval, troops, command operation:
Special Forces advise Ethiopian invasion that topples Islamist government, 2006;
AC-130 strikes, Cruise missile, drone attacks and helicopter raids against Islamist Al Shabab rebels; naval blockade against “pirates” and insurgents.

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**YEMEN
WAR
2009-?**

Missiles, command operation:
Cruise missile attack on Al Qaeda kills 49 civilians, 2009; Raids, attacks increase in civil war, 2011, Backing Saudi military assaults on Houthi rebels in Yemen since 2015, which kill thousands of civilians; Massive famine caused by civil war, port blockades.

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**LIBYA
WAR
2011-?**

NATO air strikes topple Qaddafi government, backed rebel army 2011; Rebels execute Qaddafi.
Civil war erupts; Special Forces raids vs. Al Qaeda-backed forces.
U.S., Turkey back Islamist government in Tripoli vs. Russian-backed rebels in east.

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**SYRIA
WAR
2011-?**

Training Syrian rebels, 2011-?;
Bombing alleged Syrian government air bases, chemical arms sites, 2017, 2018.

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**Bombing
SYRIA/IRAQ
2014-?**

Air strikes and Special Forces against Islamic State (ISIS) insurgents, 2014-?.

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**Troops in
NIGER
2017**

Special Forces combat against Islamist insurgents; 4 US troops killed.

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**Troops in
SAUDI ARABIA
2019-?**

Mobilizing U.S. troops against Iran in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), after Iran-backed Yemeni Houthi rebels claim drone attack on Saudi oil installations

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**Sanctions on
IRAN
2019-?**

Trump pulls U.S. out of Iran Nuclear Accord, institutes economic sanctions that threaten health care of Iranian civilians.

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**Bombing
IRAN in IRAQ
2019-20**

U.S. strikes at Iran-backed Iraqi Shi'a and Syrian militias. Shi'a protests at US Embassy in Baghdad. U.S. drone kills Iranian general and Iraqi Shi'a militia leader in Baghdad. Iran missile strikes on two U.S. bases in Iraq.

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**NO
IRAN
WAR
2020**

U.S. strikes at Iran-backed Iraqi Shi'a militias. Shi'a protests at US Embassy in Baghdad. U.S. drone kills Iranian general in Baghdad. Iran missile strikes on two U.S. bases in Iraq. Troops mobilizations in Saudi Arabia, UAE after Yemeni Houthi rebels claim drone attack on Saudi oil installations.

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