



How Donald Trump is Expanding the US Empire

by

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on

[Media Roots](#)



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[Trump is Expanding the US Empire](#)

In the first installment of this multi-part series, Trump Expanding the Empire, Abby Martin debunks the notion that Trump is an anti-interventionist president, outlining his first two years of aggressive foreign policy that has expanded US wars and occupations.

From the biggest military budget in history, to removing its restrictions to "bomb the hell out of" Iraq and Syria, to ramping-up brutal economic sanctions, to becoming America's "Arms Salesman-In-Chief."

Transcript & Links:

Welcome to Empire Files. I'm your host, Abby Martin. We started this show in 2015. And since then, we've maintained the premise that the US empire is not only a huge expanse, but constantly

expanding. Contrary to those who say the US empire is in decline, the war machine has been on a continuous march forward to swallow up new regions and markets, no matter the president.

Two years, into Donald Trump's reign as CEO of the empire, we wanted to see if the trajectory has continued. At the beginning, I admit I thought Trump was a wild card. I considered the fact that Trump is an extreme narcissist that only cares about himself, not his fellow billionaires. I considered there might be a reason why none of the CEOs the top 100 largest companies in the nation backed Trump for president.

And true to the dizzying effects of having Donald Trump as president, anything was possible - he could go against the grain and start belligerent, major new wars; he could capitulate and be a loyal servant as long as they made him look good; or he could buck the establishment bourgeoisie and pander to a sector of right-wing isolationists and anti-interventionists, who support refocusing US wars on the border, against immigrants, rather than waste resources for so called nation building abroad.

After all, Trump did posture himself as the anti-intervention candidate in the 2016 election. It was a strategy that made sense. Polls [show](#) an overwhelming majority of Americans do not support endless wars abroad. The last 17 years of military conflicts have tainted any candidate who advocates more war.

Right-wing online forums were ablaze with theories that Trump was an isolationist who would fight the "deep state" on wasteful wars. But it was obvious to anyone watching that he was talking out of both sides of his mouth. Trump also campaigned on war, most notably threatening a major war with Iran, which would make Iraq look like child's play. Not only that, but one of his main campaign promises was a major escalation of war and brutality in the Middle East.

His threats exceeded carpet bombing though, he even evoked the genocide of Muslims in the Philippines as a model, and the legend that General Pershing executed civilians with bullets dipped in pigs blood and buried their bodies with pig carcasses.

He essentially campaigned on a massive expansion of the bogus "War On Terror". Far from "isolationist", Trump presented himself as more of heartless warmonger who thought human rights law was a barrier that needed to be smashed - that the violence of the war machine was too soft, too restrained.

Candidate Trump didn't just lament the restraint on American war crimes around the world, but also financial restraints on the military machine. Somehow, Trump argued that the country with the biggest military budget in the history of the world, was actually *too small*.

Candidate Trump has turned out to be a pretty good predictor of a president Trump. And it should've been clear to everyone what kind of President he would be when he hand picked his cabinet, stacking it with the craziest neocon outliers - ones too insane even for the Bush Administration - and more generals than any cabinet since World War 2, who are literal war criminals.

He even bragged about giving the Pentagon maximum power to act, free from annoying checks and balances. And true to his word, he also shattered all records for our already obscene military budget.

Before Trump came in, it was already larger than all these countries combined. But apparently that wasn't enough, so within his first year Trump kicked in the biggest [defense budget](#) in history - close to one trillion dollars.

The increase in military spending alone equates to more than Russia's entire annual military budget. The new \$750 billion war toy chest included another \$705 million for Israel, \$100 million to deter "Russian aggression" in the Baltics, and another \$500 million to arm Ukraine, equipment that seems to keep getting into the hands of neo-nazi militias.

But the most interesting part of the budget is the spending increase for what's called Overseas Contingency Operations, which includes maintaining troop deployments and US bases, as well as new and expanding outposts. Since 2011, this spending has been capped by a federal statute. But Trump blew the caps off by \$80 billion dollars!

This couldn't have happened without Congress - or the full endorsement of the Democratic Party establishment. There is a bipartisan consensus in Washington to maintain the US empire, along with its [800 military bases](#).

And it's not just gifting the military industrial complex with an open faucet of taxpayer dollars, but using US dominance to get them huge weapons contracts with foreign proxies.

Obama oversaw some of the biggest arms deals in US history, selling more than [\\$75 billion](#) in overseas weapons sales, topping the previous record of \$68 billion in 2012.

It's only ramped up since. In the first 6 months of 2018, the DOD brokered weapons deals to foreign proxies alone worth [Richard Aboulafia](#) of the military think tank "Teal Group" [said](#) "diplomacy is out; air strikes are in... in this sort of environment, it's tough to keep a lid on costs."

It's paid off for America's five biggest defense contractors, whose stocks have more than tripled in the last couple years.

We're told it "costs too much" to have medicare for all, yet money was no object when Trump ordered the DOD to establish a "Space Force" as a sixth branch of the military, projected to cost at least [\\$13 billion](#) dollars in the first five years.

The idea to militarize space was first proposed by the Bush administration, in their PNAC blueprint for the War on Terror. Trump is just another neocon puppet, eager to fulfill their Stormtrooper fantasy.

Not to mention the fact that alongside passing this record military budget, it was paid for with budget cuts to society's most vulnerable, in particular, hungry children.

But Trump isn't just making sure kids in the United States go hungry, but children in every country it deems our enemies. Because the US dollar drives the global economy, the empire frequently wields sanctions to bend countries to its will.

Anyone claiming to be anti-war, or even just anti-intervention, must oppose any and all economic sanctions. Make no mistake: sanctions war. And not in a hyperbolic sense. They are real attacks, that kill real people.

The impact of sanctions is never discussed in the US media. They're always treated as a kind of "soft" solution, with the assumption that they only affect a society's corrupt elites. These are assumption nowhere close to the reality.

Sanctions hurt the most vulnerable - and by design. That's why they intentionally target medicine, clean water, and access to food. The logic of sanctions is, if you kill and starve enough innocent civilians, they will blame their own government, rise up and overthrow them so American force don't have to waste any blood overthrowing them.

Their genocidal impact cannot be overstated. Looking at Iraq alone, US sanctions in the 90's, that blockaded medicine from the country, killed [500,000 Iraqi babies](#). That is the true face of sanctions.

They are not an "alternative to war," sanctions ARE war in every way. So what has Trump done with the daggers of US sanctions? He's shown the true face of his foreign policy. Obama implemented hundreds of sanctions during his tenure. But Trump is ramping them up in nearly every region, adding hundreds more in his first two years.

The most destructive application of sanctions has been on Iran, where Trump upended Obama's historic nuclear deal and added 143 sanctions that have since debilitated their economy.

Then there's North Korea, where people give Trump credit for peace between the North and South. Amazingly, despite the media's rhetoric of Trump bowing down for dictators, he has installed 80 new sanctions on the DPRK, compared to the 74 applied by Obama.

In Syria, Trump has authorized a stunning 287 new sanctions, almost double the amount applied under Obama. He's administered 43 sanctions on Libya so far.

In Russia and Ukraine, Trump has defied the notion he is a puppet of Putin by sanctioning the region 105 times so far, for everything from annexing Crimea, to the alleged meddling in the 2016 election, to the attempted poisoning of Sergei Skripal. Not to mention the 43 "cyber sanctions" put on the figures alleged to have hacked into the DNC.

Next is Venezuela. Even though Obama added 7 sanctions in his term, Trump's laser focus is set on destroying the country once-and-for-all. He's already employed 63 new sanctions to strangle Venezuela and undermine any chance for economic recovery.

He imposed many more sanctions on independent, progressive countries like Cuba and Nicaragua.

What do all those countries have in common? It's not some standard of democracy or human rights - it's that they are all independent of US domination. They chart their own path and decide what's done with the wealth of their own country. The biggest thing they have in common, is that none of them pose any threat to us!

It would be bad enough if the Trump administration was only expanding economic warfare on these countries. But they're taking it much further.

Any corner of the globe we look to, we see that he is indeed expanding the US empire's influence and operations - he has ratcheted up, with new fire and veracity, covert and overt regime change operations; expansion of military bases, massive increases in bombings and civilian casualties, and belligerent escalations that put us on the brink of catastrophic war on multiple fronts.

As we'll show in this multi-part series, Trump Expanding the Empire, that whether or not Trump pisses off, offends or even destabilizes powerful sectors of the imperialist state, he has only put war and militarism on the march.

It may be confusing how Trump is still making proclamations about stopping endless wars, but we have to look at his actions, not his rhetoric.

And yes, there is growing opposition to Trump within the halls of power. But not because they think Trump is going to reign back the Empire - but because he's simply self-absorbed and unpredictable.

With all the praise about the most diverse Congress in history, you can't find any diversity in opinion when it comes to continuing US imperialism. We can't let the democrats steer the resistance away from where it needs to be - in the streets, linking our struggles, fighting the expansive US empire.

[Part 2: Trump's Syria Deception](#)