

*War Criminals Watch panel at the 2012 Left Forum held in New York City.*

Despite Obama's announcement that US combat troops are leaving Iraq, giving rise to the popular perception that the war is over, this isn't really the case. The US has been forced to withdraw its military units—in part because it couldn't forge a new status of forces agreement with the Iraqi government. But thousands of US diplomats, military contractors, CIA operatives & other support personnel will remain in Iraq after year's end. The US will still have tens of thousands of troops, as well as air & naval power & various military alliances in the Middle East & Central Asia. 23,000 of those troops will be stationed across the border in Kuwait. The status of forces agreement is in compliance with a treaty that Bush & Maliki made 3 years ago. The Obama administration, through the State Dept., pursued its plan to keep US fighting forces in Iraq beyond this year. It was the Maliki government, in general very compliant to its US backers, that balked at allowing US military to stay because the terms demanded by Obama included immunity from local prosecution for the troops. The largest US embassy in the world is in Baghdad. The State Dept. will continue to have 5,000 security contractors & 4,500 other support contractors in Iraq as well as a significant CIA presence & there will be a continuing military relationship with Iraq including the training of Iraqi forces.

**Larry Everest:** Larry Everest writes for *Revolution* newspaper and has reported from Iran, Iraq, Palestine and India. He's the author of *Oil, Power & Empire: Iraq and the U.S. Global Agenda* and *Behind the Poison Cloud: Union Carbide's Bhopal Massacre*. In 1991 he shot the award-winning video "Iraq: War Against the People" and in 2005 testified before the World Tribunal on Iraq in Istanbul.

**Michael Otterman:** Michael Otterman is a human rights consultant based in New York City. He is the coauthor of *Erasing Iraq: The Human Costs of Carnage* (Pluto Press, 2010) and the author of *American Torture: From the Cold War to Abu Ghraib and Beyond* (Melbourne University Publishing, 2007). He was a visiting scholar at the University of Sydney's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies from 2006-2009. As a consultant, he has worked with NGOs across the globe including Jubilee Australia and Catalyst Inc.

**David Swanson:** David Swanson holds a master's in philosophy from the Univ. of Virginia. He has worked as a reporter and a communications director including as press secretary for

Dennis Kucinich's 2004 presidential campaign, media coordinator for the Internat. Labor Communications Assn. and three years as communications coordinator for ACORN, the Assn. of Community Organizations for Reform Now. He blogs at <http://davidswanson.org> and <http://warisacrime.org> and works for the online activist organization <http://rootsaction.org>.

**Moderator - Debra Sweet:** Director of World Can't Wait