

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Occupy COMO protests intervention in Syria

By [Molly Duffy](#)

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COLUMBIA — Protesters outside city hall held a new sign this weekend, demanding "No War on Syria."

After President Barack Obama on Saturday [announced he would use military force in Syria, pending congressional approval](#), four men — who demonstrate every Saturday as part of the Occupy Wall Street movement — added Syria to their list of issues. Seated beneath the keyhole at city hall, the men also promoted peace with Iran and "Justice for Bradley Manning."

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Two of the protesters, Paul Searles and Nestor MacKno, both cited their experiences with the Vietnam War as a factor in their current political involvement. Searles was part of the protests against the military draft during the Vietnam era. After President George W. Bush was elected, he said, Searles became a full-time activist.

"I get to like myself," Searles said. "I don't have to feel guilty about not doing anything."

The pair said they are against military intervention abroad on all fronts and argued that the American people are tired of overseas engagements

and not in favor of additional action.

Another protester, Peter Byger, said that, including the Cold War, the United States has been involved in conflict since he was born 70 years ago.

"I'm just sick of it," he said. "Somebody has to stand up. I just try to stand up and show up, add myself to the cause."

Byger said he's pleased with Obama's choice to have Congress weigh in on the decision of whether to act in Syria, but he still hopes the U.S. does not intervene.

"Obama, Barry, stay out of it," he said. "The American people are saying that. Stay out of it. There's nothing you can do. You're just going to hit the hornet's nest."

"I think the fact that the conservative party in Britain refused to take action made (Obama) think twice," MacKno said, referring to the British Parliament's rejection of a resolution on military action in Syria as a response to its alleged use of chemical weapons against its own people.

MacKno also questioned Syrian President Bashar Assad's involvement in the attacks, suggesting that a militant group unaffiliated with the Assad government may have orchestrated the attack.

"We think both of the attacks in Syria were probably false flags," he said.

Supervising editor is [Zachary Matson](#).