

November 17, 2003

---

# **The Iraq War of 2003 and the Politics of Denuclearization**

Bruce D. Larkin  
The University of California at Santa Cruz

## *Introduction*

The sixty weeks from 1 August 2002 to 20 September 2003 include the period leading to the Iraq War, the war itself, and its immediate aftermath. The United States claimed that “Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction” posed a threat to international peace and security and, without UN Security Council authorization, made war on Iraq. When US forces failed to find ‘weapons of mass destruction’ critics charged that the White House had misled its publics.

. The US preventive war on Iraq was justified, in part, as an act of focused denuclearization, and to prevent fissile material being transferred to other states or to entrepreneurs of violence. Long-standing North Korean experiments in the politics of nuclear threat again confronted the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Japan, and the United States. GW Bush had declared three states, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, an ‘axis of evil’ and in the wake of Washington’s ‘victory’ in Iraq it turned its attention to Iran, contending that Iran’s nuclear program was in violation of commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Washington was not alone in arguing that Teheran was denying

---

the IAEA the access required to show that Washington's suspicions were unfounded.

In the runup to launching war on 19 March Britain and the United States put Iraqi weapons and weapon programs at the center of their case for war. Bush, Blair, and Powell spoke from successive 'dossiers' and 'intelligence analyses'. But after 19 March this 'evidence' took on a new significance. Iraq did not use nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons in its defense. Searchers—at this writing—have found neither large stocks of chemical and biological weapons nor, indeed, any such weapons at all, nor any evidence of ongoing nuclear, chemical, or biological weapon programs.

Both Bush and Blair went to their legislatures. Congress abandoned its Constitutional duty to assess the need for war by giving Bush a blank check: a check given in October, which Bush cashed only in March, as if no further need to consider the matter had intervened.

Moreover, the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz group, to win a free hand, offered and sanctioned three big lies: that Iraq posed a nuclear threat to the United States, that Iraq was in league with Al Qaeda, and that Iraq had somehow taken part in the 9.11 attack.

Until September 2003, when an errant remark by 'Dick' Cheney led Bush to tell the truth, they permitted—they can hardly not have known what the polls and the newspapers told everyone else—half the US public to believe that Iraq was implicated in 9.11, and so lied by omission. And it is hard to imagine that these dedicated public servants did not know, and fully understand, that they were embarked on a great deception. It is as if they had sought to rewrite Lincoln: they would fool "enough of the people enough of the time."

The 9.11 intelligence failure, abandonment of Afghanistan to its warlords, war in Iraq, junking of long-nurtured cooperative relations with allies and friends, energy policy, rejection of the Kyoto Protocol, and the incapacity to conceive the consequences of invading Iraq: every one of these failures should be the subject of full, independent, public inquiry. Two official US inquiries are underway. A carefully-constituted commission is

---

centered on the 9.11 attacks. The Senate Intelligence Committee is studying the decision to war on Iraq. Their conclusions remain to be seen.

All we have to date is the UK's Hutton Inquiry, ostensibly focused on the circumstances surrounding the death of weapons expert Dr. David Kelly, but inevitably implying questions about the Blair government's unfounded claims made to Parliament and the British public in justifying Britain's joining the 2003 Iraq war.<sup>1</sup>

We do not even have any consensus just when that war was decided, or why it was undertaken.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> At this writing (October 2003) a US Congressionally-mandated investigation of 9.11 is being undertaken by a bipartisan panel, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States..

<sup>2</sup> Robert Woodward reports that Iraq was named, as a prospective target, in conversations with Bush in the days just after 9.11. That is significant, but it does not define a 'point of no return', associated with a timetable and orders that preliminaries be undertaken. See Robert Woodward, *Bush At War*.



In this paper I will identify acts, texts, and reports which help me in my own efforts to understand these sixty weeks. While there is much we don't know, there is much on record which we should not forget. I come to this subject from two interests: how do states go to war? and how can weapon denuclearization be accomplished? Both questions are paramount in this period. Consider, for example, whether the doctrine of 'preemptive war' declared by the Bush group works against nuclear non-proliferation ... if the United States can only be deterred from attack by a credible threat to blow up New York in return. Or consider this: did the UN-IAEA weapons inspectors 'succeed' or 'fail' in Iraq? for the answer speaks worlds to the issue whether weapon denuclearization can be accomplished and sustained by political means.

### *10-11 October 2002 US Congressional Approval*

The US Congress should have been a prime player, insisting on debate and restraint, but many members saw themselves tied and gagged by the impending elections of 5 November. On 10 and 11 October 2002 the House and Senate authorized the president to war with Iraq if he chose. The vote in the House was 296 to 133, and in the Senate 77 to 23. Congress abdicated its Constitutional duty to decide, and instead granted the president two ill-defined grounds to begin war if he wished, without limit of time:

### SECTION 3

#### AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES

##### (A) AUTHORIZATION

The president is authorized to use the armed forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate in order to:

- (1) defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq; and
- (2) enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

Was this a declaration of war? After all, the Constitution stipulates that “Congress shall have the power ... [to] declare war ...” [Article I, § 8] Since 1950 successive Presidents have gone to war without a Congressional declaration, typically pleading urgency, or invitation, or some quality of the intervention which sets it apart from a ‘war’ as once understood. The ‘undeclared war’ in Vietnam led Congress to pass a War Powers Act, which imposes some requirements to approach the Congress *ex post* and secure assent. But even the weak Congressional role of the War Powers Act is circumvented by declaring that the Resolution “is intended to constitute specific statutory authorization” stipulated in section 5(b) of the War Powers Act. This is—in short—a blank check for war.

What did the White House tell Congress, and Congress accept? This paragraph from the preamble captures the tone and content of White House representations

Whereas Iraq both poses a continuing threat to the national security of the United States and international peace and security in the Persian Gulf region and remains in material and unacceptable breach of its international obligations by, among other things, continuing to possess and develop a significant chemical and

---

biological weapons capability, actively seeking a nuclear weapons capability, and supporting and harboring terrorist organizations; ...

incorporates egregious misrepresentations, that Iraq

- poses a continuing threat to the national security of the United States;
- continues to possess and develop a *significant* chemical and biological weapons capability; is actively seeking a nuclear weapons capability; supports and harbors terrorist organizations.

‘Significant’ is the Resolution’s word, but it could be used to test all four claims: for example, hospitality to once-upon-a-time ‘terrorists’ does not carry the burden of justification for war.

The Resolution explicitly conjures the possibility that Iraq might attack the United States: Iraq has the “capability and willingness to use weapons of mass destruction.” There is a risk Iraq would “launch a surprise attack against the United States.”

Whereas Iraq's demonstrated capability and willingness to use weapons of mass destruction, the risk that the current Iraqi regime will either employ those weapons to launch a surprise attack against the United States or its Armed Forces or provide them to international terrorists who would do so, and the extreme magnitude of harm that would result to the United States and its citizens from such an attack, combine to justify action by the United States to defend itself; ...

We have written that the White House sought to tie Iraq to the 9.11 attacks, although no evidence supports doing so. Here is how this move was made in the Resolution:

Whereas members of al-Qaida, an organization bearing responsibility for attacks on the United States, its citizens, and interests, including the attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, are known to be in Iraq;

Whereas Iraq continues to aid and harbor other international terrorist organizations, including organizations that threaten the lives and safety of American citizens; ...

The Resolution goes one step further: it implies that it is *up to the sole discretion of the United States* to judge that a UN

---

Security Council resolution needs to be “enforced” and by what means, including war. In effect, the White House arrogates to itself the powers of the Security Council, and the US Congress falls for it.

Finally, Congress reserved no rights to itself. It did not limit the term of its grant of authority. (There are anodyne requirements for reporting by the White House, which pose no restraint on presidential action.) It is a Joint Resolution, which to be enacted into law required, and obtained on 16 October, G. W. Bush’s signature. It follows that the authorization cannot be withdrawn by any act which does *not* win a president’s signature. This is one-way authorization, with no opening for subsequent reconsideration. It is a *gotcha!*

### *Parliamentary Approval*

On 24 September 2002, the day its contentious Iraq dossier was published, the British Government opened a Parliamentary debate on Iraq. Tony Blair made this representation to the Commons:

The dossier is based on the work of the British Joint Intelligence Committee. For over 60 years, beginning just before world war two, the JIC has provided intelligence assessments to British Prime Ministers. Normally, its work is obviously secret. Unusually, because it is important that we explain our concerns about Saddam to the British people, we have decided to disclose its assessments.

I am aware, of course, that people will have to take elements of this on the good faith of our intelligence services, but this is what they are telling me, the British Prime Minister, and my senior colleagues. The intelligence picture that they paint is one accumulated over the last four years. It is extensive, detailed and authoritative. It concludes that Iraq has chemical and biological weapons, that Saddam has continued to produce them, that he has existing and active military plans for the use of chemical and biological weapons, which could be activated within 45 minutes, including against his own Shia population, and that he is actively trying to acquire nuclear weapons capability.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmhansrd/vo020924/debtex/t/20924-01.htm#20924-01\\_head0](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmhansrd/vo020924/debtex/t/20924-01.htm#20924-01_head0)

---

We now know, of course, that the ‘authoritative’ 45-minute claim was based on one unconfirmed report, that it referred to use of chemical and biological weapons *on the battlefield*—and so would pose a threat only in the case of war, and that—as of this writing—nothing has been found to confirm such a claim. It was, in short, reckless and wrong.

The Commons voted twice. In the second vote, on 18 March 2003, the BBC reported these results:

Tony Blair has won Commons backing to send UK forces into battle with Saddam Hussein - but also suffered another major backbench rebellion.

Amid dramatic scenes in the Commons on Tuesday night, 217 MPs - 139 of them Labour backbenchers - backed a rebel amendment opposing the government's stance on Iraq, with 396 opposing the motion.

A motion backing the government's position was passed by 412 votes to 149.

#### Rebel vote

For: 217

Against: 396

Labour rebels: 139

Majority: 179

There was relief for the government after fears that many more of Labour's backbenchers would oppose Tony Blair's line on Iraq.

But the revolt among Labour MPs was still up on the last vote with 139 backbenchers opposing Mr Blair compared to 122 at the last vote.

#### Government motion

For: 412

Against: 149

Majority: 263

Fifteen Tories defied their leadership by voting against the government.

Support for the government motion fell by 22 votes to 412 from 434 when Iraq was last debated.

Rebel Graham Allen said the revolt was the largest ever against a Labour government.

This vote followed a debate in which—as the Labour ‘no’ votes show—there was sharp criticism of the Government's intentions. The text of the opponent's resolution put it that the



case for war “has not yet been established.” Then the Commons went to the final vote, declaring it “supports the decision of Her Majesty’s Government that the United Kingdom should use all means necessary to ensure the disarmament of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction”

The text of the 18 March 2003 Commons resolution [**bold face added**]:

That this House notes its decisions of 25th November 2002 and 26th February 2003 to endorse UN Security Council Resolution 1441; **recognises that Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction and long range missiles, and its continuing non-compliance with Security Council Resolutions, pose a threat to international peace and security**; notes that in the 130 days since Resolution 1441 was adopted Iraq has not co-operated actively, unconditionally and immediately with the weapons inspectors, and has rejected the final opportunity to comply and is in further material breach of its obligations under successive mandatory UN Security Council Resolutions; **regrets that despite sustained diplomatic effort by Her Majesty’s Government it has not proved possible to secure a second Resolution in the UN because one Permanent Member of the Security Council made plain in public its intention to use its veto whatever the circumstances**; notes the opinion of the Attorney General that, Iraq having failed to comply and Iraq being at the time of Resolution 1441 and continuing to be in material breach, the authority to use force under Resolution 678 has revived and so continues today; believes that the United Kingdom must uphold the authority of the United Nations as set out in Resolution 1441 and many Resolutions preceding it, and therefore **supports the decision of Her Majesty’s Government that the United Kingdom should use all means necessary to ensure the disarmament of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction**; offers wholehearted support to the men and women of Her Majesty’s Armed Forces now on duty in the Middle East; in the event of military operations requires that, on an urgent basis, the United Kingdom should seek a new Security Council Resolution that would affirm Iraq’s territorial integrity, ensure rapid delivery of humanitarian relief, allow for the earliest possible lifting of UN sanctions, an international reconstruction programme, and the use of all oil revenues for the benefit of the Iraqi people and endorse an appropriate post-conflict administration for Iraq, leading to a representative government which upholds human rights and the rule of law for all Iraqis; and also welcomes the imminent publication of the Quartet’s roadmap as a significant step to bringing a just and lasting peace settlement between Israelis and Palestinians and for the wider Middle East region, and endorses the role of Her Majesty’s Government in actively working for peace between Israel and Palestine.<sup>4</sup>

The assertions marked in **bold** capture the problem faced by Labour MPs. Many were skeptical that Iraq possessed “weapons of mass destruction” or thought, if it did so, that they were

---

4

[http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmhansrd/cm030318/debtext/30318-06.htm#30318-06\\_head1](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmhansrd/cm030318/debtext/30318-06.htm#30318-06_head1)

© 2003 Bruce D. Larkin. Not for reproduction or citation without written permission of the author.

---

remnants of earlier production, aged and unready. No *evidence* had been produced of current chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons. There was no evidence to show that Iraq had “long range missiles.” But if the *existence* of these was in doubt, then they could not be the antecedents of a claim that Iraq posed “a threat to international peace and security.”

In March 2003, of course, it was not known *by Parliament*—though it was known by senior UK intelligence officers—that the claim that WMD were deployable in “forty-five minutes” referred to battlefield weapons only.

In earlier days Labour MPs had called for an authorising UN resolution. In the text laid down by the Government, “one Permanent Member”—France—is blamed for there being no such resolution. This is a canard, masquing the fact that Washington could not find the requisite nine votes for war in the Security Council, because members—France strongly among them—did not believe the case made out.

And when it asks Parliament’s approval, the Government cannot quite utter the words ‘make war’, but instead asks approval of “all means necessary to ensure the disarmament of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction,” evidence for the existence of which was not presented.

### *UNSC Resolution 1441, 8 November 2002*<sup>5</sup>

Negotiations led the UN Security Council to adopt—unanimously—Resolution 1441. It establishes revised terms for UNMOVIC and IAEA inspection of Iraq. But world attention sprang from the declared US intention to go to war.

We can summarize the antecedents briefly. GW Bush’s political bureau included advocates of steps to remove Saddam Hussein. By mid-2001 they were actively promoting their cause

---

<sup>5</sup> This section reproduces the analysis in Appendix 2 of an earlier paper [8 December 2002], “Iraq: Go to War? and the Nuclear Question,” because of the importance of UNSC Resolution 1441 in the debate leading to war. The paper, which includes the text of UNSC 1441, is at

<http://www.gcdd.net/TX.024=2002.12.08.Iraq.pdf>

© 2003 Bruce D. Larkin. Not for reproduction or citation without written permission of the author.

---

within government. After 9.11 various reasons to do so were offered: that Iraq aided terrorism, was making—and trying to make—horror weapons, and practiced a cruel regime against its people. By August 2002 the intensity and clarity of Bush administration statements began to firm on ‘weapons of mass destruction’ and ‘regime change’. Iraq would oust Saddam Hussein, or the United States would do so by force. While insisting consistently that it could make war alone, Washington also consulted other countries, but found little enthusiasm for its ‘preemptive’ project, and produced for the public no evidence either of an ongoing ‘terrorist’ connection or ‘weapons of mass destruction.’ At this juncture the issue was moved into the UN Security Council by Permanent Members who sought to turn the US plan aside. France insisted—most importantly—that the questions ‘is there an Iraqi WMD program?’ and ‘if there is, what should be done?’ were questions for the Security Council, where it held a vote and a veto, not questions for Washington alone. The White House, having won a resolution from the US Congress ‘authorizing’ war, now wanted a UNSC resolution—if there was to be one—which did not constrain it, and which could be read as permitting war.

France successfully resisted ‘automaticity’. There is no explicit statement in 1441 that UNSC action would be required to permit war, but without that understanding the vote would not have been unanimous. In the United States, however, 1441 is not portrayed by the White House and its commentators as a victory for restraint, but as a demonstration of Washington’s winning a ‘tough’ resolution on inspections, one which Iraq would surely violate, the violations justifying war. The United States continued to take ostentatious preparations to attack, affirming its credibility.

This recitation of a familiar history points to several phrases from Resolution 1441 as especially significant, bearing on forthcoming policy choices:

- “*material breach*”

---

The United States prepares to make three justifications of a right to war against Iraq unilaterally. One is that material breach by Iraq of UNSC resolutions requires they be enforced, and a second that material breach breaks the terms of the cease-fire suspending the Gulf War and reawakens war authorization. A third is that the US action is in self-defense. Washington won two references to ‘material breach’ in UNSC 1441:

1. *Decides* that Iraq has been and remains in material breach of its obligations under relevant resolutions, including resolutions 687 (1991) ...
4. *Decides* that false statements or omissions in the declarations submitted by Iraq pursuant to this resolution and failure by Iraq at any time to comply with, and cooperate fully in the implementation of, this resolution shall constitute a further material breach ...

- *return to the Security Council*

France called initially for ‘two resolutions’. One would define the new terms for inspection. A second would be required to authorize enforcement action.

Resolution 1441 returns non-compliant action by Iraq to the Security Council:

4. *Decides* ... shall constitute a further material breach of Iraq’s obligations and will be reported to the Council for assessment in accordance with paragraphs 11 and 12 below;
11. *Directs* the Executive Chairman of UNMOVIC and the Director-General of the IAEA to report immediately to the Council any interference by Iraq with inspection activities, as well as any failure by Iraq to comply with its disarmament obligations, including its obligations regarding inspections under this resolution;
12. *Decides* to convene immediately upon receipt of a report in accordance with paragraphs 4 or 11 above, in order to consider the situation and the need for full compliance with all of the relevant Council resolutions in order to secure international peace and security;

- “serious consequences”

§13 uses euphemism to threaten Iraq with armed enforcement—war—if it fails to comply:

---

13. *Recalls*, in that context, that the Council has repeatedly warned Iraq that it will face serious consequences as a result of its continued violations of its obligations;

Three other provisions promise dispute. One invests inspectors with “immediate, unimpeded, unconditional, and unrestricted access” in Iraq. A second bars threats or acts against states “taking action to uphold any Council resolution.” A third grants UNMOVIC and IAEA authority “at their discretion” to conduct interviews of Iraqi informants outside Iraq and to “facilitate” travel of family members as well. In the first month after Resolution 1441 was enacted the United States made a point of all these provisions. It called for speeded-up inspections and interrogation of Iraqi personnel. It complained about Iraqi ‘firing’ on US and British aircraft enforcing ‘no-fly zones’.

What of US theories justifying ‘preemptive’ war against Iraq? The ‘self-defence’ argument is empty wordplay, absent any evidence of Iraqi intent to attack the United States. Defence of another country? Again, intent. The Charter, of course, assigns to the Security Council “the principal responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.” The Charter acknowledges an “inherent right of individual or collective self-defence” but under specific conditions and without relinquishing the supremacy of the Security Council:

Article 51

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

In short, the “right of self-defence” is not a trump card which can be played at will.

Does the United States have the right to decide to enforce UNSC resolutions? Not if Article 48 §1 of the Charter is taken literally, for it specifies that enforcement shall be carried out “as the Security Council may determine”:

Article 48

---

1. The action required to carry out the decisions of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security shall be taken by all the Members of the United Nations or by some of them, as the Security Council may determine.

What, then, of the theory that the Gulf War is ongoing, and that the United States may elect unilaterally to resume hostilities? The legalistic case has the scent of lawyer's trickery. Why? Because this is 2002, not 1991, and the contemporary views of the members of the Security Council must be taken into account, given the situation as they see it and their assessment of the intelligence available to them. The stances taken by France, Russia, and China in negotiating Resolution 1441, as far as those are known, gives no reason to believe they would agree to unilateral US warmaking which ignored their rights in the Security Council.

And the Bush group could make war unilaterally—nonetheless.

Why does this matter so much? An effective non-proliferation regime—one which is fully sanctioned—has many requirements in common with a nuclear abolition regime. The ultimate guarantee is regime cooperation, on-site inspection, professional assessment, and reasoned analysis of the evidence; and, should inspection fail, collective force. US actions vis-à-vis Iraq in 2002 begin from the assumptions that, first, inspection won't work and, second, foreign countries—states other than the United States—lack the 'will' or 'moral stamina' to achieve control of 'weapons of mass destruction'. If the UNMOVIC and IAEA inspections, and consequent Security Council consideration, are not permitted to run their course, the question of their efficacy will be moot; and there will be no obstacle to charges that they 'failed'. Policing a dangerous world—it would be argued—requires that the 'responsible' powers be backed by nuclear weapons.

### *Choosing War*

The war launched against Iraq on 19 March 2003 was a 'war of choice', an instrument of policy. It was not forced on the United States. But when, and by whom, was that war chosen?

---

Of course, the GW Bush administration described the Iraq War as a move to prevent attack on the United States. But there was no attack in sight.

Elsewhere I have explained that wars are chosen, given a proposal to war ‘on the agenda’, when the *opposition* to that war falls *below* a critical threshold.<sup>6</sup> This is an inversion of what is commonly believed. Most people who attribute wars to government choice imagine that war is chosen when the *proponents* of war gather ‘enough support’, support *above* a critical threshold. But political institutions hold their commitments in check by impeding new ventures. They endow individuals and groups with the *authority* to say ‘no’.

The initial position, any morning, is that there is a clamor of proposals, all of them—so far—blocked by opposition. The clamor for war to remove Saddam Hussein began on 1 March 1991, when the United States decided that it would end offensive operations, and not press on to Baghdad.

In politics, advocates assemble a coalition, joined in support of a proposal for different reasons. And they may need to negotiate the terms of the proposal itself, in the process of bringing together a *sufficiently broad* coalition. Similarly, the opposition includes individuals and groups with very different reasons for their opposition, and—if they leave the opposition—very different reasons for stepping aside. This means it is not enough to count those who say ‘aye’ and tell their reasons. It is even more important to explain how, and for what reasons (if we can know them), a ‘no’ yesterday became a ‘yes’ or a ‘maybe’ or an ‘abstain’ today. How did resistance give way?

So this is a story of advocates and resisters, and how resistance gave way.

*March 1991: Finish the Job*

Gulf War 1991 lasted 44 days, from 17 January to 1 March. GHW Bush decided to stop with defeat of Iraqi forces in the south, and not go on to Baghdad. The decision was criticized at

---

<sup>6</sup> Bruce D. Larkin, *War Stories* (New York and Zurich: Peter Lang, 2001).

once. Some figures argued that until Saddam was removed, and his ‘weapons of mass destruction’ dismantled, Saddam remained a threat. Among these early critics were some advocates of war twelve years later.

*1992: DoD Plans at the End of the GHW Bush Administration*

A draft classified Defense Planning Guidance, prepared under the supervision of Undersecretary for Policy Paul Wolfowitz, said the United States should

retain the preeminent responsibility for addressing selectively those wrongs which threaten not only our interests, but those of our allies or friends, or which could seriously unsettle international relations.<sup>7</sup>

According to the *Washington Post*, the text “restates support for a set of seven classified scenarios prepared by the Pentagon describing hypothetical roads to war.” One of those is a war against Iraq.

The *Washington Post* summarises that the report “contemplates use of American military power to preempt or punish” use of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons—then directly quoting the text—“even in conflicts that otherwise do not directly engage U.S. interests.”

The Pentagon sought to dismiss the text as a draft, unapproved, and in May brought forth a revised text, with rounded corners, approved by Secretary of Defense ‘Dick’ Cheney.<sup>8</sup>

*Letter to President Clinton on Iraq: 26 January 1998*

This letter makes the case for Clinton to “act decisively” to bring about “the removal of Saddam Hussein’s regime from power.” Not to do so is to “accept a course of weakness and drift.” The letter’s significance lies in the signers, among them a number who hold positions in or near the GW Bush administration: Elliott Abrams, John Bolton, Zalmay Khalilzad,

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in *The Washington Post*, 11 March 1992.

<sup>8</sup> *The New York Times*, 23 May 1992.



---

Richard Perle, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and R. James Woolsey. The writers utter a number of the arguments which were to echo in 2002 and 2003. ‘Containment’ of Saddam is eroding. Even if weapons inspections were resumed “experience has shown that it is difficult if not impossible to monitor Iraq’s chemical and biological weapons production.” “Given the magnitude of the threat, the current policy ... is dangerously inadequate.”

The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction. ... In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action ... <sup>9</sup>

*Project for a New American Century: August 2000*

In a report titled *Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century* the Project for a New American Century laid out a plan for the future.<sup>10</sup> Iraq is mentioned 25 times in 90 pages. The report argues, for example, that

the United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein. ...

We cannot allow North Korea, Iran, Iraq or similar states to undermine American leadership, intimidate American allies or threaten the American homeland itself. The blessings of the American peace, purchased at fearful cost and a century of effort, should not be so trivially squandered.

*2000-2001: Maneuvers in the Middle East*

Well before 9.11 the United States and United Kingdom planned major moves in and around the Middle East. Britain, for its part, scheduled joint military maneuvers with Oman to take place from mid-October to mid-November 2001. These were to

---

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.newamericancentury.org/defensenationalsecurity2000.htm> The authors stipulate that the report “does not necessarily represent the view of the project participants.” Among participants is Paul Wolfowitz, now US Undersecretary of Defense.

---

see the largest British naval deployment since the Falklands/Malvinas war of 1982, and participation of thousands of British ground troops.

The United States announced in the summer of 2001 that it intended to preposition military materiel on Diego Garcia, the British island in the Indian Ocean on which the United States maintains a significant military presence. This materiel would be drawn from stocks in Europe where, it was said, they were no longer required because of the end of the Cold War. On Diego Garcia they would be available for use in Asia. In fact, of course, Diego Garcia became a staging point for raids on Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>11</sup>

A British attack submarine from the flotilla war-gaming off Oman fired cruise missiles into Afghanistan as part of the US operations against Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

Were the United States and United Kingdom planning large-scale military action in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, or Iran before 11 September 2001?

*Summer and Fall 2001: What Did James Woolsey Want?*

In the summer of 2001 former CIA director James Woolsey—at Department of Defense expense—traveled to Europe where, according to *The Observer*, he “argued the case for links existing between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda.”<sup>12</sup>

And Iraq was on his mind in the days immediately after 9.11. On September 16th Woolsey “suggested that America had to strike Iraq for sponsoring terrorism.” Maureen Dowd observed that ‘Nightline’ host Ted Koppel rebutted Woolsey, saying “Nobody right now is suggesting that Iraq had anything to do with this. In fact, quite the contrary.” And that Woolsey replied: “I don’t think it matters. I don’t think it matters.”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> I don’t know whether these movements were already underway when the United States announced them in mid-2001, nor do I know how advanced they may have been by October 2001 or March 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Antony Barnett and Solomon Hughes, *The Observer* [London], 22 May 2003. <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/bush/story/0,8224,953646,00.html>

<sup>13</sup> Maureen Dowd, *International Herald Tribune*, 5 June 2003.

---

And Woolsey made the case for ‘bringing democracy to Iraq’ in a *Washington Post* op-ed on 27 November 2001:

Of the Mideast’s predator governments -- Iraq, Iran, Syria and Sudan -- Iraq presents the most urgent problem. Its work on weapons of mass destruction, untrammelled now for three years by U.N. inspections, creates a serious risk for its neighbors and for us. We have plenty of evidence of Iraq’s support of terrorists, such as its training of other Arabs at Salman Pak in how to hijack aircraft with knives. We know of many meetings between Iraqi intelligence and various terrorists. And we know for a fact that Saddam tried to assassinate former president George H. W. Bush in the spring of 1993.

This seems quite sufficient for putting Saddam's regime next in the cross-hairs. Those who would argue that we cannot move against Iraq without hundreds of thousands of American troops and dozens of allies must now deal with the reality of what has happened in Afghanistan. They should also take a good look at the Iraqi armed forces, which are a shadow of what we confronted in 1991. We do need help, but only one government is critical -- Turkey. The Turkish government fears a split-up of Iraq and worries that a separate Kurdistan in what is now northern Iraq would exert a gravitational pull on Turkey's Kurds. This problem should be manageable by working with the Iraqi opposition to guarantee Iraq's future borders and to give Turkey a role in guaranteeing stability in the north and in obtaining access to the oil fields there.

This will not be easy, but it should be well within our power if we are determined. Operating from Turkey and from aircraft carriers in the Persian Gulf, we should have less difficulty generating enough sorties to make quick and devastating use of air power than we had against landlocked Afghanistan. We will have to take out Iraqi air defenses and hit Iraqi ground units from the air when they concentrate to fight. We need to arm the Iraqi opposition in the north and south and provide advisers and other assistance, as in Afghanistan. We should not do this just to destroy specific sites (Saddam has hidden much of his work on weapons of mass destruction in and under hospitals, schools, etc.) nor to stage a coup to replace Saddam with another dictator. There should be no doubt about our objective: We need to bring democracy to Iraq.<sup>14</sup>

### 9.11: Iraq Onto the Agenda?

Robert Woodward writes that before 9.11 “the Pentagon had been working for months on developing a military option for Iraq.” At an NSC meeting at 4 pm on 9.12 Rumsfeld raised the

---

<http://www.iht.com/articles/98559.html>

<sup>14</sup> Seen 24 October 2003 at

<http://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/index.jsp?section=papers&code=01-F 81>

© 2003 Bruce D. Larkin. Not for reproduction or citation without written permission of the author.

---

possibility “that they could take advantage of the opportunity offered by the terrorist attacks to go after Saddam immediately.” Powell was opposed.<sup>15</sup>

*To July 2002: The US Military Favors ‘Containment’*

Between 9.11 and some point in mid-2002 there was a debate in Washington whether a continuing policy to ‘contain’ Saddam Hussein was sufficient to meet US objectives in Iraq, or whether action—war, or threat of war—was required. Informed newspaper reportage from Washington attributed to senior US military officers the view that ‘containment’ was working and should be allowed to continue. According to the *Washington Post*, “the Joint Chiefs of Staff have waged a determined behind-the-scenes campaign to persuade the Bush administration to reconsider an aggressive posture toward Iraq in which war was regarded as all but inevitable.”<sup>16</sup>

It seems likely that at some point, perhaps in late June or mid-July 2002, the Executive told those officers to be quiet, and instead to prepare for war in Iraq.<sup>17</sup>

*July-August 2002: The GHW Bush Group Goes Public*

Startlingly, in mid-summer 2002 prominent members of the administration of GHW Bush went public with implicit criticism of plans for war. Brent Scowcroft, GHW Bush’s National Security Advisor, was one of those, arguing that counterterrorism, not Iraq, should be the Administration’s focus.

... the central point is that any campaign against Iraq, whatever the strategy, cost and risks, is certain to divert us for some indefinite period from our war on terrorism. Worse, there is a virtual consensus in the world against an attack on Iraq at this time.

---

<sup>15</sup> Robert Woodward, *Bush At War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), p. 49.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, *Washington Post*, 24 May 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Michel T. Klare, “The Generals’ Revolt,” *The Nation*, 21 April 2003 (web). <http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml%3Fi=20030421&s=klare>

---

If we are truly serious about the war on terrorism, it must remain our top priority . . .<sup>18</sup>

They must have thought this was a moment at which GW Bush—or more properly the national security ring—could choose war. And the position which Scowcroft and others took complemented that of the ‘senior military officials’. Together, these could have been significant constituencies against war.

*mid-August 2002: The Israeli Contribution*

I’ve pointed out elsewhere<sup>19</sup> that

- 3• Israeli officials have urged the United States to make war against Iraq.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Brent Scowcroft, “Don’t Attack Saddam”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 August 2002. <http://ffip.com/opeds081502.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Bruce D. Larkin, “War With Iraq? and the Nuclear Question,” posted 8 December 2002 at <http://www.gcdd.net/TX.024=2002.12.08.Iraq.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Three Israeli officials were reported to have made statements to this effect in mid-August, though one—Foreign Minister Shimon Peres—hedged his call for action by insisting he was *not* urging the US to war. On 18 August the Israeli government sought to back away from its public agitation for war. The subject is delicate, and it is therefore useful to quote actual language of the reports.

Sharon. 16 August 2002. AFP, citing *Haaretz*: “Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has urged the United States not to delay its threatened strike on Iraq any further. Postponing a military operation against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein’s regime ‘will not create a more convenient environment for action in the future,’ the Israeli daily *Haaretz* quoted Sharon as saying Friday [16 August 2002] in a message sent to the US administration.”

<http://www.arabia.com/afp/news/mideast/article/english/0,10846,267538,00.html>  
Peres. 15 August 2002. CNN: “Attacking Iraq now would be ‘quite dangerous, but postponing it would be more dangerous,’ Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Thursday [15 August 2002]. ‘The problem today is not if but when,’ Peres said, ‘and if they think we wait, [Iraqi President] Saddam [Hussein] will change, and if he will change, it ... will be for the worse; he will have more weapons.’”

<http://www.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/08/15/peres.iraq/>  
Ranaan Gissin. 16 August 2002. CBS: “Israel is urging U.S. officials not to delay a military strike against Iraq’s Saddam Hussein, an aide to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Friday. ... ‘Any postponement of an attack on Iraq at this stage will serve no purpose,’ [Ranaan] Gissin said. ‘It will only give him (Saddam) more of an opportunity to accelerate his program of weapons of mass destruction.’”

---

It is unusual for one country to call on another to start a war, but Israeli officials have done that. Is there any relationship between the Bush Administration's insistence on the propriety and necessity of war against Iraq and Israel's pressing the United States to make war? Has the Israeli government said, for example, that if it found evidence of an advanced Iraqi nuclear weapons program, but the United States did not act, that it would use its nuclear capability to preempt any attack by Iraq against Israel?

The fact that three senior Israeli officials spoke over two days (15-16 August 2002) urging the United States to 'not delay' a strike on Iraq points with little doubt to a decision by Ariel Sharon to orchestrate comments directed to a debate ongoing within the United States government. Though circumstantial, this points with high likelihood to the ten days from the 15th to the 24th of August 2002 as the time at which the decision to prepare for war was taken.

*14 August 2002: The 'Principals' Discuss War Against Iraq.*

On Wednesday, 14 August, the 'principals' met in Washington, without Bush. According to Bob Woodward

Powell said they need to think about getting a coalition for action against Iraq, some kind of international cover at least. The Brits were with us, he noted, but their support was fragile in the absence of some international coalition or cover.<sup>21</sup>

*16 August 2002: GW Bush in Crawford, Texas*

GW Bush met the press pool in Crawford, Texas on 16 August. This exchange took place:

---

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/08/18/world/main519037.shtml>

Sharon's office denies he urged war. 18 August 2002. South African Broadcasting Company report, relying in part on AFP: "Ariel Sharon, the Israeli Prime Minister, has denied that Israel is urging the US to attack Iraq, a source from the prime minister's office said. 'We are not pressing the United States to bring forward an attack on Iraq,' Sharon told today's weekly cabinet meeting, according to this source."

[http://www.sabcnews.com/world/the\\_middle\\_east/0,1009,41059,00.html](http://www.sabcnews.com/world/the_middle_east/0,1009,41059,00.html)

<sup>21</sup> Robert Woodward, *Bush At War*, above, p. 335.

---

[Michael \_\_\_\_\_.] Q Mr. President, not all Republicans seem sold on your intention to deal with dictators who gas their own people. What are you going to do to make that case more persuasively? Are you consulting with them? And, what is your obligation of getting approval, not just consultation, with Congress?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I appreciate that question. First of all, I am aware that some very intelligent people are expressing their opinions about Saddam Hussein and Iraq. I listen carefully to what they have to say.

There should be no doubt in anybody's mind this man is thumbing his nose at the world, that he has gassed his own people, that he is trouble in his neighborhood, that he desires weapons of mass destruction. I will use all the latest intelligence to make informed decisions about how best to keep the world at peace, how best to defend freedom for the long run.

We'll continue to consult. Listen, it's a healthy debate for people to express their opinion. People should be allowed to express their opinion. But America needs to know, I'll be making up my mind based upon the latest intelligence and how best to protect our own country plus our friends and allies.

*26 August 2002: Vice President 'Dick' Cheney Speaks to 103rd National Convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars*

'Dick' Cheney's views are apposite, if as many believe his is the decisive voice on policy in the GW Bush administration. He devoted most of a 26 August speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars to Iraq. Because of its importance, the speech is reproduced in full as an Appendix, and the most salient lines assessed here.<sup>22</sup>

Cheney insists WMD programs are underway:

The Iraqi regime has in fact been very busy enhancing its capabilities in the field of chemical and biological agents. And they continue to pursue the nuclear program they began so many years ago. ...

Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. Among other sources, we've gotten this from the firsthand testimony of defectors -- including Saddam's own son-in-law, who was subsequently murdered at Saddam's direction. Many of us are convinced that Saddam will acquire nuclear weapons fairly soon.

Current programs? Fresh sources? Saddam's son-in-law, Lieutenant-General Hussein Kamel Hassan Al Majid, crossed into temporary exile in Jordan on 8 August 1995, and spoke with

---

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/08/20020826.html>

---

IAEA representatives on 22 August, seven years before Cheney's speech.

Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us.

Saddam has WMD and intends to use them: "no doubt." Did Cheney *not know* that the evidence failed to sustain his claims? Or—worse, if possible—did Cheney *know* that the evidence failed to support his claims?

Another argument holds that opposing Saddam Hussein would cause even greater troubles in that part of the world, and interfere with the larger war against terror. I believe the opposite is true. Regime change in Iraq would bring about a number of benefits to the region. When the gravest of threats are eliminated, the freedom-loving peoples of the region will have a chance to promote the values that can bring lasting peace. As for the reaction of the Arab "street," the Middle East expert Professor Fouad Ajami predicts that after liberation, the streets in Basra and Baghdad are "sure to erupt in joy in the same way the throngs in Kabul greeted the Americans." Extremists in the region would have to rethink their strategy of Jihad. Moderates throughout the region would take heart. And our ability to advance the Israeli-Palestinian peace process would be enhanced, just as it was following the liberation of Kuwait in 1991.

In short, an easy win. Did Cheney *not realize* that war in Iraq would be complex and difficult, fostering enemies even as it could win friends? Or did Cheney *know* that there would be no easy victory in Iraq?

*7 September 2002: Tony Blair and GW Bush Met at Camp David, Maryland*

Tony Blair met with GW Bush on 7 September. Bush introduced their intentions by saying that

I look forward to spending a good three hours talking to our friend about how to keep the peace. This world faces some serious threat -- and threats -- and we're going to talk about it. We're going to talk about how to promote freedom around the world. We're going to talk about our shared values of -- recognizes the worth of every individual.<sup>23</sup>

and the two went on to say more about Iraq:

---

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020907-2.html>



PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Thanks.

I'm looking very much forward, obviously, to discussing the issues that are preoccupying us at the moment with the President. And I thank him for his kind invitation to come here and his welcome.

The point that I would emphasize to you is that the threat from Saddam Hussein and weapons of mass destruction, chemical, biological, potentially nuclear weapons capability, that threat is real. We only need to look at the report from the International Atomic Agency this morning showing what has been going on at the former nuclear weapons sites to realize that. And the policy of inaction is not a policy we can responsibly subscribe to. So the purpose of our discussion today is to work out the right strategy for dealing with this, because deal with it we must.

THE PRESIDENT: AP lady.

Q Mr. President, can you tell us what conclusive evidence of any nuclear -- new evidence you have of nuclear weapons capabilities of Saddam Hussein?

THE PRESIDENT: We just heard the Prime Minister talk about the new report. I would remind you that when the inspectors first went into Iraq and were denied -- finally denied access, a report came out of the Atomic -- the IAEA that they were six months away from developing a weapon. I don't know what more evidence we need.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Absolutely right. And what we -- what we know from what has been going on there for a long period of time is not just the chemical, biological weapons capability, but we know that they were trying to develop nuclear weapons capability. And the importance of this morning's report is it yet again it shows that there is a real issue that has to be tackled here.

I mean, I was just reading coming over here the catalog of attempts by Iraq to conceal its weapons of mass destruction, not to tell the truth about it over -- not just over a period of months, but over a period of years. Now, that's why the issue is important. And, of course, it's an issue not just for America, not just for Britain, it's an issue for the whole of the international community. But it is an issue we have to deal with. And that's why I say to you that the policy of inaction, doing nothing about it, is not something we can responsibly adhere to.

THE PRESIDENT: Do you want to call on somebody? You don't have to if you don't want to. (Laughter.)

Q A question for the President and the Prime Minister. Will you, Mr. President, seek a U.N. resolution prior to any action against Iraq?

And for the Prime Minister, would you sanction any action against Iraq before -- without a U.N. resolution?

---

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first, I'm going to give a speech next Thursday, and I'd like you to tune in.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: As I said to you I think at the press conference we gave earlier in the week, this is an issue for the whole of the international community. But the U.N. has got to be the way of dealing with this issue, not the way of avoiding dealing with it. Now, of course, as we showed before in relation to Afghanistan, we want the broadest possible international support, but it's got to be on the basis of actually making sure that the threat that we've outlined is properly adhered to.

Because the point that I would emphasize to you is it's not us, it's not Britain or America that's in breach of United Nations resolutions. It's Saddam Hussein and Iraq. And therefore, this issue is there for the international community to deal with. And we've got to make sure that it is a way of dealing with it.

THE PRESIDENT: Patsy. ...

Q -- what is your actual target in Iraq? Is it weapons of mass destruction, or Saddam Hussein? And if the Prime Minister could answer, too.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, as you know, our government in 1998 -- action that my administration has embraced -- decided that this regime was not going to honor its commitments to get rid of weapons of mass destruction. The Clinton administration supported regime change. Many members of the United States Senate supported regime change. My administration still supports regime change. There's all kinds of ways to change regimes.

This man is a man who said he was going to get rid of weapons of mass destruction. And for 11 long years, he has not fulfilled his promise. And we're going to talk about what to do about it. We owe it to future generations to deal with this problem, and that's what these discussions are all about.

Final question. ...

Q Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, do you have any support ... from any other countries in the world, apart from Britain? And Mr. Blair, too.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. A lot of people understand that this man has defied every U.N. resolution -- 16 U.S. resolutions he's ignored. A lot of people understand he holds weapons of mass destruction. A lot of people understand he has invaded two countries. A lot of people understand he's gassed his own people. A lot of people understand he is unstable. So we've got a lot of support. A lot of people understand the danger.

PRIME MINISTER BLAIR: Yes, and I can tell you from the discussions I've had with people, of course, there are people asking perfectly reasonable questions about this, but the one thing that no one can deny is that Saddam Hussein is in

---

breach of the United Nations resolutions on weapons of mass destruction -- that is, chemical, biological, nuclear weapons; that that poses a threat not just to the region, because there is no way, if those weapons were used, that the threat would simply stay in the region.

People understand that. Now, we've got to make sure that we work out a way forward that, of course, mobilizes the maximum support, but does so on the basis of removing a threat that the United Nations itself has determined is a threat to the whole of the world.<sup>24</sup>

Blair returned to London, where the British government was preparing the dossier to be published on 24 September. Those around Blair were stretched out of shape to make the strongest possible case for war. Inferring back, it seems inescapable that Blair, while in Washington, made or repeated a commitment that Britain would take a full partner's part in a forthcoming Iraq War.

*12 September 2002: Bush Addresses the UN General Assembly*

GW Bush addressed the UN General Assembly on 12 September.<sup>25</sup> Bush laid down five conditions for 'peace'. The implication was clear: failure to comply would bring war to Iraq:

We want the resolutions of the world's most important multilateral body to be enforced. And right now those resolutions are being unilaterally subverted by the Iraqi regime. Our partnership of nations can meet the test before us, by making clear what we now expect of the Iraqi regime.

If the Iraqi regime wishes peace, it will immediately and unconditionally forswear, disclose, and remove or destroy all weapons of mass destruction, long-range missiles, and all related material.

If the Iraqi regime wishes peace, it will immediately end all support for terrorism and act to suppress it, as all states are required to do by U.N. Security Council resolutions.

If the Iraqi regime wishes peace, it will cease persecution of its civilian population, including Shi'a, Sunnis, Kurds, Turkomans, and others, again as required by Security Council resolutions.

If the Iraqi regime wishes peace, it will release or account for all Gulf War personnel whose fate is still unknown. It will return the remains of any who are deceased, return stolen property, accept liability for losses resulting from the

---

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html>

---

invasion of Kuwait, and fully cooperate with international efforts to resolve these issues, as required by Security Council resolutions.

If the Iraqi regime wishes peace, it will immediately end all illicit trade outside the oil-for-food program. It will accept U.N. administration of funds from that program, to ensure that the money is used fairly and promptly for the benefit of the Iraqi people.

If all these steps are taken, it will signal a new openness and accountability in Iraq. And it could open the prospect of the United Nations helping to build a government that represents all Iraqis -- a government based on respect for human rights, economic liberty, and internationally supervised elections.

and it is apparent that US judgments whether these criteria were met, and others' judgments, would be endless quarrel.

The next day GW Bush took three questions from reporters, prior to a meeting with Central African leaders:<sup>26</sup>

I'll take three questions from the American press corps, starting with Mr. Fournier, who writes for the Associated Press.

Q Thank you, sir. Knowing what you know about Saddam, what are the odds that he's going to meet all your demands and avoid confrontation?

THE PRESIDENT: I am highly doubtful that he'll meet our demands. I hope he does, but I'm highly doubtful. The reason I'm doubtful is he's had 11 years to meet the demands. For 11 long years he has basically told the United Nations and the world he doesn't care. And so, therefore, I am doubtful, but nevertheless, made the decision to move forward to work with the world community. And I hope the world community knows that we're extremely serious about what I said yesterday, and we expect quick resolution to the issue. And that's starting with quick action on a resolution.

Q Yes, sir, how soon are you expecting the resolution from the United Nations? In a week, month, days?

THE PRESIDENT: As soon as possible.

Q And how -- what kind of deadline would you perceive within that resolution?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, there will be deadlines within the resolution. Our chief negotiator for the United States, our Secretary of State, understands that we must have deadlines. And we're talking days and weeks, not months and years. And that's essential for the security of the world. This man has had 11 years to comply.

---

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020913.html>

---

For 11 long years, he's ignored world opinion. And he's put the credibility of the United Nations on line.

As I said yesterday, we'll determine -- how we deal with this problem will help determine the fate of multilateral body, which has been unilaterally ignored by Saddam Hussein. Will this body be able to keep the peace and deal with the true threats, including threats to security in Central African and other parts of the world, or will it be irrelevant?

Judy Keen.

Q Mr. President, thank you. Are you concerned that Democrats in Congress don't want a vote there until after U.N. action? And secondly, have you spoken with President Putin since your speech yesterday?

THE PRESIDENT: I have not spoken to President Putin since my speech. I did speak to his Foreign Minister, as did Colin Powell. I'll speak to President Putin, I'm confident, soon. I'll have -- I think we've got a scheduled phone call, actually.

And the first part of the question was, Democrats waiting for the U.N. to act? I can't imagine an elected United States -- elected member of the United States Senate or House of Representatives saying, I think I'm going to wait for the United Nations to make a decision. It seems like to me that if you're representing the United States, you ought to be making a decision on what's best for the United States. If I were running for office, I'm not sure how I'd explain to the American people -- say, vote for me, and, oh, by the way, on a matter of national security, I think I'm going to wait for somebody else to act.

And so I -- we'll see. My answer to the Congress is, they need to debate this issue and consult with us, and get the issue done as quickly as possible. It's in our national interests that we do so. I don't imagine Saddam Hussein sitting around, saying, gosh, I think I'm going to wait for some resolution. He's a threat that we must deal with as quickly as possible.

*10-11 October 2002, 16 October 2002: US Congress Commits to War*

On 10-11 October the US House of Representatives and Senate passed the measure 'authorizing' GW Bush to war against Iraq, and Bush signed the Joint Resolution into law on 16 October. [This action is discussed elsewhere in this text.]

---

*8 November 2002: Resolution 1441 of the UN Security Council*<sup>27</sup>

The Congressional resolution gave the White House a free hand. There is no evidence so far that any senior US officials questioned the war premise. Colin Powell preferred the cover of UN Security Council authority. No doubt many hoped that the pressures mounting and impending war would somehow release the catch, see Saddam removed, and so spare the need to go to war. But the war premise itself underlay US policy and action in the five months to 19 March.

Brought to the Security Council from several quarters—Tony Blair in search of a fig leaf, other Permanent Members seeking to derail or delay the drive for war, a Department of State concerned for US diplomatic relations—the administration worked a resolution it would later claim justified war. The resolution relaunched UN weapons inspections. But the White House and Pentagon would dismiss these, however rigorous and deliberate and rational they proved to be.

*So: When Did Washington Decide for War?*

This canvass points to the last two weeks of August 2002, seven months before Washington attacked, as the time at which any debate there was coalesced on war. As more evidence comes forth this conclusion will be adjusted, corrected, refined. But it's a good working hypothesis. Cheney's speech to the VFW at the end of August made public the lines of argument which dominated—and prevailed—in the internal debate. The following five months were used to sell a case, not to develop and encourage alternatives. Even in February and early March 2003, as war seemingly imminent, there were no signs in the press of any US interest in alternatives short of capitulation.

---

<sup>27</sup> A much fuller discussion of Resolution 1441, with special attention to its key terms, is in Bruce D. Larkin, "Iraq: Go to War? and the Nuclear Question", Addendum 2, pp. 24-28, followed by the full text of the resolution. <http://www.gcdd.net/TX.024=2002.12.08.Iraq.pdf>

---

And this was a War Presidency. In the absence of any further attacks on the United States, the Taliban defeated, how was the War on Terrorism to be conducted?

But Iraq was on the table the day after 9.11, and plans for war on Iraq—according to Bob Woodward—were being drawn up in the Pentagon *before* 9.11. Did Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz already believe, in January 2001, what they came to say repeatedly from August 2002? that Iraq’s “weapons of mass destruction” posed a present and growing threat, that an Iraqi nuclear weapon program was in place and at work, and that US “friends and allies in the region” were threatened? Did Tony Blair believe that? Was Cheney possessed by the fear that “Iraqi nuclear weapons” would be brought by terrorists to New York?

Are the chief hawks to be charged with deliberate deception—believing one thing and saying another—or with profound and reckless misjudgment—coming to believe that which no convincing evidence would support and then, on that basis, making war? Or were they simply amateurs in the skilled world of estimating intelligence, pawns of Iraqi exiles and Israeli politicians and quick-fix artists in their own circles? Did they really believe they could remake the Middle East—where all that oil lay—as they pleased? Were they—are they—so insulated from the world and from real experience abroad that they could not hear the concerns and doubts which should have cautioned them? Remember Rumsfeld on “old Europe” and the dismissal, on cheap and spurious grounds, of French objections.

Did they tell each other stories of hidden weapons programs, blinded inspections, “aid to terrorists”, and a prior administration’s “weakness and drift” so often that they came to believe these stories as bedrock fact?

Did they conclude, from the lack of visible and confirmed evidence, only that Saddam was just that much more dangerous a concealer?

Were they frightened of being chased from office by *another* failure to prevent a 9.11? Identifying *their holding office* with the best interests of the United States, did they conclude that the US national interest justified—required—suppressing any danger, any source of risk?

---

In short, how did they go so badly wrong and do such deep damage to the United States and its reputation in the world? And what will be the longer-term consequences of their misleading the American people on matters of fundamental political understanding?

Were they merely fools, or did they commit criminal deceit?

### *The Inspection Issue*

Inspections in Iraq were relaunched in late November 2002. In mid-March 2003 they were underway, and had not been halted by the Security Council, when inspectors had to be recalled in the face of imminent US attack. And while the United States had grudgingly acceded to a renewal of inspections after passage of UNSC Resolution 1441, Washington showed no patience for the inspection process.

Did Cheney, and the senior US Department of Defense officials, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz, want UNMOVIC/IAEA inspections to work? On a charitable view, they had convinced themselves that UN inspections *could not work*, and impelled by belief that Iraq had active weapons programs concluded that security lay only in war. Of the fallacies in this view, more later.

On the principal uncharitable view, they had decided that destroying the Saddam regime would serve one or more facets of US national interest—demonstrating US capacity to compel, discouraging recruitment to terrorism, establishing a tenable US military presence in the Middle East, bringing Iraqi oil operations within a market conducive to US participation, showing the merit of US initiative (as opposed to multilateralism, or European accommodation)—and would demonstrate the resolve and stature of the Administration, and so were fixed on ‘regime change’. Bush the ‘war president’ would be eminently electable in 2004. And ‘regime change’ would end the Iraqi ‘WMD threat’, making elaborate UN inspections unnecessary. In the charitable view, UN inspections would not work.



---

The problem with the uncharitable view is that it legitimizes ‘war of choice’ as an instrument of foreign policy. Or, worse, as a tool for internal political gain. It defies the judgment of allies.

The charitable view requires that we accept either a US intelligence failure or the Pentagon’s disregard of intelligence, and accept as well that alternatives short of war did not exist. But alternatives were being advanced. Late in the game, France proposed massively enlarging the inspection force. As early as mid-2002 analysts were discussing ‘protected inspection’ or ‘coercive inspection’ in which readiness to use force would be demonstrated but strictly in pursuit of the inspection agenda: no ‘regime change’.

We know that Wolfowitz sought to put Iraq on Bush’s agenda in the days immediately after 9.11. But the neo-conservatives’ preoccupation with Iraq dates from the 1990s.<sup>28</sup> Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld focused on perceived shortcomings of the UN inspection process.<sup>29</sup> In early 2002 Wolfowitz asked the CIA to investigate Hans Blix’ performance as head of IAEA, an unusual step interpreted as a part of an internal US policy struggle on Iraq. Richard Perle described the inspection issue as “a surrogate for a debate about whether we go after Saddam.”<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz were among signers of a 26 January 1998 letter to President Bill Clinton which called for “a strategy for removing Saddam’s regime from power” which would require “a full complement of diplomatic, political and military efforts.”

<http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqlintonletter.htm>

<sup>29</sup> Walter Pincus wrote in the *Washington Post*, “Rumsfeld Disputes Value of Iraq Arms Inspections,” 16 April 2002, that “Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said yesterday he was skeptical that a new United Nations arms inspection regime would build confidence that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is not developing nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Rumsfeld told reporters that even when U.N. inspectors were in Iraq during the 1990s, ‘for the most part anything they found was a result of having been cued to something as a result of a defector giving them a heads-up.’” <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A56918-2002Apr15&notFound=true>

<sup>30</sup> Walater Pincus and Colum Lynch, “Wolfowitz Had CIA Probe UN Diplomat in Charge,” *Washington Post*, 15 April 2002..

<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/2002/0415cia.htm>

---

In the lead-up to war press reported US ‘officials’ crudely dismissing Blix and the inspections.<sup>31</sup>

Blix’ interim reports and those of IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei were models of precision and balance, but gave the United States nothing it wanted. In turn, Blix was to say later that leads furnished the UN inspectors by the United States led to little or nothing, blind alleys.

### *The Hutton Inquiry*

The main question raised as a consequence of the Hutton Inquiry is whether the British Government overstated the case—went beyond the evidence—in a document issued on 24 September 2002 and which codified intelligence on Iraq ‘weapons of mass destruction’, preliminary to a vote in the House of Commons which in turn was a move toward Britain’s joining the war against Iraq. And did they do so *deliberately*, or if not, did they do so with *disregard for the need to be sure* that their effect did not distort the evidence?

The Hutton Inquiry held its last hearings on 25 September 2003, having begun in mid-August to probe the circumstances surrounding the apparent suicide of British weapons expert Dr. David Kelly.<sup>32</sup> The inquiry was prompted by a BBC radio report extemporized early in the morning of 29 May. In the first version BBC reporter Andrew Gilligan referred to a claim that Iraq could deploy weapons of mass destruction in 45 minutes, and the claim by a source—unnamed at the time but later seen to be Dr. Kelly—that the Prime Minister’s office had pressed for inclusion of the claim in a public report, though they “probably knew” that it was wrong. Kelly was named publicly by the Ministry of Defense and brought to testify before the Foreign

---

<sup>31</sup> See also Gordon Prather, “In Defense of Hans Blix,” WorldNetDaily.com: [http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=33307](http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=33307)

<sup>32</sup> Hearings began on 11 August 2003. Some further testimony was taken after 25 September. The official web site of the Hutton Inquiry is at <http://www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk/>

Affairs Select Committee of the Parliament.<sup>33</sup> What Gilligan said on air was

“... and what we've been told by one of the senior officials in charge of drawing up that dossier was that, actually the Government probably, erm, knew that that forty five minute figure was wrong, even before it decided to put it in.”<sup>34</sup>

Gilligan insisted, in testifying before the Hutton Inquiry, that

I was simply reporting what I believed Dr Kelly had meant when he said what he said, and I was not making the judgment that the Government had got it wrong in bad faith.<sup>35</sup>

British officials, elected and non-elected, insisted to the Inquiry that they had exercised appropriate care and scrutiny, and that the resultant report was wholly consonant with the intelligence available to those who prepared it. However, there is a deep flaw in the Government's position: they all knew that the claim that ‘weapons of mass destruction’ could be deployed in 45 minutes was dynamite, a clincher, and that because it suggested British troops in Cyprus or even the British Isles themselves could be targeted it would have a strong effect on the Commons debate, but the official charged with responsibility for overseeing the 24 September report, John Scarlett, and other intelligence officers *knew* that the 45-minutes referred only to

<sup>33</sup> Dr. Kelly's testimony is in FAC/4/0001-0027, from <http://www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk/content/evidence-lists/evidence-fac.htm>. The testimony is a pdf document.

<sup>34</sup> according to Gilligan's oral testimony to the Hutton Inquiry. The exact quoted words which appear in the Foreign Affairs Select Committee's questioning of Dr. Kelly are:

“I have spoken to a British official who was involved in the preparation of the dossier and he told me that until the week before it was published the draft dossier produced by the intelligence services adds little to what was already known. He said 'It was transformed the week before it was published to make it sexier'. The classic example was the statement that WMD were ready for use in 45 minutes. That information was not in the original draft. It was included in the dossier against their wishes because it wasn't reliable.”

<http://www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk/content/evidence-lists/evidence-fac.htm>:  
fac\_4\_0001to0027.pdf

<sup>35</sup> Hearing Transcript, Tuesday, 12 August 2003, morning, pp. 73-74. Lord Hutton and Mr. Dingemans, Counsel to the Inquiry, questioning BBC reporter Andrew Gilligan. <http://www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk/content/transcripts/hearing-trans04.htm>

---

*battlefield weapons*, not to weapons which could be launched over a distance.<sup>36</sup>

### *Dr. David Kelly's Version*

Did David Kelly agree with the British decision to make war in Iraq in March 2003?

There is a simple answer, supported by claims by his colleagues and by his sister's account of conversations with him, and confirmed by his own words: David Kelly agreed the war was necessary. He judged it right policy. That is the conclusion of the headlines, and the commentators. And it is almost certainly wrong.

In early March 2003 David Kelly wrote an article at the behest of a friend, Julie Flint, on Saddam's weapons program. In this article he exercises his skill in precision, his briefing style—as Flint puts it—of getting “every detail, every nuance” correct.

The *Observer* [London] published Kelly's article on 29 August 2003, under the headline “Only regime change will avert the threat.” Those are Kelly's words. But let us examine the distinctions he made.

On its face, Kelly's case seems to be for war. For example, after 12 unsuccessful years of UN supervision of disarmament, military force regrettably appears to be the only way of finally and conclusively disarming Iraq, but he does not attempt a case for war *now*, and a number of his claims seem to contradict—or weigh against—a case for war now. For example,

... the current threat presented by Iraq militarily is modest, both in terms of conventional and unconventional weapons ...

... it is assessed that Iraq is unable to manufacture nuclear weapons unless fissile material is available.<sup>+</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Scarlett was chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, which functioned in the Cabinet Office.

<sup>+</sup> A comment: Kelly means that the British personnel charged to analyse intelligence had concluded that Iraq could not make nuclear weapons [for some time] unless given the fissile material; and he may have thought the probability very low that Iraq could obtain sufficient quantities of fissile material .

---

War may now be inevitable. The proportionality and intensity of the conflict will depend on whether regime change or disarmament is the true objective. The US, and whoever willingly assists it, should ensure that the force, strength and strategy used is appropriate to the modest threat Iraq now poses.

The threat from Iraq's chemical and biological weapons is, however, unlikely to substantially affect the operational capabilities of US and British troops. Nor is it likely to create massive casualties in adjacent countries.

The long-term threat, however, remains Iraq's development to military maturity of weapons of mass destruction – something that only regime change will avert.

Of course, it is possible to read the article as—reluctant, or disappointed—agreement to the war. But I read it as having two main messages:

first, that there is no *urgent* or *pressing* threat from Iraq's 'weapons of mass destruction';

second, that if war were undertaken anyway, it should be done with restraint, focused and limited, "*appropriate to the modest threat Iraq now poses.*" [Italics added.]

And I read that same paragraph to draw a line between regime change and disarmament. Yes: Kelly writes that 'only regime change' will avert the 'long-term threat' of Iraqi WMD. The two sentences quoted above hold the key:

The proportionality and intensity of the conflict will depend on whether regime change or disarmament is the true objective. The US, and whoever willingly assists it, should ensure that the force, strength and strategy used is appropriate to the modest threat Iraq now poses.

The implication is that there is one *true aim* and one *concealed aim*; if disarmament were the true aim, the *modest threat* of Iraqi WMD would justify only a circumscribed use of force; but if regime change were the true aim, and a large and decisive force foreseen, the burden of the argument to do so could not be borne by adducing Iraqi WMD.

And I think the phrase "and whoever willingly assists" the United States—a pointed reference to Britain itself—should be read as a warning, and as a call to the duty of restraint.

The David Kelly whom I see in March 2003 is a man who knows that arguing against the tide on a paramount question, in

---

the culture of the British Ministry of Defense, is a sure ticket to losing voice. I do not mean that I think he wrote falsely: I imagine that he sincerely believed that only by force, in the longer-term, could Iraqi WMD programs be prevented from maturing. But I do not believe he judged the case for urgent action made out, nor any ‘imminent threat’ evidenced. He did believe a decision to go to war had already been made. Then the best that could be obtained, if weapons judgments were to decide the matter, was a focused action. But if the aim were largely unrelated to an assessment of Iraqi WMD—if ‘regime change’ was the *true aim*—then the issue lay outside his charter.

### *Interim Report of the Iraq Survey Group [2 October 2003]*

On 2 October 2003—more than six months after the Iraq War began—the Iraq Survey Group presented an ‘interim progress report’, in the form of testimony of David Kay before US Congressional committees. The ISG is a body of some 1500 US, UK, and Australian personnel created by the United States to assume the search for ‘weapons of mass destruction’ in Iraq, after two earlier bodies had not found significant evidence. An unclassified version of the testimony was then released by the CIA.

A fair summary of Kay’s remarks is his statement that

We have not yet found stocks of weapons, but we are not yet at the point where we can say definitively either that such weapon stocks do not exist or that they existed before the war and our only task is to find where they have gone.

On the other hand, he claims ISG has found “dozens of WMD-related program activities and significant amounts of equipment.” Some “examples” are described in the text. But their purposes are typically qualified: ‘suitable for’, ‘possibly used’, ‘can be used’, ‘would have been useful’. There is plan and design work, unsuccessful clandestine attempts to obtain missile technology from North Korea, and other activity at the margin. “Saddam Husayn remained firmly committed to acquiring nuclear weapons,” but the several measures cited “did not in-and-of themselves constitute a resumption of the nuclear

---

weapons program.” In short, they seem to have found the minimum which most observers anticipated was present, claim no evidence for a biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons program. That doesn’t prevent them from saying that “we have confidence that there were at a minimum clandestine on-going research and development activities that were embedded in the Iraqi Intelligence Service.” They have confidence, but share no persuasive evidence.

At this date [11 November 2003] it must be said that US and British government claims about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and the “threat” which they posed have not been demonstrated. Did Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz appreciate that their intelligence did not support war? Or did they convince themselves that only war would provide the intelligence?

### *Conclusion*

Much discussion of the decision to war has centered on minor specific claims: the 45-minute readiness for deployment, the aluminum tubes, uranium sought from Niger.

Those particulars assume that Cheney Rumsfeld & Co. chose war to clear Iraq of ‘weapons of mass destruction’. But David Kelly’s question “whether regime change or disarmament is the true objective,” implying that one but not both was the aim, reflects what we know about how the issue was *repositioned* by the White House when it engaged the United Nations in October and early November 2002. In speaking to Congress the White House had stressed Saddam’s rule as evil, cited earlier Congressional commitment to his downfall, and dramatized the need by talking of WMD. Then, with Congressional ‘authorization’ in hand, they turned to the Security Council. The Security Council, however, required a discourse on WMD and inspections: the Security Council was not in the business of changing regimes. In mid-2003, when no WMD had been found, and the White House was being taken to task for its claims about WMD, it reverted to stressing regime change—removing a bloody tyrant—as its purpose, achieved.

---

We assume that advocates of war (and those who concurred in it) had different aims: regime change, geopolitical advantage, profit, prevention of attack on Israel, shuttering WMD programs, following the President. But in both discourses—to the United States, and to the United Nations—the White House used the threat of Iraqi WMD as a decisive part of the argument. The important point, then, is not that some of the particulars were wrong, but that *persuasive evidence to make the case that there was a threat from Iraqi WMD was not in hand.*

There is no reason to consider the UNMOVIC/IAEA UN inspections a failure. In retrospect, the French call for a strengthened inspection group—larger, more capable—looks very good. Hans Blix seems to enjoy pointing out that GW Bush is asking for patience, after no time was allowed the UN inspectors.

Nothing in this history demonstrates that a widely-agreed denuclearization regime could not be maintained against clandestine efforts to produce nuclear weapons.

This history does show, however, that the representative bodies in the United States and United Kingdom—Congress and Parliament—willingly abandoned their oversight of the executive. They fell for claims which were unevidenced, and badly evidenced; and the US Congress gave a green light five months before war was begun. These were shameful acts. If we learn from mistakes, these are mistakes we should not forget.

---

2003.11.11 Armistice Day



---

## Appendix

### Cheney Speech. 26 August 2002.

In the days of the Cold War, we were able to manage the threat with strategies of deterrence and containment. But it's a lot tougher to deter enemies who have no country to defend. And containment is not possible when dictators obtain weapons of mass destruction, and are prepared to share them with terrorists who intend to inflict catastrophic casualties on the United States.

The case of Saddam Hussein, a sworn enemy of our country, requires a candid appraisal of the facts. After his defeat in the Gulf War in 1991, Saddam agreed under to U.N. Security Council Resolution 687 to cease all development of weapons of mass destruction. He agreed to end his nuclear weapons program. He agreed to destroy his chemical and his biological weapons. He further agreed to admit U.N. inspection teams into his country to ensure that he was in fact complying with these terms.

In the past decade, Saddam has systematically broken each of these agreements. The Iraqi regime has in fact been very busy enhancing its capabilities in the field of chemical and biological agents. And they continue to pursue the nuclear program they began so many years ago. These are not weapons for the purpose of defending Iraq; these are offensive weapons for the purpose of inflicting death on a massive scale, developed so that Saddam can hold the threat over the head of anyone he chooses, in his own region or beyond.

On the nuclear question, many of you will recall that Saddam's nuclear ambitions suffered a severe setback in 1981 when the Israelis bombed the Osirak reactor. They suffered another major blow in Desert Storm and its aftermath.

But we now know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. Among other sources, we've gotten this from the firsthand testimony of defectors -- including Saddam's own son-in-law, who was subsequently murdered at Saddam's direction. Many of us are convinced that Saddam will acquire nuclear weapons fairly soon.

Just how soon, we cannot really gauge. Intelligence is an uncertain business, even in the best of circumstances. This is especially the case when you are dealing with a totalitarian regime that has made a science out of deceiving the international community. Let me give you just one example of what I mean. Prior to the Gulf War, America's top intelligence analysts would come to my office in the Defense Department and tell me that Saddam Hussein was at least five or perhaps even 10 years away from having a nuclear weapon. After the war we learned that he had been much closer than that, perhaps within a year of acquiring such a weapon.

Saddam also devised an elaborate program to conceal his active efforts to build chemical and biological weapons. And one must keep in mind the history of U.N. inspection teams in Iraq. Even as they were conducting the most intrusive system of arms control in history, the inspectors missed a great deal. Before being

---

barred from the country, the inspectors found and destroyed thousands of chemical weapons, and hundreds of tons of mustard gas and other nerve agents.

Yet Saddam Hussein had sought to frustrate and deceive them at every turn, and was often successful in doing so. I'll cite one instance. During the spring of 1995, the inspectors were actually on the verge of declaring that Saddam's programs to develop chemical weapons and longer-range ballistic missiles had been fully accounted for and shut down. Then Saddam's son-in-law suddenly defected and began sharing information. Within days the inspectors were led to an Iraqi chicken farm. Hidden there were boxes of documents and lots of evidence regarding Iraq's most secret weapons programs. That should serve as a reminder to all that we often learned more as the result of defections than we learned from the inspection regime itself.

To the dismay of the inspectors, they in time discovered that Saddam had kept them largely in the dark about the extent of his program to mass produce VX, one of the deadliest chemicals known to man. And far from having shut down Iraq's prohibited missile programs, the inspectors found that Saddam had continued to test such missiles, almost literally under the noses of the U.N. inspectors.

Against that background, a person would be right to question any suggestion that we should just get inspectors back into Iraq, and then our worries will be over. Saddam has perfected the game of cheat and retreat, and is very skilled in the art of denial and deception. A return of inspectors would provide no assurance whatsoever of his compliance with U.N. resolutions. On the contrary, there is a great danger that it would provide false comfort that Saddam was somehow "back in his box."

Meanwhile, he would continue to plot. Nothing in the last dozen years has stopped him -- not his agreements; not the discoveries of the inspectors; not the revelations by defectors; not criticism or ostracism by the international community; and not four days of bombings by the U.S. in 1998. What he wants is time and more time to husband his resources, to invest in his ongoing chemical and biological weapons programs, and to gain possession of nuclear arms.

Should all his ambitions be realized, the implications would be enormous for the Middle East, for the United States, and for the peace of the world. The whole range of weapons of mass destruction then would rest in the hands of a dictator who has already shown his willingness to use such weapons, and has done so, both in his war with Iran and against his own people. Armed with an arsenal of these weapons of terror, and seated atop ten percent of the world's oil reserves, Saddam Hussein could then be expected to seek domination of the entire Middle East, take control of a great portion of the world's energy supplies, directly threaten America's friends throughout the region, and subject the United States or any other nation to nuclear blackmail.

Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us. And there is no doubt that his aggressive regional ambitions will lead him into future confrontations with his neighbors -- confrontations that will involve both the weapons he has today, and the ones he will continue to develop with his oil wealth.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is no basis in Saddam Hussein's conduct or history to discount any of the concerns that I am raising this morning. We are,

---

after all, dealing with the same dictator who shoots at American and British pilots in the no-fly zone, on a regular basis, the same dictator who dispatched a team of assassins to murder former President Bush as he traveled abroad, the same dictator who invaded Iran and Kuwait, and has fired ballistic missiles at Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, the same dictator who has been on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism for the better part of two decades.

In the face of such a threat, we must proceed with care, deliberation, and consultation with our allies. I know our president very well. I've worked beside him as he directed our response to the events of 9/11. I know that he will proceed cautiously and deliberately to consider all possible options to deal with the threat that an Iraq ruled by Saddam Hussein represents. And I am confident that he will, as he has said he would, consult widely with the Congress and with our friends and allies before deciding upon a course of action. He welcomes the debate that has now been joined here at home, and he has made it clear to his national security team that he wants us to participate fully in the hearings that will be held in Congress next month on this vitally important issue.

We will profit as well from a review of our own history. There are a lot of World War II veterans in the hall today. For the United States, that war began on December 7, 1941, with the attack on Pearl Harbor and the near-total destruction of our Pacific Fleet. Only then did we recognize the magnitude of the danger to our country. Only then did the Axis powers fully declare their intentions against us. By that point, many countries had fallen. Many millions had died. And our nation was plunged into a two-front war resulting in more than a million American casualties. To this day, historians continue to analyze that war, speculating on how we might have prevented Pearl Harbor, and asking what actions might have averted the tragedies that rate among the worst in human history.

America in the year 2002 must ask careful questions, not merely about our past, but also about our future. The elected leaders of this country have a responsibility to consider all of the available options. And we are doing so. What we must not do in the face of a mortal threat is give in to wishful thinking or willful blindness. We will not simply look away, hope for the best, and leave the matter for some future administration to resolve. As President Bush has said, time is not on our side. Deliverable weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a terror network, or a murderous dictator, or the two working together, constitutes as grave a threat as can be imagined. The risks of inaction are far greater than the risk of action.

Now and in the future, the United States will work closely with the global coalition to deny terrorists and their state sponsors the materials, technology, and expertise to make and deliver weapons of mass destruction. We will develop and deploy effective missile defenses to protect America and our allies from sudden attack. And the entire world must know that we will take whatever action is necessary to defend our freedom and our security.

As former Secretary of State Kissinger recently stated: "The imminence of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the huge dangers it involves, the rejection of a viable inspection system, and the demonstrated hostility of Saddam Hussein combine to produce an imperative for preemptive action." If the United States could have preempted 9/11, we would have, no question. Should we be able to prevent another, much more devastating attack, we will, no question. This nation will not live at the mercy of terrorists or terror regimes. (Applause.)

---

I am familiar with the arguments against taking action in the case of Saddam Hussein. Some concede that Saddam is evil, power-hungry, and a menace -- but that, until he crosses the threshold of actually possessing nuclear weapons, we should rule out any preemptive action. That logic seems to me to be deeply flawed. The argument comes down to this: yes, Saddam is as dangerous as we say he is, we just need to let him get stronger before we do anything about it.

Yet if we did wait until that moment, Saddam would simply be emboldened, and it would become even harder for us to gather friends and allies to oppose him. As one of those who worked to assemble the Gulf War coalition, I can tell you that our job then would have been infinitely more difficult in the face of a nuclear-armed Saddam Hussein. And many of those who now argue that we should act only if he gets a nuclear weapon, would then turn around and say that we cannot act because he has a nuclear weapon. At bottom, that argument counsels a course of inaction that itself could have devastating consequences for many countries, including our own.

Another argument holds that opposing Saddam Hussein would cause even greater troubles in that part of the world, and interfere with the larger war against terror. I believe the opposite is true. Regime change in Iraq would bring about a number of benefits to the region. When the gravest of threats are eliminated, the freedom-loving peoples of the region will have a chance to promote the values that can bring lasting peace. As for the reaction of the Arab "street," the Middle East expert Professor Fouad Ajami predicts that after liberation, the streets in Basra and Baghdad are "sure to erupt in joy in the same way the throngs in Kabul greeted the Americans." Extremists in the region would have to rethink their strategy of Jihad. Moderates throughout the region would take heart. And our ability to advance the Israeli-Palestinian peace process would be enhanced, just as it was following the liberation of Kuwait in 1991.

The reality is that these times bring not only dangers but also opportunities. In the Middle East, where so many have known only poverty and oppression, terror and tyranny, we look to the day when people can live in freedom and dignity and the young can grow up free of the conditions that breed despair, hatred, and violence.

In other times the world saw how the United States defeated fierce enemies, then helped rebuild their countries, forming strong bonds between our peoples and our governments. Today in Afghanistan, the world is seeing that America acts not to conquer but to liberate, and remains in friendship to help the people build a future of stability, self-determination, and peace.

We would act in that same spirit after a regime change in Iraq. With our help, a liberated Iraq can be a great nation once again. Iraq is rich in natural resources and human talent, and has unlimited potential for a peaceful, prosperous future. Our goal would be an Iraq that has territorial integrity, a government that is democratic and pluralistic, a nation where the human rights of every ethnic and religious group are recognized and protected. In that troubled land all who seek justice, and dignity, and the chance to live their own lives, can know they have a friend and ally in the United States of America.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/08/20020826.html>

---

---

Bruce D. Larkin  
Professor of Politics  
University of California at Santa Cruz  
larkin@learnworld.com

---

---

## Version History

v1.0      2003.11.11 Armistice Day

Final draft for proofing. The section on UNSC Resolution 1441 is taken from an essay posted on the Web on 8 December 2002 as part of the text of Appendix 2 of an earlier paper [8 December 2002], "Iraq: Go to War? and the Nuclear Question," because of the importance of UNSC Resolution 1441 in the debate leading to war. The paper, including the full text of UNSC 1441, is at <http://www.gcdd.net/TX.024=2002.12.08.Iraq.pdf>

---

---