

Should the U.S. Invade Iraq?

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

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Q: Don't we need to invade Iraq to prevent more terrorist attacks like 9/11?

A: Absolutely not. There is no evidence Iraq aided the Sept. 11 attackers or Al Qaeda. None of the Sept. 11 hijackers were Iraqi, no major Al Qaeda leader is Iraqi, and no proof exists of a meeting between Iraqi and Al Qaeda officials.¹ Vincent Cannistraro, former director of the C.I.A.'s Counter-Terrorism office, has said, "Is there any confirmed evidence of Iraq's links to terrorism? No."²

Islamist organizations like Al Qaeda are Saddam Hussein's opponents, not his allies. Saddam Hussein has jailed many Islamist extremists within Iraq. Osama bin Laden wants to replace Iraq's secular government with a religious one like Iran's. Why would Saddam Hussein provide arms to people who might use them against him?

An unprovoked war on Iraq will make terrorist attacks against the U.S. more likely, not less. If the U.S. invades Iraq and kills innocent civilians, resentment against U.S. policies will increase across the Middle East and South Asia. Bin Laden couldn't design a better recruitment ad.

Q: Doesn't Iraq have weapons of mass destruction that put us in imminent danger?

A: No. Scott Ritter, chief U.N. weapons inspector in Iraq til 1998, has stated repeatedly that since 1998 Iraq has not had viable weapons of mass destruction, and poses no threat to us.³ Top U.S. generals and State Department and C.I.A. officials agree.⁴

Inspections worked extremely well to disarm Iraq. By 1998, U.N. inspectors had eliminated 90-95 percent of Iraq's ability to produce or use chemical and biological weapons.⁵ Inspectors destroyed 100 percent of the factories that produced these weapons and 100 percent of the equipment needed to make them. They eliminated nearly all existing weapons and the long-range missiles designed to carry them.⁶ In 1998, the International Atomic Energy Agency certified that Iraq no longer had a viable nuclear weapons program.⁷

In any case, the mere existence of biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons programs would not automatically constitute a clear and present danger requiring war.⁸ France, Israel, England, Egypt, Russia and Taiwan—as well as the U.S.—now have or recently had chemical or biological weapons pro-



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Prayers for Peace: Iraqi women in Baghdad pray that Iraq is spared from an attack by the United States.

grams, yet Bush has not threatened these countries with war.⁹ When North Korea admitted it has a nuclear weapons program, Bush announced that diplomatic pressure, not military force, could persuade North Korea to end its nuclear efforts.¹⁰

Q: Is Iraq rebuilding its weapons of mass destruction?

A: Bush has provided no proof Iraq is rebuilding these weapons. Since the U.N. withdrew its weapons inspectors from Iraq in December 1998, there have been no further on-the-ground weapons inspections in Iraq to verify Bush's claims. How can we justify going to war based on pure speculation?

It's nearly impossible that Iraq is building nuclear weapons factories, getting nuclear weapons-manufacturing technology, and testing nuclear bombs without detection by U.S. satellites and intelligence. As Ritter points out, you don't make nuclear weapons "in a basement or cave."¹¹ The U.S. also would detect both the purchase of the technology required to produce chemical and biological weapons, and the gasses emitted during the production process.¹² The U.N. embargo and intense U.S. and British surveillance make it especially hard to hide such weapons programs.

So long as other states in the Middle East build up their arms programs, Iraq will have an incentive to do so, too. The enormous imbalance created by Israel's possession of more than 200 nuclear weapons—Israel is the only state in the region that definitely has them—is largely responsible for triggering a regional arms race. Disarming Iraq should be seen as one step toward the goal of making the

Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, as called for in U.N. Resolution 687. Halting weapons shipments to all countries in the region is another.¹³

Q: Doesn't waiting make it more likely that Saddam Hussein will get weapons of mass destruction and use them against us?

A: Not really. The Iraqi leader is a calculating dictator, not a suicidal maniac. What he cares most about is staying alive and in power. He knows if he used weapons of mass destruction against the U.S. or its allies or gave them to a terrorist group, the U.S. would retaliate massively, spelling his and Iraq's destruction.

When Bush cites Iraq's use of chemical weapons in the past, he neglects to mention that Saddam Hussein only used them against targets he knew the U.S. had no interest in protecting (Iranian troops and Kurdish citizens of Iraq). Despite long-standing tensions and hostilities, Iraq has never used weapons of mass destruction against the U.S., U.S. troops, or U.S. allies like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Israel. Nor has Iraq threatened to use them against the U.S. or England.¹⁴

In fact, the C.I.A. recently concluded that the chances of Iraq initiating an attack on the U.S. were very low, if the U.S. does not attack Iraq. The C.I.A. warned, however, that if Saddam Hussein thinks he cannot prevent a U.S. invasion, he would be much more willing to use whatever weapons he does have against the U.S. or its allies.¹⁵

To launch a military attack because Bush claims that Iraq might someday have weapons it could use against us goes completely against international law and U.N. rules. Worst of all, it sets a dangerous precedent in foreign policy. According to Bush's logic, why shouldn't Pakistan attack India to destroy its nuclear arsenal—or vice-versa?

Q: If there is a dispute over inspections, does that show Iraq is hiding weapons of mass destruction?

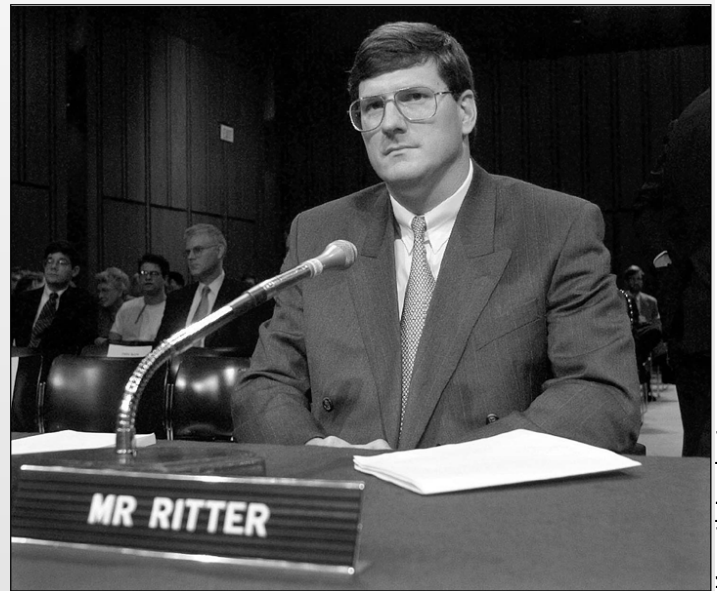
A: Not necessarily. Bush is so determined to overthrow Saddam Hussein's government that he is trying to provoke a conflict over inspections to create a pretext for going to war, not to avoid it.

Bush's strategy is to pressure the UN into imposing conditions for inspections that Baghdad will eventually reject. Bush is demanding that foreign military forces accompany inspectors and that they exercise unwarranted control over Iraq's territory.¹⁶ If and when Saddam Hussein draws the line, Bush could claim Iraq is failing to cooperate, and invade.

This is exactly what the U.S. did in December 1998. At the Clinton administration's urging, the head of the U.N.'s weapons inspection team deliberately disregarded U.N.-Iraqi agreements dealing with sensitive sites and demanded unlimited access to the government's party headquarters—a very unlikely place

to store weapons of mass destruction.¹⁷ The Iraqis refused, as would Bush. Imagine Bush's response if U.N. inspectors demanded the right to see if there were nuclear or chemical weapons stashed in the Republican Party's headquarters.

Saddam Hussein's refusal to open his headquarters to U.N. inspectors was Clinton's pretext for recalling the inspectors and bombing Iraqi targets, including private residences. Only then did Iraq block U.N. weapons inspectors from returning. U.S. intelligence later confirmed that a central aim of the bombing was the assassination of Saddam Hussein, not weapons destruction.¹⁸



Kenneth Lambert

Former United Nations weapons inspector Scott Ritter, pictured here as he testified on Capitol Hill in 1998, recently stated that it is highly unlikely that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction.

Q: If the U.N. authorizes military action against Iraq, won't that show that the world is united behind Bush's drive to attack Iraq?

A: No. It would only show that the U.S. can blackmail, bribe and bully enough countries into accepting its war plans. In 1991, Egypt got \$14 billion of debt canceled for supporting the U.S.-led Gulf War. Sudan, in the grip of a famine, was denied food aid for opposing it.¹⁹

No matter what a new U.N. resolution actually says, Bush will probably try to claim it authorizes his war. But U.N. laws do not give any country the right to "preemptively" attack a country that has not attacked it. That's aggression, not self-defense.

International law also prohibits the use of force to resolve international disputes unless all non-military options have been exhausted. While Bush may claim otherwise, no past U.N. resolution authorizes the U.S. or any country to decide unilaterally to use military force against Iraq. That's the U.N.'s call, not Washington's.²⁰

Bush's bullying tactics can also be really dangerous. When the U.S. pressured Pakistan's President Musharraf to assist in the U.S. attack on

Afghanistan, Musharraf became so unpopular at home that he had to prove his patriotic credentials. He allowed Pakistani nationalists to escalate the conflict with India over Kashmir, bringing India and Pakistan to the brink of nuclear war.

Q: **Would a U.S. President really lie to get us to back a war?**

A: As a matter of fact, many U.S. presidents have knowingly told half-truths and lies to create support for their wars. In 1964 Lyndon B. Johnson rallied support for sending U.S. troops to Vietnam by falsely claiming North Vietnam had attacked American ships in the Gulf of Tonkin.²¹

To win congressional support for the 1991 Gulf War, Bush Sr. said that he had top-secret, Pentagon satellite images of 250,000 Iraqi troops and 1,500 tanks amassed on Saudi Arabia's border. Yet commercial satellite images taken at the same time showed there were no troops at the Saudi border.

As Representative Jim McDermott (D-WA) recently argued, there's good reason to think "the president would mislead the American people" to create support for his war.

Q: **Since the Iraqi government imprisons and kills its own people, won't the people of Iraq support a U.S. invasion?**

A: Probably not. Most Iraqis do not want the U.S. to take over their country and impose a leader upon them, even if some do want to get rid of Saddam Hussein.

Also, most Iraqis are angrier with the U.S. government than with Saddam Hussein, and they mistrust U.S. motives more. The 1991 Gulf War and the U.S.-backed economic sanctions that followed it have destroyed much of Iraq's industry, water supply, and medical facilities. Sanctions have killed over 500,000 children under the age of five, according to U.N. estimates.

Bush likes to talk in terms of "getting Saddam Hussein," but we would not be invading an individual, but a country. Even with so-called "smart" bombs, thousands of innocent Iraqis will be killed--draftees, civilians, and children. In the 1991 war, two "smart"

bombs blew up the Amariyah bomb shelter and killed more than 400 women, men, and children who had taken refuge there.

U.S. soldiers might find few Iraqis willing to fight for Saddam Hussein, but plenty of patriots willing to defend their country from foreign invaders.

Q: **Well, if Iraq doesn't pose any immediate threat to the U.S., and if we can't be sure that most Iraqis want us to send in troops, why is Bush so dead set on invading Iraq?**

A: Some people say Bush is set on invading because Saddam Hussein dissed his daddy (during and after the 1991 Gulf War), but that's probably too simple! This war has much more to do with expanding U.S. control over the Middle East's oil supplies, and increasing U.S. oil corporations' profits. It's no accident that Bush is keen to install a U.S.-allied regime in the country that's home to the world's largest known oil reserves after Saudi Arabia.

Alan Pogue

The U.S. economy is dependent on oil, and that dependence is growing. In 2000, the U.S. imported half the oil it used; by 2020, it will

import two-thirds. The U.S. has the technical know-how to reduce our oil dependence by converting to clean fuels. But the U.S. auto industry doesn't want to have to re-tool, and the oil companies and banks financing them want to continue making huge profits off oil. The Bush and Cheney families, as well as some Democrats, are big-time oil profiteers and have strong ties to the oil industry.

Right now, Saudi Arabia is the main source of imported U.S. oil. Bush and Cheney are worried that political instability in Saudi Arabia could threaten these oil supplies. Control over Iraqi oil would free the U.S. to pursue its global political agenda without having to shore up or compromise with the current Saudi government. Control over Iraqi oil also gives the U.S. government more political leverage over countries like Japan and Germany that need to import oil.

Q: **Is it just about getting control over Iraq's oil?**

A: No. Long before September 11, 2001, during the first Bush's presidency, Paul Wolfowitz and other advisors wrote a Defense Department report advocating that the U.S. expand its military presence to achieve permanent domination of every region of the globe. The plan didn't get much support at the time, so it



Children cross a ditch filled with raw sewage in an Iraqi housing complex for internally displaced people.

was quickly shelved.

But under the banner of the "war on terrorism," these same people, who now serve Bush Jr., are seizing the opportunity to put their plan into effect. They view installing a pro-U.S. government in Baghdad as a critical step.

The Bush administration also needs to distract us, the U.S. people, from the growing problems that could make us angry at our own government and corporations, and its own failures. Remember how Bush was going to hunt down Osama Bin Laden, overthrow the Taliban, and set up a new democratic government in Afghanistan? Well, a year later, Bush still hasn't found bin Laden or Mullah Omar, leader of the Taliban, and much of Afghanistan is still run by warlords.

Here at home, there are more unemployed people. More heads of corporations have been exposed as greedy crooks who care about nobody but themselves. The stock market is sagging. More working people and low-income people lack health insurance and other benefits, and people of color are often still the worst off. Elections are in early November. There's nothing like some national unity against a foreign enemy to take our minds off all that and get us to support the president and the Republican Party!

Q: Why aren't more Democrats opposing Bush's war plan?

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12. William Rivers Pitt, "The Coming October War in Iraq," *Truthout* July 24, 2002 http://www.truthout.com/docs_02/07.25A.wrp_iraq.htm
13. Phyllis Bennis, Testimony Prepared for Hearings on Iraq Policy,

A: Many Democrats have big business pals, just like Bush and Cheney, and don't want to go up against them. Many are scared of the Republicans calling them unpatriotic or "soft on terrorism."

However, as people and governments around the world have voiced their opposition to Bush's war plans, some Democrats have felt pressured to at least say a war without allies is a bad idea. A handful of more courageous Democrats, like Barbara Lee, sponsored a counter-resolution calling for the use of inspections and non-violent means of resolving the crisis. As anti-war pressure grew, the number of House Democrats willing to vote No on Bush's pro-war resolution jumped from 19 to 126 (plus six Republicans and one Independent) within just a few weeks.

The truth is we can't expect Democratic or Republican politicians to do the right thing without pressure from ordinary people like us. The only way to stop this war is for us to get organized, voice our opposition to Bush's war-mongering, and make these politicians listen to us. We've got to use everything from letters and lobbying to marches and sit-ins to make our voices heard--before thousands of innocent people die.

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