

Committee On The Middle East

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DO NOT BOMB IRAQ

While the U.S. clearly has the military power to further devastate and prostrate Iraq, we strongly believe that the course the U.S. has chosen is not only grossly unjust, but also exceedingly hypocritical and duplicitous. We further believe that though the U.S. may be able to pursue its imperial policies without substantial opposition in the short term, the policies being pursued today, especially the new and massive military assault being prepared against Iraq, are likely to have tremendously negative historical ramifications.

As Middle East experts and scholars—many with close and personal ties to this long-troubled and misunderstood region—we feel a political, a moral, and a historical responsibility to speak up in clear opposition at this critical time.

Origins of Today's Imbroglia:

Throughout this century Western countries, primarily the United States and Great Britain, have continually interfered in and manipulated events in the Middle East. The origins of the Iraq/Kuwait conflict can be found in the unilateral British decision during the early years of this century to essentially cut off a piece of Iraq to suit British Empire desires of that now faded era.

Rather than agreeing to Arab self-determination at the end of World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Western nations conspired to divide the Arab world into a number of artificial and barely viable entities; to install Arab "client regimes" throughout the region; to make these regimes dependent on Western economic and military power for survival; and then to impose an ongoing series of economic, cultural, and political arrangements detrimental to the people of the area. This is the historical legacy that we live with today.

Throughout the 1930s and the 1940s the West further manipulated the affairs of the Middle East in order to control the resources of the region and then to create a Jewish homeland in an area long-considered central to Arab nationalism and Muslim concerns. Playing off one regime against the other and one geopolitical interest against another became a major preoccupation for Western politicians and their closely associated business interests.

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Following World War II:

After World War II, and from these policy origins, the United States became the main Western power in the region, supplanting the key roles formerly played by Britain and France. In the 1960s Gamel Abdel Nasser was the target of Western condemnation for his attempt to reintegrate the Arab world and to pursue independent "non-aligned" policies. By the 1970s the CIA had established close working relationships with key Arab client regimes from Morocco and Jordan to Saudi Arabia and Iran—regimes that even then were among the most repressive and undemocratic in the world—in order to further American domination and to secure an ever-growing supply of inexpensive oil and the resultant flow of petrodollars.

By the late 1970s the counter-reaction of the Iranian revolution was met with a Western build-up of the very same Iraqi regime that is so condemned today in a vain attempt to use Iraq to crush the new Iranian regime. The result was millions of deaths coming on top of the terrible destruction of Lebanon, itself a country that had been severed from Greater Syria by Western intrigues, as had been the area of southern Syria, then known as Palestine. Additionally the Israelis were given the green light to invade Lebanon, further devastate the Palestinians, and install a puppet Lebanese government—an attempt which failed leading to an American and Israeli retreat but ongoing militarism to this day. Meanwhile, throughout all these years Western manipulation of oil supplies and pricing, coupled with arms sales policies, often seriously exacerbated tensions between countries in the region leading to the events of this decade.

The Gulf Conflict:

It was precisely such American manipulations and intrigues that led to the Gulf War in 1990. Indeed, we would be remiss if we did not note that there is already much historical evidence that the U.S. actually maneuvered Iraq into the invasion of Kuwait, repeatedly suggesting to Iraq that it would become the pivotal military state of the area in coordination with the U.S. Whether true or not the U.S. subsequently did everything in its power to prevent a peaceful resolution of that conflict and for the first time intervened with massive and overwhelming military force in the region creating today's dangerously unstable quagmire.

The initially stated American goal was only to protect Saudi Arabia. Then after the unprecedented military build-up the goal became to expel Iraq from Kuwait. Then the goal evolved to toppling the Iraqi government. And from there the Americans began to impose various limits on Iraqi sovereignty; took over much of Iraqi air space; sent the CIA to repeatedly attempt to topple the Iraqi government; and placed a near-total embargo on Iraq that many—including a former Attorney General of the United States—have termed near-genocidal. The overall result has been the subjugation and impoverishment of Iraq and the actual death of approximately 5% of the Iraqi people as the direct result of American actions.

With the Clinton Administration, the U.S. began to insist on the "dual containment" of both Iraq and Iran—both countries which just a few years ago the U.S. was working very closely with and providing considerable arms to. With few in the press able to remember from one year to the next or to connect one historic event with another, somehow Washington has come to insist on Iraqi disarmament and Iranian strangulation. Furthermore, these policies are being pursued even while Israel and key Arab client states are receiving American weapons in ever larger amounts, with Israel's weapons of mass destruction making her forces 7 to 8 times stronger than all Arab armies combined. Furthermore still, the U.S./Israeli strategic alliance has never been closer, the U.S. has repeatedly helped Israel defy the will of the international community and the United Nations, and the U.S. continues to champion a disingenuous Israeli "peace process" which in reality on the ground continues to dispossess the Palestinians and to corral them onto reservations in their own country!

In a future statement we will move on to the crucial subject of what alternative policies the United States should be pursuing. But at this critical moment we are compelled to come forward and urgently condemn the policies now being pursued. We call for an immediate cessation of the economic embargo against Iraq, an end to U.S.-imposed restrictions on Iraqi sovereignty and airspace, and most of all immediate suspension of all plans to attack Iraq once again with the overwhelming technological and military instruments available to the U.S.

If the U.S. continues to pursue its current policies then we conclude and predict it will not be unreasonable for many in the world to brand the U.S. itself as a arrogant and imperialist state, and if that becomes the historical paradigm, it will be both understandable and justifiable if others pursue whatever means are available to them to oppose American domination and militarism. Such developments could quite possibly lead to still more decades of conflict, warfare, and terrorism throughout the region and beyond.