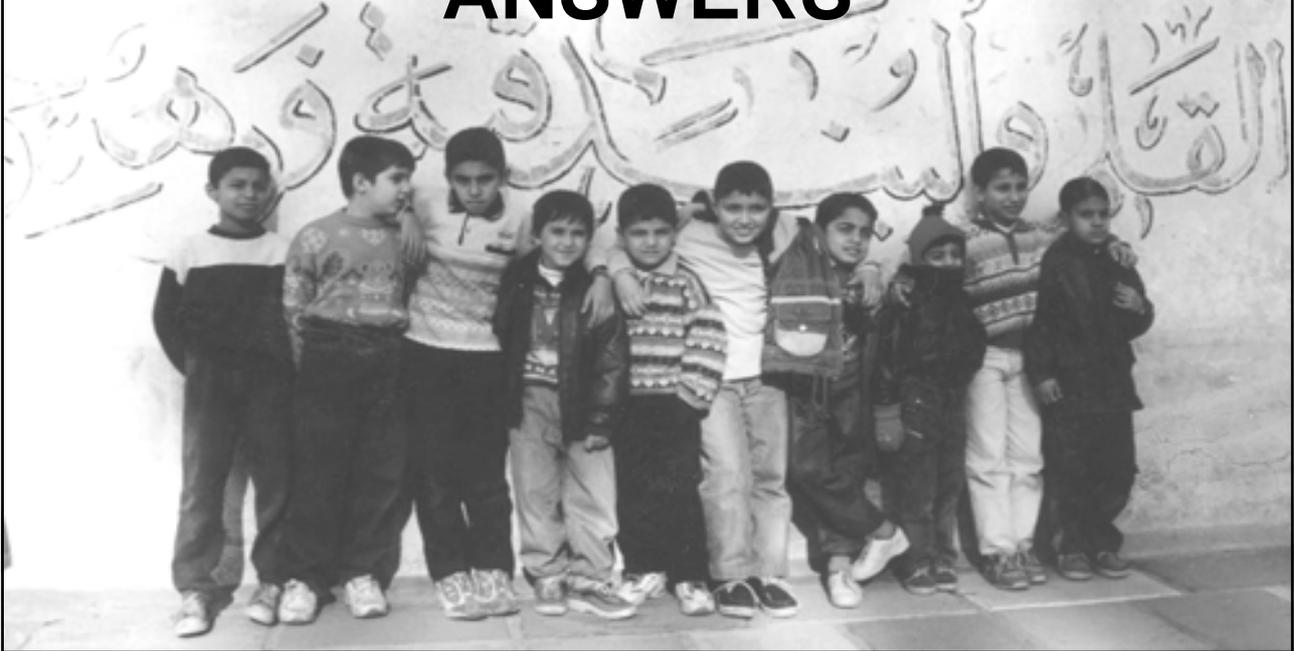


IRAQ – SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



Prepared by Mike Treen for Global Peace and Justice Auckland.

Is a war against Iraq a real possibility?

Unfortunately the US is on a determined course towards war that can only be stopped by a massive international movement of opposition.

Following September 11, the US government has been promoting a “first strike” strategy against any country they regard as a threat. At first this was confined to states deemed to harbour or assist those the US define as terrorists, but it now includes states that have or may acquire the ability to develop “weapons of mass destruction”.

Iraq occupies first place in the queue because of its strategic place in the Middle East which is home to two-thirds of the world’s known oil supplies. The central advisers to President Bush have been pushing for a renewed war for the past 11 years to “finish the job” begun by his father in the 1991 Gulf War .

This policy was spelt out July 1 by Bush in a speech to the West Point Military Academy: “If we wait for threats to fully materialise we will have waited too long. We must take the battle to the enemy.” He added all Americans “must be ready for pre-emptive action when necessary”. On July 8 he specified Iraq and said “it is the stated policy of this government to have a regime change in Baghdad” and vowed to “use all the tools at our disposal to do so”. On August 10 he repeated that Iraq is “an enemy until proven otherwise”. In words

that must make any nation nervous he declared: “When we speak of making the world more safe, we do so not only in the context of Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, but nations that have proven themselves to be bad neighbours and bad actors.” Speaking more like a small-time gangster, Bush told *Time* magazine: “We’re taking him out.”

The US administrations actions are directly opposed to international law. Article 2(4) of the UN Charter States: “All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state”. At the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal after World War II, the US representative, Robert Jackson, said: “To initiate a war of aggression...is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.”

What evidence is there that the US is preparing for war?

On June 16 the *Washington Post* reported that Bush “signed an intelligence order directing the CIA to undertake a comprehensive covert program to topple Saddam Hussein, including authority to use lethal force to capture the Iraqi president.” The order directs the CIA to increase support for Iraqi opposition groups and forces inside and outside Iraq, including with money, weapons, equipment, training, and intelligence information, reported Robert Woodward. US

Government officials were quoted as saying the operations should be viewed largely as “preparatory” to a military strike so “the agency can identify targets, intensify intelligence gathering on the ground in Iraq, and build relations with alternative future leaders and groups if Hussein is ousted.”

The Pentagon has placed record orders for munitions, prompting US weapon-makers to double their production of laser-guided bombs, add new shifts of workers on assembly lines for satellite-guided bomb tail kits, and raise ammunition production at one factory to its highest level in 15 years.

Special drills by the US First Marine Expeditionary Force have begun in preparation for battles in deserts and mountains. Washington has been reinforcing a string of military bases and airfields throughout the Persian Gulf region. It has built a 15,000 foot runway in Qatar, the longest in the Middle East, to handle the air force’s largest transport planes.

On August 16 The Herald (Scotland) reported: “The Pentagon has moved 50,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines within striking distance of Iraq in the last 10 months under cover of deployments targeting global terrorism, according to senior UK military sources.

“The quiet buildup includes the presence of up to five nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, each with an attack force of between 70 and 80 jets ... There are also several US marine expeditionary forces, infantry battalions backed up by helicopter gunships, tanks and armoured personnel carriers, embarked on special assault ships in and around the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf. Other major contingents are located in Qatar and Oman, with land-based fighters at airbases in Turkey and Kuwait.”

Bombing in the so-called “no-fly” zones of Southern and Northern Iraq established after the 1991 war (covering 60% of the country’s territory) were stepped up in July and Defence Secretary Rumsfeld said they could be expected to continue “on a weekly basis”.

The US has been building up its military arsenal despite the end of the so-called “Cold War” for precisely this sort of war. Last year there was \$US839 billion in military expenditure worldwide. The US comprises less than 5% of the world’s population, but its defence budget equals 36% of this worldwide sum. This year’s military budget of \$351 billion is roughly equal to the combined amount allocated for defence by the 15 highest spenders outside the US. Post September 11 Washington announced plans to increase its military spending by a massive \$45 billion next year rising to \$500 billion by 2007. The US will soon spend more on the military than all other countries in the world combined.

Isn’t it true that Iraq is building “weapons of mass destruction”?

Outgoing secretary of defence William Powell told incoming President Bush in January 2001 that “Iraq no longer poses a military threat to its neighbours”. Vice-President Cheney told CNN in March 2001: “I don’t believe [Saddam Hussein] is a significant military threat today.”

This assessment confirmed that by Scott Ritter, former chief inspector of the UN Special Commission in charge of disarmament. He said in 1999: “From a qualitative standpoint, Iraq has been disarmed. Iraq today possesses no meaningful weapons of mass destruction.”

Iraq continues to allow inspections of its nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency, which has reported that there is no evidence of renewed nuclear weapons development.

From 1991 to 1998 Iraq was subject to 9000 inspections and Ritter said in March this year that “never once could we state we had evidence or proof that Iraq was in possession of prohibited weapons.”

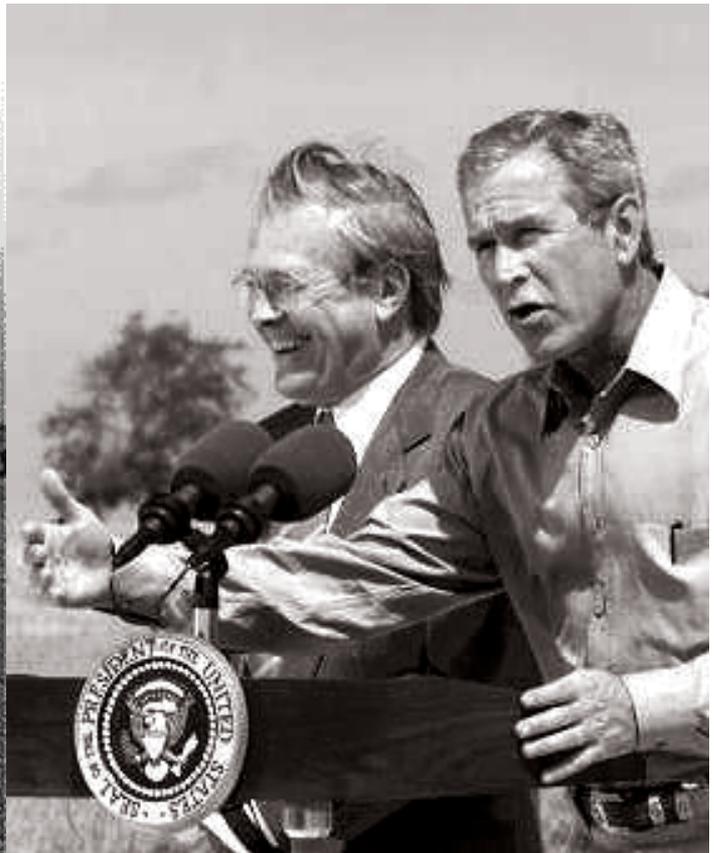
“The major factories that produced weapons of mass destruction were identified and destroyed. The production equipment associated with the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction was identified and destroyed. The vast majority of the weapons produced by these factories were identified and destroyed. This means that [in 1998] Iraq was no longer capable of producing biological or chemical weapons, or nuclear weapons or long-range ballistic missiles.

“Even if Saddam wanted to rebuild these weapons programs, he doesn’t have the ability to. Because of the economic sanctions, he doesn’t have the money or access to the technology. He no longer has the industrial infrastructure. This industrial infrastructure lends itself to detection by the very capable intelligence capabilities - not only of the US but the rest of the world. And nobody has detected such capability.

“But what is clear is that the US has a policy that is more focused on the removal of Saddam Hussein than the elimination of his weapons of mass destruction. Weapons inspections were convenient to the US only so far as they assisted in their efforts to isolate, contain and destabilize Saddam Hussein. The second the inspectors can account for Iraq’s weapons, that they can certify that Iraq no longer has viable weapons programs-that’s when the U.S. will manipulate the process [by] using the inspectors to deliberately provoke confrontation and crisis and to spy on Iraq.”

The Pentagon admits that Iraq’s current armed forces are one-third their strength prior to 1991 and military spending is one-tenth the level of the 1980s.

Not one of Iraq’s neighbours who are supposed to be “threatened” by Hussein has publicly supported the US war moves and in March this year the 22-nation Arab League (including Kuwait) unanimously passed



US President Bush and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld are openly preparing for a new war against Iraq

a resolution opposing any attack on Iraq and calling for the lifting of economic sanctions.

Then why were the UN weapons inspectors “expelled” ?

Contrary to many media reports, the inspectors were never “expelled” from Iraq. They were withdrawn on December 15, 1998 at the urging of the US to justify a massive bombing offensive that began the following day.

Rolf Ekeus, the Swedish diplomat who headed the UN inspections from 1991-97, said there was no doubt the US manipulated the inspection process for its own purposes. They sought to provoke conflict with Iraq “that could be used as a justification for direct military action” and wanted to use them to find Hussein. At least two US agents were on his staff, he said. According to arms inspector Scott Ritter in his book *End Game* Ekeus’ successor, Richard Butler, held regular meetings with US officials and coordinated his team’s activities with US agencies. In November 1998 US government official Sandy Bergher “immediately met with Butler to coordinate inspection schedules in the framework of all but inevitable strikes”.

Butler’s report to the UN justifying the withdrawal of the inspectors was written with US help. As the *Washington Post* reported: “Clinton administration officials played a direct role in shaping Butler’s text ...at secure facilities in the US mission to the United

Nations.” Three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (France, Russia and China) opposed the withdrawal.

Iraq has said it will allow the inspectors to return but they want assurances to prevent manipulation and a timetable for the end of sanctions. This is deemed by the US to be unacceptable and they insist the return be without conditions.

In fact the US says inspections are irrelevant to their goal of “regime change”, which will continue regardless. On May 5, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said: “US policy is that, regardless of what the inspectors do, the people of the region would be better off with a different regime in Baghdad.” Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld dismissed possible inspections as a “sham” because “a biological laboratory can be on wheels in a trailer and make a lot of bad stuff, and it’s moveable. And it looks like most any other trailer.”

Iraq has been given little incentive to allow the inspectors back since the US has consistently maintained that economic sanctions will continue until they have a regime more to their liking. As early as May 1991 the then President Bush’s deputy national security adviser Robert M Gates said: “Iraqis will pay the price while he [Hussein] remains in power. All possible sanctions will be maintained until he is gone....Any easing of the sanctions will be considered only when there is a new government.” The policy was

continued by President Clinton who declared: "Sanctions will be there until the end of time, or as long as he remains."

With a sanctions regime that has no time limit and no agreement on what constitutes "compliance" with UN resolutions, it is impossible for Iraq to prove the unprovable. To have no "capacity" to produce any chemical or biological agent would require Iraq to return to the stone age – which seems to be the object of US policy.

What about the possibility of Iraq giving support to terrorists?

Repeated attempts have been made to link Iraq to the September 11 attacks or the Anthrax releases in the US but all came to a dead end. There was the rumour that Mohammed Atta, one of the hijackers, had met an Iraqi intelligence official in the Czech Republic last year. The Czech police say he was not even in the country last year. On February 5, a *New York Times* investigation concluded: "The Central Intelligence Agency has no evidence that Iraq has engaged in terrorist operations against the United States in nearly a decade, and the agency is convinced that Saddam Hussein has not provided chemical or biological weapons to al Qaeda or related terrorist groups."

US government spokespeople have been reduced to using the mad logic that because Baghdad and al Qaeda share a hostile attitude to the US they "might" collaborate some time in the future. War becomes an instrument to preclude theoretical possibilities.

What has been the effect of economic sanctions on Iraq?

UN and Unicef reports based on detailed household surveys confirmed in 1999 that at least half a million children – 5000 a month – had died as a direct result of sanctions. Twenty-two percent of all children were chronically malnourished and many suffered from infections.

Denis Halliday, the coordinator of the UN Humanitarian Oil-for-Food programme in Iraq and Assistant General Secretary of the UN, resigned in disgust after 34 years with the UN describing the sanctions as the "genocidal destruction of a nation". He wrote: "We are in the process of destroying an entire society. It is as simple and terrifying as that. It is illegal and immoral." His successor, Hans Von Sponeck, also resigned. Together they wrote: "The death of 5-6000 children a month is mostly due to contaminated water, lack of medicines and malnutrition. The US and UK governments' delayed clearance of equipment and materials is responsible for this tragedy, not Baghdad."

Most of Iraq's water and sewage treatment plants, as well as all three chlorine production plants, were destroyed during the 1991 bombing. Iraq has not been



Is the death of half a million children a price worth paying? "We think the price is worth it." - Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State

able to import water pumps to rebuild the plants or chlorine to treat the water and epidemics were the inevitable results. In fact they were predicted in a January 1991 US Defence Intelligence Agency document entitled "Iraq's Water Treatment Vulnerabilities" which said the bombing and sanctions would prevent Iraq importing "water treatment replacement parts and some essential chemicals" leading to "increased incidences, if not epidemics, of disease." It noted: "Unless the water is purified with chlorine, epidemics of such diseases as cholera, hepatitis, and typhoid would occur." Article 54 of the Geneva Convention prohibits attacks on "drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works".

Iraq also continues to suffer the horrible aftermath of the widespread use of Depleted Uranium (DU) munitions by the US during the war. Thousands of cases of cancer and birth deformities are a direct result.

After six years of complete embargo Iraq was permitted to resume selling oil in 1996. The money, however, is deposited in a UN-controlled account which has taken between 25% and one-third of the income for expenses and compensation claims. All purchases must be approved by a special committee and any Security Council member can put any item "on hold" without reason. As of the beginning of August 2002 some 1,450 contracts worth \$US5 billion are "on hold" — 90% put there by the US and UK. Goods put on hold include ambulances, pencils, vaccines, cancer treatment equipment, water pumps, refrigeration equipment, morphine, detergent, chlorine, and blood bags.

While Iraq has sold \$US54.4 billion dollars worth of oil under the programme to date, only \$US23.5 billion worth of humanitarian and relief supplies have arrived in the country so far. This is less than \$US200 per Iraqi per year and the amounts cannot resolve the immediate humanitarian crisis, much less provide the basis for long-term rehabilitation of the economy and



Result of 1993 US bombing raid against Iraq. For the people of Iraq the Gulf War has never ended.

society. Iraq cannot pump more oil because they lack the money to purchase new equipment and foreign investment is banned.

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan reported in March 2001: “Until such time as Iraq’s infrastructure for electricity and water and sanitation has been sufficiently rehabilitated the Iraqi people will continue to be vulnerable to disease and hardship.”

In May 1996, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was asked on the CBS programme *60 Minutes* if the death of more than half a million children was a price worth paying. “I think this is a very hard choice, but the price - we think the price is worth it,” she replied.

But hasn't the Iraq government stopped supplies getting through?

On the contrary the regime has been praised for running an efficient and effective rationing and distribution system that is credited with averting widespread famine in the post-war years. The United Nations has hundreds of monitors still in Iraq to ensure the delivery of needed food and other aid. They provide regular reports to UN agencies and on no occasion have reported any deliberate action by the Iraqi government to block supplies.

Former UN coordinator of the humanitarian “Oil for Food” programme Hans von Sponeck wrote in the July 2, 2002 *Toronto Globe and Mail* that the failure of the programme was not one of internal distribution. “During my tenure, more than 90 percent of oil-for-food goods distributed by the government reached their intended destinations. UN reports have consistently confirmed this success rate – one beyond expectation given the chaotic constraints of disintegrating infrastructure, erratic communications and electrical power, and arbitrary US ‘holds’ on \$5 billion worth of contracts. Rather, the failure has been a problem of woefully inadequate amounts and range of goods

received. Until May 2002, the total value of all food, medicines, education, sanitation, agricultural and infrastructure supplies that have arrived in Iraq has amounted to \$175 per person per year, or less than 49 cents a day.”

Is it true that the US used to support Saddam Hussein and helped him get his weapons?

Saddam Hussein came to power with the active support of the US CIA. When the Iraq Petroleum Company, the foreign consortium that exploited Iraq’s oil was threatened with nationalisation in 1963, the US engineered what the Central Intelligence Agency called its “favourite coup.” “We regarded it as a great victory,” said James Critchfield, then head of the CIA in the Middle East.

The repressive Ba’ath Party regime came to be dominated by Saddam Hussein in 1979. His ambitions coincided with US hostility to the Iranian Revolution of the same year and Iraq was given everything it wanted for the eight-year war that followed against Iran.

US relations with the Ba’ath regime had deteriorated following the Arab/Israel wars of 1967 and 1973 and the nationalisation of Iraq Petroleum in 1972. But Saddam became a US favourite after he attacked Iran in 1980. Billions of dollars worth of weapons were shipped to Iraq by the US and UK, often illegally. Essential equipment and ingredients for Iraq’s weapons programmes were sold by US and British firms. Iraq was quietly removed from the US list of countries that supported terrorism by US President Reagan in 1982.

Ironically it was the current US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld who visited Iraq in December 1983 as Reagan’s special envoy to restore full relations. Just 12 days after Rumsfeld met Iraq’s foreign minister the *Washington Post* reported on January 1, 1984, that the United States “in a shift in policy, has informed friendly Persian Gulf nations that the defeat of Iraq in the war with Iran would be ‘contrary to US interests’ and has made several moves to prevent that result.” Rumsfeld visited again in March 1984 for further talks - after the US State Department had issued a statement saying “available evidence indicates that Iraq has used chemical weapons”. In November 1984 normal diplomatic relations were restored.

In 1988, Saddam’s forces attacked Kurdish civilians with poisonous gas from Iraqi helicopters and planes. US intelligence sources told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1991, they “believe that the American-build helicopters were among those dropping the deadly bombs”. The US Senate tried to impose sanctions to stop Iraq obtaining further technology but the measure was killed



by the White House. In August this year the *New York Times* (belatedly) reported: “A covert program during the Reagan administration provided Iraq with critical assistance at a time when American intelligence agencies knew that Iraqi commanders would employ chemical weapons in waging the decisive battles of the Iran-Iraq war, according to senior military officers with direct knowledge of the program.” In this programme “more than 60 officers of the Defense Intelligence Agency were secretly providing detailed information of Iranian deployments, tactical planning for battles, plans for airstrikes and bomb-damage assessments for Iraq”. Retired colonel Walter Lang, a top intelligence officer of the time, told the *New York Times* that “the use of gas by the Iraqis was not a matter of deep concern”.

When John Kelly, the US Assistant Secretary of State, visited Baghdad in 1989 he told Hussein: “You are a force for moderation in the region, and the United States wants to broaden her relationship with Iraq.” US arms sales continued until days before the invasion of Kuwait.

A 1994 US Senate report documented the transfer to Iraq of the ingredients of biological weapons: botulism developed at a company in Maryland, licenced by the Commerce Department and approved by the State Department. Anthrax was also supplied by the Porton Down laboratories in Britain, a government establishment. “We knew about their [nuclear] bomb programme,” said a former member of the Bush Senior administration, “but Saddam was our ally”.

Even after the 1991 Gulf War the US allowed Hussein a free hand to suppress a rebellion in the South and North of the country. US troops protected arms depots from being seized by the rebels and allowed helicopter gunships to operate in the so-called “no fly zones”. At the time, Richard Haas of the US State Department explained: “What we want is Saddam’s regime without Saddam.”

Then what are the real reasons for the US going to war?

Attacking and invading Iran was fine by the US but taking over Kuwait - a stable US client state with huge oil reserves of its own - was a sign that Saddam had become too big for his boots. He and his regime needed to be taught a lesson.

US policy towards the Middle East and its huge oil resources was summed up by former US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger: “Oil is much too important a commodity to be left in the hands of the Arabs.”

Iraq possesses the world’s second-largest proven oil reserves, currently estimated at 112.5 billion barrels, about 11% of the world total, and its gas fields are immense as well. Oil industry experts think that Iraq possesses additional reserves that would rival the world’s number one producer Saudi Arabia.

In early August, US Senator Richard Lugar said, “As part of our plan for Iraq ... we’re going to run the oil business ... we’re going to run it well, we’re going to make money and it’s going to help pay for the rehabilitation of Iraq.”

The four largest oil companies in the world are largely US- and British-based and controlled the industry in Iraq before it was nationalised in 1972. Iraq has been negotiating with French, Russian and Chinese companies for the development of the industry post sanctions and a war will ensure the US-British companies regain control.

Is any government supporting the US war plans? Who is opposed?

The planned war with Iraq has few supporters. The only governments to sign up have been Australia and the UK. Most governments and many military and political figures around the world have voiced their concern that a new war will be an adventure with consequences likely to be a disaster for the people and the region.

In Britain, Labour MPs, trade unions and church leaders are mobilising to try and stop Tony Blair taking the country into war. Public opinion polls show two-thirds opposed to war with over half thinking Blair was becoming “Bush’s poodle”. Four senior Anglican Bishops, including Dr Rowan Williams, the next Archbishop of Canterbury, signed a petition declaring an attack on Iraq would be “immoral and illegal”. The petition said: “It is deplorable that the world’s most powerful nations regard war and the threat of war as an acceptable instrument of foreign policy.” The former British Chief of Defence Staff, Field Marshal Lord Bramall, said Britain risked being dragged into a “very, very messy” and lengthy war. “You don’t have a licence to attack someone else’s country just because you don’t like the leadership.”

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said, “the Middle East needs peace, not new war”, and that his country would not be “available for adventures”. Canadian Foreign Affairs minister Bill Graham said: “We have no evidence he [Saddam Hussein] is in possession of weapons of mass destruction or that he would intend to use them at this time. I do consider it dangerous if Iraq agrees to accept inspectors and if that is rejected out of hand.”

No country in the region other than Israel has indicated a willingness to support the war or provide bases. Even Kuwait signed up to a declaration at a recent Arab summit opposing a new war and calling for an end to economic sanctions. Neighbours fear that a new war will lead to the breakup of the Iraqi state with destabilising consequences for the region. President Mubarak of Egypt warned August 27: “If you strike Iraq and kill the people of Iraq while Palestinians are being killed by Israel...not one Arab leader will be able to control the angry outburst of the masses.”

Even in the US political and military leaders are debating the wisdom of their “Commander in Chief”. General Brent Scowcroft, US National Security Adviser to President Bush during the Gulf War, warned that though he had no doubt the US could dislodge Hussein, “I think we could have an explosion in the Middle East. It could turn the whole region into a cauldron and destroy the War on Terror.”

US peace forces are mobilising for mass protests in October. An open letter by nearly 100 of the US’s most distinguished names in art, literature and education wrote:

“Let it not be said that people in the United States did nothing when their government declared a war without limit and instituted stark new measures of repression. We believe that questioning, criticism and dissent must be valued and protected. Such rights are always contested and must be fought for. We too



Iraqi children try to study in sanctions starved schools

watched with shock the horrific events of September 11. But the mourning had barely begun when our leaders launched a spirit of revenge. The government now openly prepares to wage war on Iraq – a country that has no connection with September 11. We say this to the world. Too many times in history people have waited until it was too late to resist. We draw on the inspiration of those who fought slavery and all those other great causes of freedom that began with dissent. We call on all like-minded people around the world to join us.”

Can the US government afford to ignore international opinion against a new war?

International opposition and protest can make a difference and helped bring the war in Vietnam to an end 27 years ago. But the US strategy is based on using their massive military supremacy over their “allies” as well as their enemies to enforce their global supremacy.

On June 12 Bush spoke to the Homeland Security Advisory Council explaining that Washington “is just going to have to enforce the doctrine, either you’re with us or you’re against us. You join the coalition of freedom, or you’re on the other side of the tracks”.

Richard Perle, head of the Pentagon’s Defence Policy Board, wrote in *The Telegraph* August 9: “I have no doubt he [Mr Bush] would act alone if necessary. But he will not be alone when the time comes.” He continued, “neither the president nor the British Prime Minister will be deflected by Saddam’s diplomatic charm offensive, the feckless moralising of ‘peace’ lobbies or the unsolicited advice of retired generals”.

Former defence secretary Casper Weinberger told US Senators: “If we go in alone and remove Saddam Hussein we’ll find that success has many allies.”

Joseph Biden, Democratic Party chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said August 4: “I believe there probably will be a war with Iraq. The only question is, is it alone, is it with others and how long and costly it will be?”

Isn’t the US just trying to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction and so make the world a safer place?

At the beginning of this year Pentagon planning papers were released spelling out a “first strike” nuclear policy against any state the US rulers think constitutes a threat to their interests. British Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon joined in with the comment that “Saddam can be absolutely confident that in the right conditions we would be willing to use our nuclear weapons.”

The *New York Times* noted March 12 in an editorial entitled “America as Nuclear Rogue”: “If another country were planning to develop a new nuclear weapon and contemplating preemptive strikes against a list of non-nuclear powers, Washington would rightly label the nation a dangerous rogue state. Yet such is the course recommended to President Bush by a new Pentagon planning paper.”

This year Bush also announced that the US would not ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and was withdrawing from the Anti Ballistic Missile treaty. This has joined a long list of UN conventions and arms control mechanisms the US has sought to undermine or destroy.

In December 2001 the US killed the proposed enforcement and verification mechanism for the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention since the US refused any inspections. In March 2002 the US forced the removal of Bustani, head of the Organisation to Prevent Chemical Weapons, from office. His crime was to try to include Iraq in the Chemical Weapons Convention and so be subject to inspections that could deprive the US of excuses needed for war.

The US has rejected the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto Treaty, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a convention banning anti-personnel land mines, a small arms treaty and the UN Convention Against Torture.

Even in regard to Iraq the UN Resolution 687 authorising sanctions also says that Iraqi disarmament should be a step towards “the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and all missiles for their delivery and the objective of a global ban on chemical weapons”. Israel is known to have several hundred nuclear warheads and the means to deliver them yet remains a strongly supported US “ally”. Despite the continuing occupation of Palestinian territory, no sanctions are proposed. US military aid to Israel is running at \$3 billion a year. As of 2000, 20% of the \$US80 billion international arms trade is imported by the six pro-Western Monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The US remains the largest supplier of these weapons.

In September 2001 the US dropped a ban on arms sales to India and Pakistan, despite both countries having developed nuclear weapons and missiles. Sales continued even as the two states geared up for war over the disputed territory of Kashmir.

What is the policy of the New Zealand government?

Until 1999 New Zealand actively supported the sanctions regime imposed on Iraq and the continuing bombing of Iraq by the US and UK.

The Labour-Alliance government elected that year

withdrew a naval ship soon after taking office. An SAS unit operating from Kuwait was also pulled out when one of its members was killed by US bombing during a training exercise. In March 2001, Foreign Affairs Minister Phil Goff wrote: “New Zealand will continue to advocate a smarter approach to the issue of Iraq. The international community needs to focus on the key issue of disarmament and ensure that Iraq has a clear path for its return to the community of nations. Neither comprehensive sanctions nor air strikes bring us closer to a solution.”

Another letter on June 4 was more cautious and placed action against Iraq in the framework of the “campaign against terrorism” used to justify NZ support for the US war on Afghanistan. “There are no *current* [emphasis added] plans for New Zealand to widen its military contribution in the campaign against terrorism beyond Afghanistan ... United States action against Iraq is at this point speculative.” He said NZ had “urged caution” as any action “might undermine the goal of keeping the coalition against terrorism as broad as possible”.

In the July 20 *Listener*, Prime Minister Helen Clark said, “I can’t see any circumstances where New Zealand would commit to a first strike.”

But the government has said nothing to criticise the US war plans and was pulled into the war in Afghanistan when the US “enforced” its “you’re with us, or against us” doctrine. Pressure will need to be maintained to ensure no more NZ troops will be sent to join another US military adventure.

GLOBAL PEACE AND JUSTICE AUCKLAND

AIM: Global Peace and Justice Auckland (GPJA) is a network of people who provide a platform for individuals and groups to discuss and organise co-operatively on peace and justice issues.

GOALS: To hold a series of monthly public forums for the purpose of education, discussion and organisation.

To provide organisational forums as required to stimulate thought and action on specific peace and justice issues, so that groups and people can work together to improve the peace/justice situation on a given issue.

To provide a website, with coverage of what is being organised through GPJA.

To provide a regular Auckland-wide update/bulletin of events happening on peace and justice issues.

To provide a collective voice for people on peace and justice issues of common concern.

If you want to become involved, would like to be on our mailing list, or have any enquiries, please

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