

2/15/03

Hard to find facts to endorse military action

In teaching my contemporary issues class in Coventry, I try to be as objective as possible in discussing controversial topics. I search through various news sources, both conservative and liberal, for all perspectives on the topic. In researching the debate on the proposed war on Iraq, it is difficult to find non-circumstantial or factual information that endorses military action against Iraq. In fact, there is an abundance of scholarly information that contradicts such aggression that it seems to defy the logic the Bush Administration is using to successfully convince the domestic and international public.

I cannot tell or defend to my students that Saddam Hussein is

a nice guy and deserves to stay in power. In fact, the people who protest this war are not defending Iraq's government or supporting terrorism. The task at hand in my class and among the public is about sifting through the rhetoric and misinformation propagated by our government and regurgitated by the complacent and docile mainstream media. It is also about insisting that our country's dedicated citizens who fight in our armed services deserve to risk their lives truly for our safety and the principles of democracy. Unfortunately, with this proposed war on Iraq, it is not the case. Consider the following reasons, accusations or casus belli for war on Iraq that have been brought forward by the Bush administration.

Casus belli No. 1: *Saddam Hussein is a ruthless dictator who has used weapons of mass destruction against the Kurds (depicted as his innocent citizens).* While the first part is true, the second part deserves some critical attention. For example, a retired CIA official, Stephen C. Pelletiere, recently reported a past U.S. Defense Intelligence investigation in the *New York Times* that found that the Iranian forces were actually to blame for the atrocities in Halabja, North Iraq. It turns out that Iran also used gas in the Iran-Iraq war. And, Iran used a

Banking Committee hearings. In addition, one must consider that some of the Kurdish people fought with the Iranian troops against Saddam. While the use of these weapons is not justified, upon reviewing the facts, it changes the weight of the accusation.

Another thing to think about is that Iraq chose not to use weapons of mass destruction in the Gulf War, yet the U.S. government approved and used up to 800 tons of depleted uranium munitions in Iraq and Kuwait. There are still shell casings littered in school yards and elsewhere in Iraq. According to the UN Commission on Human Rights, only one microscopic particle exposed to a person is

270 times the radiation acceptable to a worker in the radiation industry. To this day, there are as many as 50,000 veterans of the Gulf War that suffer illnesses related to these shells. In Iraq, thousands of children are also infected. Nuclear weapons, even in this capacity, can be considered weapons of mass destruction. Amazingly enough, the Bush administration is considering using nuclear bunker buster weapons this time.

Casus belli No. 2: *Iraq has not complied or abided by UN law.* One continually asserted fact is that Saddam kicked out the UN inspectors in 1998. Actually, the inspectors pulled out, urged by the Clinton administration. One of the contentions of our government was that the inspectors were not allowed to visit presidential palaces thought to be storage facilities for illegal weapons. While this is true, it is also true that Rolf Ekeus, head of UNSCOM confirmed that the U.S. inspectors worked with the CIA and the Israelis to obtain "information outside the mandate." In other words, we were using the UN inspectors as part of our spy network. No wonder Saddam was and is hesitant to trust or concede to all of Hans Blix's demands.

Another allegation is that Saddam has not destroyed all of

deterred just as these other countries have been?

Casus belli No. 3: *Iraq invaded the sovereign country of Kuwait and launched preemptive missile strikes against Israel.* Saddam did invade that small country south of Iraq, but there was a rationale for this act of aggression that needs to be considered. First, Kuwait was selling oil at lower prices, reducing Iraq's profits and sales against OPEC agreements. Second, Kuwait had refused to write off previous loans and aid to Iraq. Iraq needed a reprieve or loan forgiveness due to its post war recession from eight years of conflict with Iran. Saddam insisted that Iraq made the sacrifices in curtailing

Iranian expansionism for Kuwait and other Middle Eastern countries and therefore deserved this concession. Third, Iraq also accused Kuwait of drilling in the Rumaila oil field that lies in the conflict due to the Saudi's aversion to having non-Islamic forces on its holy soil, in addition to a meeting with the U.S. ambassador in which she stated that the U.S. had no position on Iraq's movement into Kuwait. Regardless, the invasion did violate UN law and cost many innocent lives. But, hypocritically, the U.S. has also invaded sovereign countries such as the illegal invasion in Panama under Reagan, aiding the Contra attack in Nicaragua (World Court 1986 ruling), and the CIA's overthrow of the democratic government in Iran (1953) to name a few that were in violation of UN law.

Another event that is used as justification for war on Iraq is the fact that Saddam launched SCUD missiles at Israel during the Gulf War in violation of UN authority. What is not mentioned is that Saddam did not use chemical or biological warheads, even though he possessed them. On the other hand, the U.S. also launched two cruise missiles at a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan and a supposed terrorist training camp in Afghanistan in 1998. Until

organizations, some of which have terrorist connections. If this were the sole reason to go to war with Iraq, the U.S. would need to declare war on the entire region. On the other hand, the Bush Administration has made allegations that Saddam is connected to al-Qaeda. While probably impossible to prove wrong, it also seems incredibly unlikely. For example, right after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Osama bin Laden approached Prince Sultan bin Abdelaziz al-Saud, the Saudi defense minister, offering a lead to force of 100,000 mujahideen into Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Osama bin Laden is a radical Islamic fundamentalist and Iraq's Ba'ath Party is a secular government. They don't mix. In addition, Saddam has continually repressed Islamic fundamentalist groups, like Al-Qaeda, for years. Only since the U.S. and Britain have superseded UN regulations and imposed the illegal "no-fly" zones, some of these terrorist groups are now out of range from the Iraqi government's war on dissidents and can train in these alleged base camps. Also keep in mind that the CIA has been in this area for some time training the Kurdish rebels, not unlike they helped train the mujahideen during the Soviet Afghanistan conflict. This, of course, came back to haunt us later. Finally, consider that if Iraq's government provided weapons of mass destruction to these radical terrorists it would lead to their own destruction, since the Ba'ath party is not a theocracy built on radical Islamic law, therefore an infidel and subject to Osama bin Laden's holy war.

The lesson to be learned here is that the U.S. government, among others, will use misinformation and propaganda in order to shape public opinion into going to war. The Johnson administration lied about the events in the Tonkin Gulf to convince America to enter the Vietnam War, just like the Bush Administration has been falsifying information about Saddam

cyanide-based gas that the Iraqis weren't known to possess at the time. Also, the U.S., after knowing about Iraq's use of gas on Iranian troops during the war from 1980 to 1988, continued to provide strategic satellite images to Iraqi generals. U.S. corporations like American Type Culture Collection were given permission to sell seed stock to Iraq for the production of biological weapons, like anthrax, botulinum, and others, as revealed in the 1994 House

his weapons of mass destruction as required by UN resolutions and is currently hiding stockpiles of them. While hardly anyone would contest this possibility of Saddam's deceit, it also needs to be considered that the U.S., Pakistan, India, China, North Korea, Iran, Israel, among others are known to possess these weapons as well. The justification for the possession of these weapons is deterrence. Why can't Iraq be contained and

now, it has yet to be proven that these locations had nothing to do with the embassy bombings in Africa. In addition, this was a violation of the sovereignty of these nations in accordance with UN law.

Casus belli No. 4: *Iraq is funding and supporting terrorism.* People in Iraq and the Middle East have continually sent money to the people in Palestine. Much of this money is sent through various charity

Hussein to involve us in this proposed conflict with Iraq. The main point to consider is that there are many of our citizens, relatives, and friends that have been activated to fight this unnecessary war. If Colin Powell's speech to the UN is the only real casus belli the White House can conjure, all of us citizens should vote to bring our valued armed service members home immediately.

Ted Mitchell