

# Bush demands U.N. rubber-stamp war on Iraq

Amerikan war will hasten, not delay, deployment of weapons of mass destruction

*Rush edition of an article from the upcoming MIM Notes, newsletter of the Maoist Internationalist Movement*

On September 12 U.S. President George Bush demanded the United Nations force Iraq to give up its alleged weapons of mass destruction—including its ability to build “nuclear” weapons as he calls them. He also called on Iraq to “end all support for terrorism and act to suppress it, cease persecution of its civilian population, release or account for all Gulf War personnel whose fate is still unknown, and end all illicit trade outside of the oil-for-food program.”(1) Although Amerika’s European allies expressed relief that Bush sought their blessing, the President made it clear Amerika would go ahead even if the United Nations opposed an attack on Iraq—and the sooner the better. “We’re talking days and weeks, not months and years,” said Bush.(2)

Bush’s speech was a ham-fisted attempt to justify the war he wants so badly. The demands he’s made of Iraq are so unrealistic and vague—not to mention hypocritical—that Iraq is bound to fail to meet them.

For example, former U.N. weapons inspector Scott Ritter said two years ago that, “Iraq has indeed been disarmed... The chemical, biological nuclear and long-range ballistic missile programs that were a real threat in 1991 had, by 1998, been destroyed or rendered harmless.” Even Richard Butler, another former weapons inspector who is now a hawk backing his calls for war with allegations about Iraq’s weapons program, said in 1998, “if Iraqi disarmament were a five-lap race, we would be three quarters of the way around the fifth and final lap.”(3) Hard for Iraq to give up weapons that only exist in Bush’s speeches.

The claim that the United States needs to invade with or without a U.N. figleaf in order to dismantle Iraq’s nuclear weapons program is also disingenuous. Sensational “news” reports quoting a study which concluded Iraq could develop nuclear weapons within months either fail to mention or bury a key point: *if* Iraq got a hold of a sufficient amount of weapons-grade radioactive material, then it could build a bomb in months or a few years. That’s a big *if*, however, and one of the reasons more countries don’t have nuclear weapons. Iraq is not the only country which could

make a bomb if it were given enough plutonium. As the headline for an article in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* summing up the German spy agency’s assessment of Iraq’s nuclear capability put it: “Anybody can build atomic bombs.”(4)

Which is MIM’s point. If Iraq doesn’t get the bomb, somebody else will. Pakistan, India and Israel did. In fact, by buying off critics and bullying Iraq the United States increases the appeal of nuclear weapons. Why engage in negotiations with the United States when you know it will take what it wants anyway, backed by the power of its own nuclear arsenal? Even former U.S. Secretary of Defense McNamara grasped the obvious conclusion, quoting an Indian politician, “Before one challenges the United States, one must first acquire nuclear weapons.”(5)

If all those clamoring for war against Iraq were serious about eliminating the risk of nuclear war, they would be working to eliminate the tensions which drive countries to war—tensions built in to capitalism.

More obfuscation

Bush also claimed that Iraq had defied U.N. resolutions for years by not letting weapons inspectors into the country. Setting aside that the United States has ignored U.N. resolutions pertaining to Israel for decades, it was the United States which pulled its weapons inspectors out of Iraq in 1998. Iraq did not end weapons inspection.

As Voices in the Wilderness, an organization dedicated to lifting U.N. sanctions on Iraq, points out, “Richard Butler, the head of UNSCOM, pulled the inspectors out of Iraq in anticipation of the 1998 U.S. Desert Fox bombing campaign. It was only as a result of these bombings that the Iraqi government subsequently refused to allow inspectors to return to the country.

“The US is not really interested in weapons inspections. People forget that the Iraqi accusations that UNSCOM was spying on the Iraqi government turned out to be true. The U.S. infiltrated and subverted the mission of the international inspectors, and then used the Iraqi government’s protests against that subversion as



Anti-Nazi poster by John Heartfield. *Hitler tells fairy tales. “Help, help, I’m surrounded!”* Bush has taken a page from the Nazi’s book of demagoguery by exaggerating the threat posed by Iraq’s alleged weapons of mass destruction while ignoring Amerika’s own weapons and its complicity in the Iraqi (and Israeli, etc.) weapons programs.

an excuse to bomb the country. The U.S. itself destroyed weapons inspections in Iraq, and used the expected dramatic standoff as a reason to unleash the deadly Desert Fox bombing.”(3)

Immediately after September 11 officials in the U.S. state department linked Iraq to the attacks, with no evidence. Bush did not make any specific connections between Iraq and September 11, but then he didn't have to, as former Democratic Senator Bob Kerrey wrote, “there is credible evidence that Iraqi intelligence personnel met with one of the leaders of the attack.” It is still not clear that this Prague meeting actually took place, but if it did, it was just that, a meeting which couldn't have lasted more than an afternoon. It is still no reason to think Iraq had anything to do with September 11.

#### Unilateral multilateralism

Leaders from the U.N. and Amerika's European allies like France were glad that President Bush sought the endorsement of the United Nations. Frances's Foreign Minister said, “[if an attack takes place] without legitimacy there is a risk of increasing instability in the world. This legitimacy for France means of course the role of the Security Council.”(6) The Security Council is the supreme authority in the U.N.; France has a permanent seat.

However, considering that the substance of Bush's speech to the U.N. was “act on Iraq or the U.S. will” as a New York Times banner headline put it,(7) it is the legitimacy of the U.N. that is on the line. If these leaders who up to now criticized Bush's war plans support the war through the U.N., they will be exposed as lackeys who simply wanted to save some face. A U.N. resolution against Iraq on the heels of Bush's speech will merely give Bush's war a veneer of “legitimacy;” the U.N. will play its familiar role as a fig leaf for aggressive Amerikan imperialism.

As MIM Notes reported on the eve of the first Gulf War, “instead of choosing between war and diplomacy, the United States is pursuing both with a vengeance. Consolidating power over allies, creating puppets and punishing defectors, the USA is laying the groundwork for a broader military victory in the war of expansion in the Middle East. The wide-ranging efforts undertaken by the USA around the world underscore the imperialist nature of the conflict, eliminating arguments that the war is caused by a single policy decision or an aggressive personality.”(8)

This time, however, other capitalist powers—Russia, Saudi Arabia and most of the countries in the Middle East except Israel—oppose a renewed attack on Iraq. George Bush may be risking Amerikan hegemony by pushing forward in so many areas simultaneously: Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, south Asia, the Philippines, Korea, etc. If Russia were to stand up to the United States and pledge to defend Iraq, which it has large business deals with, ties with the United States might become politically and economically risky. Suddenly economic ties to Russia and the European Union would not look so bad to a host of Eastern European, Middle East and Central Asian countries. Those who have played Othello or the more complex Go game can see the risks that the above-average-but-over-matched Bush is playing with.(9)

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder already declared German armed forces will not participate in any attack on Iraq. As MIM notes goes to press, the ruling SPD-Green coalition is debating whether or not to propose a parliamentary resolution supporting Schröder's decision. This is a response to pressure from the smaller social-democratic PDS, the former East German ruling party, which was the first to suggest a resolution opposing “any form of German participation” in a war on Iraq.(10) The SPD and Greens—both of which rabidly supported German participation in the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, by the way—want to make sure that the PDS can't pose as the party of peace in the upcoming elections. In any case, this shows how social-democratic parties in second-tier imperialist powers like the PDS might make promising allies when they come into conflict with the world's imperialist hegemon, the United States.

#### The real deal

So if Bush's war is not a moral crusade against tyranny or against the threat of “nuclear” weapons, what is it?

Rami G. Khouri, an American-educated Jordanian journalist interviewed by the New York Times, summed it up well. “There is a sense by many ordinary people and politicians that the moves against Iraq are an effort to redraw the map for the strategic interests of the United States and Israel... Everyone I know wants Saddam Hussein removed. Nobody I know wants the Americans to do it—because we believe they are the last people in the world who will work on the behalf of Arab interests.”

Another man interviewed in the same article said, “all this talk of democracy in the Middle East is baloney. The United States wants to do this against Iraq to spite Arabs and in spite of Arabs.”(11) A talking head interviewed on National Public Radio agreed with this perspective, noting that pro-U.S. “stability” in the region would require local governments to become more, not less, repressive.(12) As MIM and many others have repeated since September 11, Amerikan client states like Saudi Arabia or Egypt were not necessarily better than the Taliban regime when it came to wimmin's rights, the right to free speech and political association, economic exploitation, etc. The difference was the Taliban did not play along with U.S. designs—at least not as much as Washington wanted.

And of course for all his talk about Iraq flaunting U.N. resolutions, Bush said nothing about U.N.-resolution-flaunting Israel. Voices in the Wilderness make the interesting point that, “UN Security Council Resolution 687 calls for regional disarmament throughout the Middle East, not just in Iraq... The US can begin good-faith negotiations with the Iraqi government to return weapons inspectors to Iraq in the context of this regional call for disarmament. Ultimatums that are issued without any possibility of discussion, under the threat of massive war, and ignoring Iraq's own security concerns in the region, are not a useful form of international diplomacy. The US could examine its weapons sales to all of Iraq's surrounding neighbors over this period of eleven years that Iraq has been sanctioned from international trade.”(3) Most notably on the question of “nuclear” weapons, it is an open secret that Israel has them now, not just the capability to produce them in a few years.

If the United States does attack, it is the common people of Iraq who will suffer even more. In the first Gulf War, the United States bombed civilian infrastructure—an internationally recognized war crime (13)—and this combined with U.N. sanctions has contributed to the deaths of 5,000 Iraqis a day. As a speaker at a teach-in in Iowa put it: The images of death and human suffering in Iraq, should evoke the same feeling of horror as the images of people leaping from the World Trade Center on September 11. “We need to be every bit as outraged.”(14)

An Amerikan attack on Iraq will kill thousands but peace in the Middle East and the world will be further removed than ever. Far from achieving Pax Americana, war against Iraq will increase worldwide anger against the United States and send the message that the United States will only listen to the criticism of weapons. — By MC206, 14 September 2002

#### Notes:

1. Reuters, 12 Sep 2002.
2. Associated Press, 13 Sep 2002.
3. Voices in the Wilderness, www.nonviolence.org/vitw.
4. Frankfurter Rundschau, 13 Sep 2002.
5. MIM Notes 255, 1 Apr 2002.
6. Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 12 Sep 2002.
7. New York Times, 12 Sep 2002.
8. MIM Notes 48, Jan 1991.
9. MIM Notes 266, 15 Sep 2002.
10. Frankfurter Rundschau, 12 Sep 2002.
12. All Things Considered, 28 Aug 2002.
13. www.hrw.org/reports/1991/gulfwar/
14. Des Moines Register, 12 Sep 2002.