

Why We Oppose War on Iraq

Greenpeace International

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Greenpeace is opposed to war. We promote non-violent solutions to conflict. We actively campaign for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, held by any and all countries. Here are five reasons why we are opposed to the war in Iraq:

1. War would have devastating human and environmental consequences.

The last Gulf war killed two hundred thousand people and left many of the survivors malnourished, diseased, and dying. Damage to ecosystems in the area remained years after the war ended. What would be the consequences of another war?

[For more, see below](#)

2. War is an ineffective way to deal with weapons of mass destruction.

There is a need for global disarmament from weapons of mass destruction that must be achieved through peaceful diplomatic negotiations.

[For more, see below](#)

3. Bush is clearly trying to gain control of Iraq's oil reserves.

As Nelson Mandela has said, an attack on Iraq would be clearly motivated by George W. Bush's desire to please the US arms and oil industries.

[For more, see below](#)

4. This war is illegal and sets a dangerous precedent.

Even Henry Kissinger argues that "the notion of justified pre-emption runs counter to modern international law, which sanctions the use of force in self-defense only against actual - not potential - threats."

[For more, see below](#)

5. It's hypocritical to single out Iraq.

Other countries such as India, Pakistan and Israel all have weapons of mass destruction.

[For more, see below](#)

1 The Consequences of War

A war with Iraq would have devastating human and environmental consequences.

Lessons from the Gulf War

The human and environmental impacts of the Gulf War were tremendous. Approximately 100,000 Iraqi soldiers were killed by the 80,000 tonnes of

explosives dropped by the coalition forces. The air campaign also killed between 2,500 and 3,500 Iraqi civilians. The civilian death toll in 1991, after the bombing had stopped, rose to around 110,000 (70,000 of them children under 15). This "delayed mortality" was due in part to shortages of medicines and healthcare facilities, but followed the widespread destruction of water treatment and sanitation infrastructure (1). In turn this led to outbreaks of infectious disease.

In the aftermath of the war the remaining population faced severe hardships. Electricity, water and sanitation systems were not restored. Food storage and distribution systems broke down. In combination with sanctions imposed after the war, these circumstances condemned many of the survivors to a life of malnutrition, disease and early death. Subsequently, it has been estimated (2) that around half a million fewer deaths in children under five would have occurred if the pre-war decline in such mortalities had been continued into the 1990s.

In addition to the immense human suffering caused by the war, it was arguably the first war where large-scale environmental damage was deliberately used as a form of weapon.

Between six and eight million of barrels of oil were deliberately poured into the Persian Gulf, causing the world's largest oil spill. The slick, 30 miles long and eight miles wide, caused severe pollution to over 500km of coastline. Fires from 600 deliberately damaged Kuwaiti oil wells consumed an estimated 67 million tonnes of oil created a blanket of soot, gases and aggressive chemicals which impacted terrestrial and marine systems over the Gulf area (3).

This led to immediate respiratory problems in local populations and generated serious long-term risks of birth defects and cancer in exposed people.

Bays and mudflats were clogged with oil, disrupting the flora and fauna in these areas vital as nursery grounds to marine organisms and feeding grounds for birds and other marine animals. It is estimated that 15,000 square kilometres of the Mesopotamian Wetlands were destroyed by smothering with oil. Tens of thousands of birds are thought to have died as a direct result of the war and many others suffered the chronic effects of oiling. The feeding grounds for over one hundred thousand wading and migratory birds were destroyed and some populations have been slow to recover or continue to show poor reproductive performance. Important shrimp fisheries declined immediately after the war to around 1% of their pre-war level (3-6). Although some recovery has taken place in the biological systems, further pollution arising from a conflict would disturb these fragile recovery processes.

The land itself suffered physically and biologically from the military assault. Fuel-air bombs pulverized the topsoil and destroyed the vegetation. Tanks and tracked vehicles compressed desert soil, curtailing subsequent vegetation regrowth. Coalition military forces left solid wastes littered over some 40,000 square kilometers of Kuwait, northeastern Saudi Arabia and Southern Iraq. This consisted of destroyed military hardware including 5,000 Iraqi tanks and vehicles, 120,000 tonnes of ammunition and 80,000 tonnes of bombs. In addition some 4 million tonnes of human wastes, including sanitary wastes in pits, were also left in the militarily impacted areas (7).

The Current Crisis in Iraq

Most of the health, water, sanitation and power systems infrastructure in Iraq was destroyed, during the last Gulf war, remain unrestored. Food supplies depend almost entirely on rationing, which is vulnerable to civil disorder and administrative breakdown. A major drought that has affected Iraq for the past three years has only worsened the situation. The primary source of water for Iraqis, the Tigris river, is now heavily polluted with sewage, and most sewage treatment plants are not functioning. Water pumping stations and tanker trucks are in disrepair. The power supply is still severely crippled supplying around 50% of demand. Sanctions imposed by the UN since 1990 make it extremely difficult for Iraq to obtain parts to repair the damage.

As a result, millions of Iraqis are malnourished with children being particularly affected. According to information given by UNICEF⁸ "Infant mortality today (107 deaths per 1,000 live births) is more than double what it was at the end of the 1980s. The under-five mortality rate (131 deaths per 1,000 live births) is two-and-a-half times what it was in 1989. " This rate of increase is greater than for any other country in the world.

Likely consequences of a new war

The impact of a war on Iraq will depend entirely upon the targets that are selected and the weapons used. If industrial facilities are targeted then chemical contamination can be expected due to spillage and/or burning of chemical stockpiles and stores. Subsequently, as these plants are put back into operation, environmental standards will undoubtedly be lower leading to chronic pollution problems. A fall in environmental standards was observed after the 1991 conflict since these standards were not a priority and spares to restore facilities to full operation were not available due to imposed economic sanctions.

If producing oilfields are targeted or deliberately sabotaged, it would likely result in fierce fires, smoke production, oil spillage on land and related impacts. The soot from the Kuwait fires during the last war caused widespread impacts, including a fall in seawater temperature. This, in turn, had an impact on fisheries and sensitive ecosystems. Similar impacts would be likely in the case of a new conflict (3).

If water infrastructure, sanitation and sewage treatment facilities are destroyed, it will have microbiological impacts on marine resources and cause health impacts on civilians in the form of increased levels of sewage transmitted bacterial and viral infections such as typhoid, cholera and polio as well as parasitic diseases.

It is possible that pollution from the deliberate release or spillage of oil may occur on the same scale as during the 1991 war. If this happens, similar impacts can be expected, but of a more severe nature due to the fragility of the slowly recovering marine ecosystems after the last conflict (3).

Bombing of nuclear installations and/or the use of nuclear weapons on the battlefield would undoubtedly cause widespread radioactive contamination. This in turn would further compromise the already highly vulnerable food supply chain within the country and would probably lead to serious radioactive contamination over the region as a whole. Damage caused by chemical and biological weapons would depend on the type of weapons used and the targets selected. Chemical weapons have the power to cause very high mortality rates in humans, domestic animals and wildlife in targeted areas (9). The longer lasting health effects on those not immediately killed and the ensuing exit from the areas concerned, would probably lead to a complete breakdown of society in impacted areas. The same would apply if biological weapons, such as anthrax, were used.

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2. Weapons of Mass Destruction

War is an ineffective way to deal with weapons of mass destruction.

There is a need for global disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, including by all five permanent members of the Security Council and any other countries that possess them. Disarmament must be achieved through diplomatic negotiations, not through armed aggression, be it unilateral or multilateral.

The need for global disarmament has long been recognized by the international community. Under the terms of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which entered into force in 1970, the US and the four other acknowledged nuclear powers made a binding commitment to nuclear disarmament. In exchange, the non-nuclear weapons states agreed that they would not seek nuclear weapons capability. Thus far, the US and other nuclear powers have been adamant in insisting that non-nuclear weapons states live up to their commitments, but silent in the face of criticism about their own failures.

Thirty years on, at the NPT review conference in the year 2000, the US and the other signatories agreed to end nuclear weapons testing by enacting the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) as the first of thirteen specific disarmament commitments. Shortly thereafter, the US Senate voted against ratification of the CTBT. In 2002, the US government declared that it no longer agreed with the commitments made in 2000, particularly the global ban on nuclear testing, putting the future of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in jeopardy.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), a treaty aimed at eradicating another weapon of mass destruction, entered into force in 1975. Since its inception, the BWC has been ineffective at ensuring compliance with its terms, largely because of its lack of a verification scheme. Five years of work to develop effective verification measures were torpedoed by the US government in June 2001. The Bush Administration refused at the last minute to agree to international inspections, citing concerns about US national security and the need to protect US corporations' industrial secrets. This decision outraged the international community, and is particularly hypocritical in light of the current demands on Iraq.

The Bush administration has also reneged on the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, announcing in December 2001 that it was withdrawing from the Treaty in order to pursue its Star Wars missile defense program.

Funding the safeguarding and destruction of nuclear weapons and materials in the countries of the former Soviet Union by the United States is crucial if the proliferation of nuclear weapons is to be curtailed. Yet one of the first acts of the Bush Administration when it came into power in 2001 was to slash funding for these programmes by almost 21 percent while increasing nuclear weapons funding by almost five percent.

The story continues up to the present. As recently as 5 February 2003, a key US Senate committee recommended ratification of the Bush-inspired US-Russia Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty (SORT). The SORT treaty does not require the destruction of a single weapon, representing another failure of the US (and Russia) to abide by disarmament commitments. The SORT treaty provides for cuts only in "deployed" weapons and blatantly fails to meet the NPT test of a multilateral disarmament treaty leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Coupled with Bush's planning for the possible use of nuclear weapons against Iraq (or any other possible aggressor), and his plans to build new nuclear weapons, this shows that the US is in material breach of the NPT as well as other international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament treaties. Furthermore, it clearly displays that the Bush Administration presents an imminent threat to global security.

3. It's about Oil

Bush is clearly trying to get control of Iraq's oil reserves.

Control over oil is a central motivation for the Bush administration's military confrontation with Iraq. The unilateralist nature of the US's new security stance in a post-September 11th world has become inexorably linked with the importance of controlling oil.

The dependence of the economy on oil forces US foreign policy to equate control of oil with its "vital interest". Two thirds of the world's oil supplies are in the Persian Gulf, making control and influence in this region crucial.

The fight to control oil has increased global conflict. The production and use of oil has destabilized governments and had an anti-democratic influence in oil producing countries. The use of oil is causing climate change, which poses the greatest environmental threat to our planet.

Oil companies such as ExxonMobil have used their political influence to undermine attempts to tackle climate change, and encouraged US dependence. ExxonMobil's contributions to the Republican Party in the 2000 election cycle totaled more than US\$1 million, on top of years of funding multimillion-dollar anti-Kyoto advertising campaigns.

Greenpeace believes that real security will only come about when we stop our global addiction to oil and transfer our resources to producing clean renewable energy.

Driven by Oil

The global economy is underpinned by the use of fossil fuels such as coal, gas and oil. Securing control of this valuable resource has become a major driver for American foreign policy.

The US has become increasingly dependent on foreign supplies of oil. In 2001 the US imported 54 percent of its oil, compared with 2 percent in 1950. The US accounts for about 25 percent of global oil consumption but has only 3 percent of the proven oil reserves (1).

Since becoming president George W. Bush has continually stated that the US faces an energy crisis. Although there is little proof, he has based many of his policies on this false understanding.

The Bush Administration's response to the "energy crisis" has concentrated on the supply side, with no attempt to reduce an ever-increasing domestic demand for oil.

The "dig, drill and destroy" approach to energy policy threatens some of the US's most pristine areas and will increase air pollution. And to little effect. The entire output from drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge only yields about six months' worth of oil for the US.

Apart from its consequences in the US, the emphasis on supply naturally leads to an aggressive foreign policy. The National Energy Policy Group chaired by Vice President Cheney concluded that energy security should be a priority of trade and foreign policy. In a recent statement to Congress, General Anthony Zinni testified that the US "must have free access to the region's [Persian Gulf] resources".

Iraq has the second largest proven reserves of oil in the world. It has more than the combined proved reserves of the Caspian Basin, Siberia, Alaska, the North Sea and West Shetland (2).

Oil runs deep in the Bush Administration. Apart from President Bush himself, Vice President Cheney is the former CEO of oil-services giant Halliburton Co.

Donald Evans, the Secretary of Commerce, and Secretary of Energy Stanley Abraham both previously worked for oil giant Tom Brown. Condoleezza Rice, the President's national security advisor, is a former member of the board of directors of Chevron. Rice even had a Chevron oil tanker named after her.

Corporate Polluters in the Driving Seat

Given many of its members' natural affinity with oil companies it is not surprising that Bush Administration policies on energy seem to have created an open door for corporate polluters.

Companies like ExxonMobil have worked hard to protect their core business. ExxonMobil has for the last ten years undermined every effort to reduce the world's reliance on oil by pressuring the US government into abandoning its commitments to the Kyoto Protocol on global warming.

During the 2000 election cycle, ExxonMobil gave \$1,375,250 to political campaigns — second only to Enron among oil and gas company campaign contributions. Of this total, 89 percent went to Republican candidates. By undermining efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, ExxonMobil prolongs US oil dependence and prolongs its entanglements with often politically unstable oil producing countries.

In 1999 ExxonMobil's lobbying budget, \$11.7 million, was the fifth highest in the US. The result of ExxonMobil's influence is that Exxon's words come out of Bush's mouth. After intensely lobbying Bush to ditch the treaty, which he did in March 2001, Exxon took out advertisements describing the Kyoto Protocol as "fundamentally flawed" and "fatally politicized". Two months later Bush described the Kyoto treaty as "fatally flawed in fundamental ways" (3).

"If you try talking about Iraq and if you were not encumbered by the fear that your actions would be linked to ExxonMobil or the oil industry, you'd be talking about oil issues," according to a Bush energy advisor quoted anonymously in the Wall Street Journal⁴.

Real Security

The burning of oil and other fossil fuels causes climate change, which has the potential to radically damage entire ecosystems. Changing the climate will affect everyone and everything on Earth, as acknowledged by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Established by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme, the IPCC is a group of more than 2000 of the world's top scientists.

The people of the US and other oil dependent economies will only gain real security when they achieve energy independence. A combination of energy efficiency and the transition to an economy based on clean renewable energy

is the quickest way to achieve that goal. Even better, it's the cheapest way to do it.

A comparison of the projected costs of the war with the price of energy security is sobering.

White House projections for the costs of the war are typically between \$90 billion and \$250 billion. Many commentators quote \$200 billion. By comparison the 1991 Persian Gulf War cost the US an estimated \$61 billion.

\$90 billion could provide clean renewable energy to the 1.6 billion people, a quarter of the world's population, who have no access to electricity. As well as helping to bring about sustainable development, it would prevent the deaths of the two and half million women and children who die each year from the indoor pollution caused by cooking fires (5).

In the US, \$200 billion dollars could buy:

- \$2,000 solar system for each of the 100 million households in America.
- 10 million Honda or Toyota hybrid cars, which have a fuel efficiency of 40 miles per gallon. They could replace the 10 million vehicles that get less than 20 miles per gallon. Transportation currently accounts for over 30 percent of the US's annual CO2 emissions. The fuel saved by switching would be approximately 3.75 billion gallons or 14.2 billion liters of gas.
- 330,000 wind turbines. Based on the 1998 cost of a 600-kilowatt windturbine (\$500-650,000) and not assuming any scale of production cost savings (6).

Why stop with energy?

- \$13 billion a year would feed all of the 30,000 children a day who die from hunger.
- \$10 billion would curb the spread of AIDS in Africa where 6,000 people a day die from the disease.
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4. Illegality of War

War with Iraq is illegal and sets a dangerous precedent.

The US and UK governments claim they have the right to invade Iraq even without a second UN resolution. They claim Iraq is a threat to world peace and security and that they are entitled to take preventive unilateral military action. Contrary to these claims, legal experts from around the world say that such an attack would be illegal without a further Security Council Resolution specifically authorizing the use of force.

Furthermore the 'preventive' use of force currently being considered against Iraq is against both the spirit and letter of international law; the United Nations would be well-advised not to allow such a dangerous precedent. Already it has been reported that North Korea is considering a preventative attack against American forces in South Korea. The claimed doctrine of preventive war is not only illegal; it is dangerous, destabilising and destructive of international peace and security.

Background

The UN was created after World War II to keep international peace and security, because the old system of collective security had failed to prevent devastating world wars. The old system, based on shifting alliances between states, had not prevented nationalistic governments of powerful economies from using force to achieve their economic and political aims.

The UN Charter binds all member states to maintain international peace and security, through the peaceful settlement of disputes, collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace and most importantly international cooperation.

This attempt to increase international cooperation has been increasingly undermined by the US government in recent years. It has pulled out of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, failed to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty despite clear promises made under the NPT (Non Proliferation Treaty), pulled out of the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) Treaty, refused to submit the treaty on the International Criminal Court to the Senate for its consent and refused to sign the Biological Weapons Protocol.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, US delegations to international negotiations worked hard to weaken treaty language, and then failed to ratify them anyway. All of these unilateral actions by the United States

are undermining the power and authority of the UN, discouraging international cooperation and breaking down the rule of international law.

Unilateral Attack not Legal

The US has recently claimed a right to take preventive military action, including against Iraq, saying "if we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long" and that "Iraq is a clear threat to international peace".

While the US and UK claim that Iraq is already in material breach of Resolution 1441 for a number of reasons, this does not give them the right to start an attack - only the United Nations can decide if a material breach exists and only the UN can decide what to do about it. A further Security Council resolution is clearly needed to authorise the use of force.

The US claim ignores one of the major principles of the United Nations. UN Charter Article 51 gives states a sovereign right to start military action in self defense only if it has suffered armed attack: "nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security."

The right of self-defense exists only where an attack has already been made, or is plainly imminent. In one often cited case involving the SS *Caroline*, there must be "a necessity of self-defence, instant, overwhelming, leaving no choice of means and no moment for deliberation". In the absence of this circumstance, the correct and legal course is to ask the Security Council to deal with the matter.

In fact, in 1981, when Israel attacked the Osirak nuclear reactor in Iraq, claiming in effect a right of preventive self-defence, the attack was strongly condemned by the Security Council in Resolution 487 (1981), including by the United States, as a "clear violation" of the Charter. Significantly, US Secretary of State Colin Powell has since praised the attack as a "clear, preemptive military strike. Everyone now is quite pleased even though they got the devil criticized out of them at the time." The attack was illegal then and a similar attack would be illegal now.

Iraq has not threatened to attack any State at this time, has not mobilised its forces to do so and does not have the military force to attack the United States, United Kingdom or Australia, all of which have sent forces to the region. So repeated claims by those States that a preventive attack on Iraq can be justified by Article 51 have no legal basis. Even Henry Kissinger has stated that "[t]he notion of justified pre-emption runs counter to modern international law, which sanctions the use of force in self-defense only against actual — not potential — threats."

Preventive Attack, Even with Security Council Approval, IS Inconsistent with International Law

There is no basis in international law for use of force as a preventive measure when there has been no actual or imminent attack by the offending State or widespread violence or humanitarian emergency. If the Security Council were now, for the first time in its history, to authorize preventive war against Iraq, where there is no imminent threat to peace, it would seriously undermine international restraints on the use of force. This would clearly undermine the United Nations Charter objectives to maintain international peace and security.

To authorize a preventive war on the basis that a state may have hidden weapons of mass destruction would set a precedent for other preventive wars against up to 20 other countries. The use of force would resort to violence at the cost of civilian as well as military lives at a time when threats to international peace and security international proliferate.

There are sufficient International mechanisms available to address the charges against Iraq and the Iraqi leadership. These include, apart from the existing weapons inspection program, the establishment by the Security Council of an ad hoc international criminal tribunal, the use of the International Criminal Court for any crimes committed after July 2002, and the International Court of Justice.

Mechanisms to ensure compliance include diplomatic pressure, negotiations, sanctions on certain goods with military application or which could be used to produce weapons of mass destruction, destruction of stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and inspections of facilities with capabilities to assist in production of weapons of mass destruction.

The international community must address the question of weapons of mass destruction through international cooperation, with consistency and non-discrimination. Even the United States and United Kingdom, together with China, France, India, Pakistan, and Russia as nuclear powers, are bound by an obligation to "pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

US War Plans under Geneva Convention

CBS News reported on Jan 24 that the Pentagon intends to start the war with a massive attack on Baghdad, including attacks on electricity and water supplies. Such a plan would contravene Article 54 of Protocol I to the Geneva Convention: *2. It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the*

adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive.

During the Gulf war, Iraqi water and electricity infrastructure was destroyed, much of which was said to be "accidental collateral damage", but there are indications that these were deliberate attacks. In Jan 2003, over one hundred US law professors and NGOs sent a letter to George Bush warning that recent US battle tactics in Kosovo and Afghanistan indicate concern that international humanitarian law will be broken in any attack on Iraq.

The Use and Threat of Nuclear Weapons Are Illegal

A classified document known as National Security Presidential Directive 17, signed by President Bush last September, was leaked to the press in January. According to news reports, the document states: *"The United States will continue to make clear that it reserves the right to respond with overwhelming force — including potentially nuclear weapons — to the use of [weapons of mass destruction] against the United States, our forces abroad, and friends and allies".*

In 1996, the International Court of Justice ruled that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law; but did not conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in an extreme circumstance of self-defence, in which the very survival of a State would be a stake.

The use of nuclear weapons in Iraq in response to Iraqi chemical or biological weapons usage, or as an attack on command bunkers would clearly be illegal under international law.

5. Double Standards

Iraq is not the only country in the region with weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the Middle East.

WMD in the Middle East

The first use of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East was by British forces in 1917, when Britain occupied territory that was later to become Iraq.

Chemical weapons were used in the process of welding the Kurdish north, the Shia south and the Sunni tribes around Baghdad, into an invented Iraqi "kingdom" to control the region's oil. Winston Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, found "turbulent tribes" of Arabs were fighting this imperialism with some success and encouraged the use of chemical weapons. There was some opposition to this in Whitehall but Churchill wrote: "I do not understand this

squeamishness about the use of gas. I am strongly in favour of using poison gas against uncivilised tribes." (1)

Today, a snapshot of suspected WMD programs in the Middle East, whose development was aided by Western governments and corporations, reveals a disturbing picture.

SYRIA: Syria has one of the largest chemical weapons stockpiles in the Middle East, with a ready supply of scud missiles, to be used as delivery systems. According to the US Defense Intelligence Agency, Syria began developing an offensive chemical warfare program in the early 1970s "as a result of a perceived Israeli threat", and now probably has a biological weapons programme. CIA Director William Webster testified in 1989 that: "West European firms were instrumental in supplying the required precursor chemicals and equipment. Without the provision of these key elements, Damascus would not have been able to produce chemical weapons." (2)

IRAN: Many analysts think Iran is closer to producing a nuclear weapon than Iraq, and the US government claims Iran may have up to several thousand tons of weaponised chemical agents. (3) Iran denies these allegations and regularly calls for a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East.

EGYPT: Egypt is widely believed to have used chemical weapons in Yemen in the 1960s, and is still thought to maintain chemical weapons capability. Egypt is not believed to be pursuing new WMD systems at this time, and actively supports a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East. (4)

ISRAEL: Israel has the oldest and largest nuclear weapons program in the Middle East. Its official position is ambiguous: it claims it "will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the region" and the established nuclear weapons states have been happy with this. However, analysts agree that it has built between 100 and 400 nuclear weapons during a program that started in the 1950s, a sophisticated arsenal bigger than Britain's. (5) Israel has not signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty or any other arms control treaty and refuses UN inspections of its nuclear facilities.

Israel has missiles with a range of at least 3,500km, and the only anti-ballistic missile system in the world. Its delivery systems include three nuclear submarines that can be armed with nuclear tipped cruise missiles. (6) Israel is thought to have considerable chemical and biological weapons programs, but information about them is scarce. Israel has allegedly used chemical and biological weapons in the past. (7)

IRAQ: As of 1990, Iraq had an advanced nuclear weapons program and large chemical and biological warfare stockpiles, obtained with help from many companies in many countries and with the explicit knowledge of the US and

other western governments. (8) Much of its WMD capacity was identified and destroyed by UN inspectors after the 1991 Gulf War (including 40,000 chemical weapons and 30 missiles designed to deliver them). Iraq claims all its WMD stocks and facilities were destroyed. There are questions, however, over how many of its chemical and biological elements remain, although the majority of the international community does not think Iraq is in possession of nuclear weapons or has the capability to build them. Current weapons inspections have revealed no trace of nuclear, chemical or biological agents in any site visited (9) or any evidence that Iraq has attempted to re-start its nuclear programme. (10)

WMD in the Rest of the World

The race for weapons of mass destruction is not isolated to the Middle East. India and Pakistan shocked the world when they publicly announced their nuclear weapons testing programs through the detonation of small yield (five to twenty-five thousand tons of TNT equivalent) nuclear bombs. The West responded by imposing economic and technical sanctions but these were mostly lifted in order to ensure their support for the conflict in Afghanistan. India and Pakistan have now become accepted members of the international community and their illegal nuclear weapons programs are being largely ignored.

It is not hard to imagine why North Korea, for example, now appears poised to follow suit. The five permanent members of the Security Council — US, UK, France, Russia and China — collectively have the largest arsenals of nuclear weapons of all: over 35,000 of them. They are all working to keep these arsenals, to improve and, if necessary, increase them. All nations must immediately ban nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction to avoid heading for a global nuclear, or other WMD, free-for-all.

Why the Double Standards?

The US, UK and most of Western Europe helped arm Saddam Hussein with WMD, conventional weapons and delivery vehicles. A 1992 US Senate committee report revealed that the US had exported chemical, biological, nuclear, and missile-system equipment to Iraq, including anthrax, exported by the US Center for Disease Control.¹¹ According to the report, this was done with the full knowledge of the Reagan Administration, whose envoy, Donald Rumsfeld, visited Saddam Hussein in 1984 to reopen US-Iraq relations after declassifying Iraq from the status of a terrorist-supporting state.

150 western companies, including 24 from the US, have supplied Iraq with equipment and know-how for its WMD programs since 1975. Iraq supplied this information in its report to the UN in December 2002, but the US vetted the material due to its "sensitive" nature prior to distributing it to the non-permanent members of the Security Council. (12) A full version of the report was leaked to the press.

Even after Iraq's horrendous 1988 attacks on Halabja, which killed at least 5,000 Kurdish civilians in Iraq, and which the US and UK governments repeatedly cite as a reason to get rid of Saddam Hussein, western officials bent over backwards to play down the truth and significance of these attacks. They initially blamed Iran for the atrocity and "[i]n December 1988, Dow Chemical sold US\$1.5 million of pesticides to Iraq, despite US government concerns that they could be used as chemical warfare agents." An Export-Import Bank official reported in a memorandum that he could find "no reason" to stop the sale, despite evidence that the pesticides were "highly toxic" to humans and would cause death "from asphyxiation." (13)

It is clear these double standards are being applied because it was in the strategic interest of the US and other governments to support Saddam Hussein when he was waging war with their mutual arch-enemy, Iran. Now that Iraq is no longer a strategic ally, it must be disarmed at all costs, using whatever arguments the public can be convinced to believe.

Greenpeace shares the belief that Iraq must be disarmed of any weapons of mass destruction it may possess, but believes that all other countries must be subject to the same rules. The tools for a peaceful, non-violent transition to a world free of weapons of mass destruction exist within the UN treaty system, and we call on all countries to support and further develop these mechanisms in good faith.

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