

Editorial: To-Raq or Not to-raq

November, 2002

How many American civilian casualties are acceptable to you?

This is the first question any critic of President Bush's policy on Iraq should have to answer. Bush has already given the only right answer—zero. Those who oppose the president ought to tell us why dead Americans here on our soil are okay. Why this nation should go ahead and leave stones unturned in our war against terrorism.

It is only a matter of time before Saddam Hussein acquires a nuclear weapon, if he hasn't already. Many of our "allies" in Europe have been only too happy over the years to help Iraq acquire the technology needed to create weapons of mass destruction. Failing to destroy that capacity right away would be among the most tragic mistakes in our nation's history.

Hussein already has chemical and biological weapon capacity. He already has ties to al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. His next step is obvious.

Our next step is just as obvious--do something now, or risk a terrorist event within the United States that kills not 3,000 innocent citizens, but 300,000. Perhaps for some critics that's an acceptable loss of life. If so, they should tell us so. It's clearly not acceptable to the President of the United States.

The choice is stark, but it is real. Does anyone doubt that Osama Bin Laden, assuming he is still alive, or Saddam Hussein would blanch at releasing smallpox into our population? At using mustard gas? At exploding a rogue nuke?

In the early 21st Century, there will be no more important question for our nation than this—are we willing to do whatever it takes to protect ourselves, or are we willing to sit quietly and allow a terrorist organization to explode a nuclear weapon in Los Angeles or New York, or Portland?

No one wants war, but on September 11 Islamic terrorists did more than fly some planes into some buildings. They also committed this nation to a course of action that can only end with a complete erasure of Islamic terrorism as a threat to this country. Bin Laden's men believed we would not respond. They thought they were attacking a weak nation. Some of us, regrettably, are weak.

Taking out Saddam Hussein is the obvious next step in our war against global terrorism. Unless, that is, you're willing to see hundreds of thousands of American men, women and children die horribly, burned to death or blown to pieces.

...Or Not to-Raq

George Bush (43) like the Godfather before him is about to make Saddam Hussein “an offer he can’t refuse.”

In the movie, “The Godfather” informed the bandleader when he wanted the famous singer out of his long-term contract that either “his brains or his signature would be on the contract.” It was an offer he couldn’t refuse.

Saddam, according to the president, can either allow the United Nations inspectors in and disarm his weapons of mass destruction, or he can face war, regime change. Seems simple. But the problem with making Saddam “an offer he can’t refuse” is that he’s been stupid enough to refuse them before: The Gulf War. And of course it is the Iraqi people who suffer whenever Saddam performs his calculus.

Before Bush decides that Saddam is too stupid once again to understand an offer he can’t refuse, maybe the president should do a quick review of what happened 11 years ago in the first Gulf War.

- 1) America led a successful international coalition liberating Kuwait from Iraq. Most of Kuwait’s oil goes to Japan, which is why Japan paid for the war.
- 2) Kuwaiti citizens didn’t fight in their war for liberation. They went on vacation only to return when the country was more habitable.
- 3) As American soldiers came home from the war, we managed to leave 10,000 troops in Saudi Arabia for safekeeping. Many in the Arab world wondered if we had colonial aspirations for their region.
- 4) As former U.S. Senator Bob Kerrey commented recently about the decade since the war, “We promoted democracy everywhere in the world but in the Middle East.”

Winning a war against Saddam is feasible, maybe easy—but after defeating the Taliban and liberating Afghanistan, improving relations with Pakistan, China and a host of other countries, America has the opportunity now not to fight this war and to partially disengage from the Middle East, bringing our troops home from Saudi Arabia. The Arab/Islamic world is having an argument about modernism. Many, like the two million people a day in Iran (emulating the fifty million a day in China), are on the Internet voting daily, individually for information, for freedom. A war right now could step on the pace of that change. A war now would also mire us in the region and ensure our status as a colonial power. Then, dramatically, the argument in the Arab world would be the Arab Street vs. the American Colonial Power and not where the argument really is and should be, an internal conflict: The Arab Future: Modern vs. Primitive.

Before we fight this war, we should ask ourselves: Do we really want to be the policeman to the world? Because some of us, weak (Neville Chamberlains) as we may be, may just not be up for a 10 year war on terrorism. It’s an offer we can refuse.