

Congressman Ron Paul March 20, 2002

Why Initiate War on Iraq?

I was recently asked why I thought it was a bad idea for the President to initiate a war against Iraq. I responded by saying that I could easily give a half a dozen reasons why; and if I took a minute, I could give a full dozen. For starters, here is a half a dozen.

Number one, Congress has not given the President the legal authority to wage war against Iraq as directed by the Constitution, nor does he have U.N. authority to do so. Even if he did, it would not satisfy the rule of law laid down by the Framers of the Constitution.

Number two, Iraq has not initiated aggression against the United States. Invading Iraq and deposing Saddam Hussein, no matter how evil a dictator he may be, has nothing to do with our national security. Iraq does not have a single airplane in its air force and is a poverty-ridden third world nation, hardly a threat to U.S. security. Stirring up a major conflict in this region will actually jeopardize our security.

Number three, a war against Iraq initiated by the United States cannot be morally justified. The argument that someday in the future Saddam Hussein might pose a threat to us means that any nation, any place in the world is subject to an American invasion without cause. This would be comparable to the impossibility of proving a negative.

Number four, initiating a war against Iraq will surely antagonize all neighboring Arab and Muslim nations as well as the Russians, the Chinese, and the European Union, if not the whole world. Even the English people are reluctant to support Tony Blair's prodding of our President to invade Iraq. There is no practical benefit for such action. Iraq could end up in even more dangerous hands like Iran.

Number five, an attack on Iraq will not likely be confined to Iraq alone. Spreading the war to

Israel and rallying all Arab nations against her may well end up jeopardizing the very existence of Israel. The President has already likened the current international crisis more to that of World War II than the more localized Vietnam war. The law of unintended consequences applies to international affairs every bit as much as to domestic interventions, yet the consequences of such are much more dangerous.

Number six, the cost of a war against Iraq would be prohibitive. We paid a heavy economic price for the Vietnam war in direct cost, debt and inflation. This coming war could be a lot more expensive. Our national debt is growing at a rate greater than \$250 billion per year. This will certainly accelerate. The dollar cost will be the least of our concerns compared to the potential loss of innocent lives, both theirs and ours. The systematic attack on civil liberties that accompanies all wars cannot be ignored. Already we hear cries for resurrecting the authoritarian program of constriction in the name of patriotism, of course.

Could any benefit come from all this warmongering? Possibly. Let us hope and pray so. It should be evident that big government is anathema to individual liberty. In a free society, the role of government is to protect the individual's right to life and liberty. The biggest government of all, the U.N. consistently threatens personal liberties and U.S. sovereignty. But our recent move toward unilateralism hopefully will inadvertently weaken the United Nations. Our participation more often than not lately is conditioned on following the international rules and courts and trade agreements only when they please us, flaunting the consensus, without rejecting internationalism on principle- as we should.

The way these international events will eventually play out is unknown, and in the process we expose ourselves to great danger. Instead of replacing today's international government, (the United Nations, the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, the international criminal court) with free and independent republics, it is more likely that we will see a rise of militant nationalism with a penchant for solving problems with arms and protectionism rather than free trade and peaceful negotiations.

The last thing this world needs is the development of more nuclear weapons, as is now being planned in a pretense for ensuring the peace. We would need more than an office of strategic information to convince the world of that.

What do we need? We need a clear understanding and belief in a free society, a true republic that protects individual liberty, private property, free markets, voluntary exchange and private

solutions to social problems, placing strict restraints on government meddling in the internal affairs of others.

Indeed, we live in challenging and dangerous times.