

# U.S. Policy Toward Iraq: Policy Alternatives

Prepared by Phyllis Bennis, Stephen Zunes, and Martha Honey



FOREIGN POLICY IN FOCUS

# Foreign Policy In Focus Position Paper

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# Foreign Policy In Focus

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The document that follows is the result of two meetings initiated in 2001 by *Foreign Policy In Focus* (FPIF) to examine the failure of current U.S. policy toward Iraq and to draw up a statement outlining the components of a new, more humane, and effective policy.

The following people attended the initial meeting, held in late January at the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) in Washington, DC: Martha Honey, codirector of FPIF and fellow at IPS; Phyllis Bennis, director of the New Internationalism project and fellow at IPS; Stephen Zunes, a professor at the University of San Francisco and Middle East/North Africa editor of FPIF; Clovis Maksoud, director, Center for the Global South at American University; Joe Stork, advocacy director, Middle East, Human Rights Watch; and Alistair Millar, vice president, Fourth Freedom Forum. This group recognized that while there is growing awareness of the grave shortcomings of U.S. policy toward Iraq, there has been relatively little work done to build a broad consensus of policy alternatives. The group decided to convene a larger meeting of grassroots activists, academics, and representatives from human rights, faith-based, Middle East, and policy organizations to try to find common ground around a set of policy alternatives.

Phyllis Bennis wrote an initial draft of an alternative policy which served as the basis of the second meeting at IPS in late March. The following people participated in that meeting:

Nick Arons, Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, DC  
Phyllis Bennis, Director, New Internationalism Project, Institute for Policy Studies, Washington, DC  
Sharon Burke, Amnesty International, Washington, DC  
Lauren Fleer, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Nyack, NY  
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Barbara Wein, U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington, DC  
Marvin Wingfield, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee,  
Washington, DC  
Stephen Zunes, Foreign Policy In Focus and University of San Francisco,  
San Francisco, CA

Although there was not agreement on all points, the meeting was remarkable in that there was wide consensus on most of the elements that should be incorporated into a reformed U.S. policy. Based on minutes from this meeting, Phyllis Bennis wrote up a new document, which has since been revised and edited by Stephen Zunes and Martha Honey. It should be noted that the participation by individuals and organizations in the discussion should not be seen as an endorsement by them of this draft.

We hope that this draft can form the basis of a unified challenge by the progressive community and others concerned with U.S. policy toward Iraq to work for a change that reflects concerns about the nature of the Iraqi regime—including its potential threat to its neighbors and its own people—and shifts the direction of U.S. policy toward one centered on demilitarization, international law, and human rights.

We are seeking endorsements of this policy platform. If you and/or your organization wish to have your name added as endorsing these policy alternatives, please email or telephone Stephen Zunes <Stephen@coho.org>; (831) 425-2975. Comments and suggestions are also welcome.

## U.S. Policy Toward Iraq: Policy Alternatives

Current U.S.-UN policy regarding Iraq has failed and has largely lost credibility. It is widely viewed internationally as reflecting U.S. (and, to a lesser degree, British) insistence on maintaining a punitive sanctions-based approach regardless of the humanitarian impact and it is increasingly regarded as having failed to bring about either democratic changes in Iraq or security for the Persian Gulf region. Numerous countries are challenging, if not directly violating, the sanctions regime, and international support has largely eroded.

The U.S. is the driving force behind UN policy, since Washington wields effective veto power over any proposed changes. The U.S. is becoming increasingly isolated in the world body, with only Great Britain remaining in support of the American position. There is little question that a change to a more humane and practical policy by the U.S. would quickly be accepted by the UN Security Council as a whole.

U.S. policy toward Iraq has also failed to take into account the consequences of widespread opposition in the Middle East—across the region at the street level and increasingly at the governmental level as well.

The administration of President George W. Bush has tacitly acknowledged this failure through Secretary of State Colin Powell's advocacy of "smart sanctions." The Bush position is often portrayed as a major shift toward a more targeted and humane means of enforcing a sanctions regime against the Iraqi government. However, since the new formula is based upon ongoing UN Security Council supervision over Iraq's oil exports and revenues and includes vigorous inspections of any and all international commerce, it appears designed more to halt the growing violations of the sanctions regime than to ease the suffering of the Iraqi people. The Iraqi government has rejected the proposal, and most international humanitarian groups working in Iraq have expressed serious reservations about it. There also appears to be little support from foreign governments.

In the U.S., neither the current policy nor the proposed modifications have much support, but there has been strong opposition to ending the sanctions, based on charges that doing so would be considered "soft on

Saddam Hussein." The result has become a largely politically driven inertia, with the cost-benefit assessment limited to whether changing the policy carries a higher or lower domestic political price than maintaining the current failed policy.

Also of concern are U.S. policies that fall outside the UN framework, such as the low-level campaign of air strikes and the enforcement of "no-fly zones," which both violate international law and harm the populations they are supposedly trying to protect, as well as Washington's renewed effort to support an armed Iraqi opposition to the regime of Saddam Hussein.

The following provides a framework and a set of proposed policy options around six key areas deemed central to U.S. policy toward Iraq: arms control, economic sanctions, human rights, no-fly zones, the Iraqi opposition, and depleted uranium.

### Arms Control

#### *FRAMEWORK:*

The United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) was formed to oversee the dismantling of Iraq's potential for the development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems. UNSCOM withdrew in December 1998 on the eve of Operation Desert Fox, an intense four-day bombing campaign by the U.S. and Great Britain, and Iraq has not permitted UNSCOM's return. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has continued its inspection of Iraqi nuclear-related facilities, as it has with other signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The Iraqi regime amassed significant conventional military capacity and made serious efforts toward WMD capability before August 1990. The heavy bombing during the Gulf War in 1991 and the December 1998 attacks destroyed much of Iraq's conventional capacity, and UNSCOM and the IAEA have thoroughly disempowered Iraq's WMD capacity. On the conventional side, the military remains a power within Iraq but is strategically weakened relative to surrounding countries.

On the WMD side, the last UNSCOM assessments in 1998 concluded that Iraq was free of nuclear weapons and missiles, almost free of chemical weapons, and questionable regarding biological weapons. Most weapons experts agree that the Iraqi regime probably desires to rebuild its WMD capacity, if that were possible (in part, because of Israel's nuclear arsenal), but that it does not have access to the materials to do so. Most strategic analysts acknowledge that Iraq today is neither a threat either to the U.S. nor to Iraq's neighbors. Reflecting that reality, the current disarmament goal should be to prevent future rebuilding of the WMD programs rather than attempting to finalize UNSCOM's accounting of Iraq's entire arsenal. In short, the focus should be upon qualitative rather than quantitative WMD disarmament.

Existing U.S. policy, which plays a key role in the development of UN policy, has undermined actual disarmament progress by maintaining an all-stick/no-carrot approach to the economic sanctions and by ignoring the regional and supplier components of arms control. By contrast, a partial lifting of sanctions in return for partial compliance would have allowed an incentive for greater Iraqi cooperation and would have avoided the current stalemate, which has resulted in a sanctions regimes that disproportionately impacts the civilian population and yet fails to win Iraqi compliance with demands for international inspections outside the NPT.

Article 14 of UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 687 (the sanctions resolution) identifies the goal of "establishing in the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and all missiles to deliver them, and the objective of a global ban on chemical weapons." But this UN goal, which the U.S. formally endorsed, remains an unfulfilled ideal in the context of regional Middle East security. As of 2000, 20% of the \$80 billion international arms trade is imported by the six pro-Western monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Rather than working toward regional arms control, the U.S. remains the largest supplier of arms of all kinds to this already arms-glutted region.

***ALTERNATIVE U.S. POLICY PROPOSALS:***

1. The U.S. should continue to support the UN ban on arms transfers to Iraq.
2. The IAEA and the UN (through the Conference on Disarmament and through Security Council-appointed inspectors and those drawn from the chemical weapons treaty organizations) should conduct regular inspections inside Iraq, along Iraq's borders, and—with the voluntary consent of the relevant governments—inside its immediate neighbors (Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria). The inspections would be designed to identify and halt any efforts by Iraq or its neighbors to build new WMDs or to import material to do so. This would involve the establishment of an inspection agency modeled after the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and empowered, by agreement from all governments in the region, with the right to make spot-checks, especially at border crossings.
3. The U.S. should encourage the establishment of a regional security regime for all eight littoral states of the Persian Gulf (the six GCC states plus Iran and Iraq) that could include such confidence building measures as: a regional early warning network, arms control, a regional cooperation framework comparable to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, other conflict-prevention protocols, and a regional open skies policy.
4. The U.S. should, as prescribed by Article 14 of UNSC Resolution 687, initiate negotiations among the major arms supplying nations to stop all advanced arms transfers to Iraq's neighbors—including Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait—and should set an example by immediately announcing a moratorium on such arms transfers.
5. The U.S. should initiate, or support others initiating, Article 14 negotiations involving all Middle East countries regarding the creation of a Middle East WMD-free zone covering all WMDs, including Israel's uninspected nuclear arsenal. Arms control, including the elimination of WMD programs, should also become a priority in the U.S.-led peace process between Israel and its neighbors.

## Economic Sanctions

### *FRAMEWORK:*

Economic sanctions imposed under UNSC Resolution 687 were ostensibly designed to pressure Iraq to cooperate with UNSCOM in finding and eliminating Iraq's WMD programs. Although UNSCOM and the IAEA were in fact able to find and eliminate the vast majority of Iraq's WMD programs, the sanctions have failed to insure the Iraqi government's complete cooperation, and, ten years later, there is no indication that economic sanctions are even slightly effective in advancing disarmament goals. Meanwhile, innocent Iraqi civilians are suffering as a result.

The economic sanctions imposed on Iraq over the last decade are the most comprehensive and tightly enforced of any sanctions regime in recent history. The U.S. position of linking the sanctions to the end of Saddam Hussein's regime has significantly undermined the legitimacy of the UN's more limited goal of imposing sanctions until the UN could verify that Iraq had ended its WMD production. Combined with the devastation caused by the 1991 bombing during Operation Desert Storm, the sanctions regime has left the Iraqi leadership weakened in military capacity and in international credibility (though in the Middle East, the latter is rapidly being reversed). Domestically, however, sanctions have served to significantly strengthen the regime. This has occurred because sanctions have: restricted the outside influences, access, and contacts of ordinary Iraqis; made the population dependent on the government for the supply of the minimal food and medicine available; and destroyed Iraq's middle class, traditionally the social group in the forefront of efforts to promote regime changes in the Arab world.

The sanctions regime itself—most notably the lack of access to the massive funds required for infrastructure repair and replacement—is responsible for the deaths of thousands of the most vulnerable Iraqis, particularly children. Funds generated through gray and black markets in smuggled oil—estimated at up to a half billion dollars each year in the hands of the Iraqi government—are generally not made available to the civilian population and, even under the best of circumstances, would be insufficient to meet a significant fraction of the domestic needs of Iraq's 23 million people. Official U.S.

statements blaming the Iraqi regime for the humanitarian crisis in the country are exaggerated, not because the top leadership of the regime makes the well-being of its citizens its top priority, but because the regime does not have the financial ability to significantly improve their lot. (It should be noted, as well, that while staying in power remains the top goal, sustaining a level of physical well-being for the population as a whole has been part of Ba'ath Party's political survival strategy since it came to power.) Although it is true that the regime has callously diverted much of its own funds away from civilian use and toward political and military investment, this cannot justify the continuation of an international sanctions regime that is directly responsible for much of the human suffering. A full 25% of Iraq's legal oil revenues that go into the UN's escrow account are diverted by the UN Compensation Commission. This Commission adjudicates claims made by Kuwait and other parties for damages suffered during Iraq's invasion and occupation. Although the principle of compensation is a sound one, sending money to a wealthy country like Kuwait should be secondary to preventing the deaths of innocent children in Iraq.

What is needed to rebuild Iraq's devastated social fabric is a massive infusion of cash for the multibillion-dollar reconstruction effort. A sanctions regime that attempts to control a country's economy from the outside simply will not provide such funds; the artificial economy created from such outside control cannot survive. Ironically, the U.S.-backed economic sanctions have created in Iraq one of the tightest centralized economic systems of any country in the world.

The black market in Iraq, a virtual inevitability under any tight sanctions regime, has further distorted the Iraqi economy. Pre-sanctions Iraq had one of the narrowest wealth-poverty gaps in the region, but the small sector of black marketeers who have profited enormously from the sanctions regime now fuel new and continuing social tensions. Among the Iraqi population, responsibility for economic and social deprivation is largely blamed on the sanctions; when the sanctions are lifted, extraordinary pressure is likely to be directed at the Ba'athist leadership, in contrast to the current level of passive acquiescence to the regime. In short, an end to

the sanctions regime would likely weaken, not strengthen, Saddam Hussein's rule.

The sanctions are imposed in the name of the UN, but in fact have little international support. Numerous countries, including important U.S. allies, are challenging, if not directly violating, the sanctions, and international legitimacy has long since eroded. There is little question that once Washington seeks an end to the economic sanctions, the rest of the UN member states will join in supporting that new stance.

The sanctions currently have and will continue to have a residual effect on U.S. companies, particularly oil companies, competing with European and Asian companies for access to the post-sanctions Iraqi market. The new Bush administration is contending with two competing factions within the administration regarding Iraqi policy: those who oppose sanctions on free trade grounds and those who still demonize the Iraqi regime.

The current sanctions resolution, UNSC 1284, passed reluctantly by the Security Council in December 1999, continues the problems of earlier sanctions resolutions in that it fails to delineate steps toward gradual compliance and does not acknowledge examples of partial compliance but rather includes only open-ended demands that cannot clearly be satisfied. It also does not provide for the actual lifting of economic sanctions—only their temporary suspension. Under this scenario, the default position of reimposed sanctions remains, absent continuing affirmative decisions by the Security Council, thus preventing Iraq access to the large-scale (oil company) investments required to rebuild its infrastructure. UNSC 1284's failure should be recognized and new discussions opened for a post-sanctions UN policy toward Iraq.

#### ***ALTERNATIVE U.S. POLICY PROPOSALS:***

1. There should be a delinking of military sanctions from economic sanctions.
2. There should be an end to the diversion of the 25% of oil-for-food funds that currently goes to the Compensation Commission, until such time as UNICEF and other international agencies can certify that Iraq's humanitarian crisis is over.

3. There should be an end to the UN's control of contracts on imports. The UN committee responsible for overseeing military sanctions should be notified of contracts when those contracts are being sent for fulfillment. If the U.S. or any other Security Council member has concerns regarding the possibility of dual use for a particular item, the item should remain in the contract and fulfillment should be implemented, but a mechanism should be created to notify UN monitors in Iraq to impose a higher level of tracking to insure appropriate end-use of the item.
4. There should be a lifting of economic sanctions. This must include the removal of obstacles to the economic rehabilitation of Iraq, including abolishing the UNSC 661 Sanctions Committee. This body reviews all oil-for-food contracts and is currently holding up over \$2 billion in humanitarian supplies. Furthermore, the UN escrow account should be closed as soon as Baghdad accepts the regional disarmament and inspection regime described above. Although there are some widespread and legitimate concerns that the Iraqi regime might use some of these funds to rearm and to enhance its repressive apparatus, strict monitoring and pressures on potential suppliers should keep such potential abuses to a minimum.

## **Human Rights**

### ***FRAMEWORK:***

Serious violations of political and civil rights have been a feature of the Iraqi regime since it came to power over twenty years ago. Unfortunately, U.S. government initiatives to challenge past or present Iraqi human rights violations have little credibility, because: 1) the U.S. continued to provide military, diplomatic, and economic support to Iraq throughout the periods of the worst Iraqi violations (including the Anfal campaign in the late 1980s) without seriously challenging the Iraqi regime's repression; 2) the U.S., through its enforcement of UN sanctions and its continued bombing, is responsible for ongoing human rights violations against the Iraqi people, which have caused far more civilian deaths than the total directly attributable to the Iraqi regime; and, 3) the current U.S. policy of singling out Iraq for its human

rights violations while supporting other repressive regimes in the region casts doubt on the sincerity of Washington's stated concern for universally recognized human rights.

The goal of any human rights campaign should be a focus on accountability based on international law and enforced by appropriate international institutions. The U.S. record on human rights toward Iraq and toward the Middle East in general has damaged U.S. credibility to the point where U.S. leadership would likely prove counterproductive. Similarly, though there are indeed aspects of Iraq's human rights records that are qualitatively worse than even those of its autocratic neighbors, failure to simultaneously promote human rights throughout the entire region will make any efforts to hold the Iraqi regime accountable for its human rights abuses appear more like a political vendetta than an effort based upon legitimate moral and legal foundations.

#### ***ALTERNATIVE U.S. POLICY PROPOSALS:***

1. The U.S. should support the dispatch of UN human rights monitors to Iraq, as mandated by UNSC Resolution 688 to investigate human rights conditions of Iraqi civilians, including violations by any party of political, civil, economic, social, or cultural rights. Investigation should include political prisoners; torture and executions; prohibitions on free speech, opposition political organizations, etc.; denial of adequate food, clean water, health care, and education; restrictions on travel; and, other denials of basic rights. Such investigations, whether in a tribunal form or otherwise, should be focused on establishing accountability for violations, regardless of perpetrator, and should be an ongoing monitoring program to protect the Iraqi population.
2. The U.S. should support international initiatives (tribunals or other forums) designed to hold individuals and governments (Iraq, U.S., and others) accountable for violations of all categories of human rights in Iraq or occupied Kuwait. A timeline from the mid-1980s to the present would provide a framework for a tribunal or other accountability process to investigate the most egregious allegations of violations of international law and/or UN resolutions. A major focus would be violations of the laws of war, which would include Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait, its use of chemical weapons, and its failure to account for missing prisoners-of-war. Another focus would be violations of civil and political rights, which would include the Iraqi regime's widespread use of arbitrary arrest, torture, extrajudicial killings, and forced relocation or expulsion from homes.
3. The U.S. should initiate internal investigations to determine the accountability of U.S. officials responsible for crafting or implementing policies in Iraq that have violated the human rights of the Iraqi population and should take steps to prevent such policies from being imposed in the future. Such an investigation should analyze violations of the laws of war, which would include attacks against nonmilitary and retreating Iraqi troops by allied forces during the Gulf War and the ongoing bombing of Iraq. There should also be a focus on large-scale violations of economic, social, and cultural rights from the allied bombing and sanctions regime, including the denial of a civilian population's access to sufficient food, water, medicine, and education, as well as the destruction of educational, medical, and cultural institutions.
4. All of the above should be part of a shift in U.S. policy toward making the promotion of human rights a higher priority in America's relationship with all countries of the Middle East region.

## **No-Fly Zones**

### ***FRAMEWORK:***

The U.S., Great Britain, and France unilaterally initiated "no-fly zones" in northern and southern Iraq in response to popular concern over the humanitarian crisis generated by the Iraqi government's severe repression of the Kurdish and Shi'a communities following their March 1991 antigovernment uprisings. The two no-fly zones were originally designed to protect these areas from Iraqi air strikes by banning all Iraqi military flights. These no-fly zones have no precedence in international

law and no authorization from the United Nations. France has subsequently quit the enforcement efforts.

Subsequently, the U.S. and Britain escalated their military role to include assaults on anti-aircraft batteries that fired at allied aircraft enforcing the zones. This role was escalated still further when anti-aircraft batteries were attacked simply for locking on their radar screens on allied aircraft, even without firing. Then, the Clinton administration began attacking radar installations and other military targets within the no-fly zone, even when they were unrelated to alleged Iraqi threats against U.S. aircraft. Now, the new Bush administration has escalated things still further, targeting radar and command-and-control installations well beyond the no-fly zone.

According to 1994 and 1996 State Department reports, the creation and military enforcement of no-fly zones have not successfully protected the Iraqi Kurdish and Shi'a populations. The fact that the U.S. and UK routinely allow the Turkish Air Force to conduct bombing raids against Kurdish targets in the northern no-fly zone indicates that there is not a genuine concern about protecting this vulnerable minority. U.S.-UK air strikes have also failed to accurately pinpoint Iraqi military targets. In 1999 alone, UN officials documented 144 civilians killed in the U.S.-UK bombing raids. Enforcement of the no-fly zones is increasingly viewed by many in the U.S. Air Force as both strategically useless and too costly in terms of personnel and funding.

U.S. military enforcement of no-fly zones—unlike the liberation of Kuwait—is not authorized by the UN and is therefore a violation of international law. Internationally, many governments, particularly in Europe and in the Arab world, are strongly opposed. Most of the Washington's Middle Eastern allies are reluctant supporters and face growing domestic pressure to end support for the U.S.-UK flights. Particularly troubling for some Gulf states with restive Shi'a populations of their own, is the fear that the no-fly zone for the Shi'a areas of southern Iraq could lead to the breakup of the country along sectarian lines.

#### ***ALTERNATIVE U.S. POLICY PROPOSALS:***

1. The U.S. must stop the bombings and end military enforcement of the no-fly zones.

2. The U.S. should call on Turkey to respect its own borders and to keep its air force and ground troops out of Iraqi territory.
3. The U.S. should encourage other third parties (such as the European Union, Jordan, Qatar, and France) to work through the UN to initiate discussions with the Iraqi government regarding protection of the Iraqi Kurdish population and other threatened communities within the no-fly zones in Iraq. Since the EU is already involved in discussions regarding Turkey's treatment of its Kurdish minority, broadening those talks in such a way as to include protecting the rights of Iraqi as well as Turkish Kurds might be a useful beginning.

## **Iraqi Opposition**

### ***FRAMEWORK:***

A centerpiece of U.S. policy, particularly since the new Bush administration has come to office, has been Washington's efforts to bolster political and military opponents of Saddam Hussein, both within Iraq and in exile. The 1998 Iraq Liberation Act, which called for direct U.S. support for Iraqi opposition groups, was largely designed to placate claims that the Clinton administration was "soft" on Iraq.

The Kurds in Iraq, like those in surrounding states, have long faced discrimination and sometimes savage repression, especially after nationalist uprisings. Despite this, Kurdish groups have over the years been in negotiations with Baghdad over access to various rights and privileges. The U.S. in recent decades has a record of seducing, then abandoning, Kurdish leaders and their movements and thus is poorly positioned to claim the moral high ground of "protecting" the Iraqi Kurds. Today the Iraqi Kurdish leadership from both major parties is actively cooperating with the Iraqi regime regarding the income from oil smuggled through Turkey and other matters of mutual interest.

There has also been serious opposition to Saddam Hussein's regime within the country's Arab majority. However, the Iraqi regime has largely succeeded in squelching most serious internal opposition, and the only opposition organization with a functional base of support inside the country, the Supreme Council of the

Islamic Revolution, is closely tied to Iran. The exiled opposition figures are seriously divided. Most have little or no credibility inside Iraq, and a large component represent a range of unsavory characters from corrupt bankers to supporters of the ousted monarchy. The Iraqi National Congress, based in London, is a coalition of exile groups without a clear political agenda and is united largely in the search for access to U.S. aid money.

One of the new Bush administration's first actions was a reenergized embrace of military support for the Iraqi "contras," with some officials going so far as to compare them to the "victorious" Nicaraguan contras. Such a policy is fraught with dangers. First, any democratic forces inside the country risk losing their credibility if they accept U.S. government money. Second, such a strategy signals a U.S. commitment to an illegal policy of overthrowing a foreign government. Top Bush administration officials, including Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, have been supporters of the Iraq Liberation Act. Such a policy antagonizes U.S. allies and is a clear violation of international and U.S. law, as well as a number of treaty obligations. Third, despite the greatly reduced power of Saddam Hussein's military as a result of the war, the sanctions, and the inspection regime, the Iraqi government still has an armed force quite capable of crushing virtually any internal rebellion. Encouraging armed resistance would simply lead to more killings and destruction without loosening the regime's grip on power. Indeed, some top Pentagon officials, including former U.S. Central Command head General Anthony Zinni, argue that the opposition is simply incapable of seriously weakening, let alone overthrowing, the Iraqi regime.

#### ***ALTERNATIVE U.S. POLICY PROPOSALS:***

1. There should be no U.S. support for armed Iraqi opposition groups. Since the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act does not include specific means for implementing its provisions, the White House can and should reverse its current position of support for the act and announce its intention to disregard it.
2. The U.S. should reassert its commitments to abide by the UN Charter and other international legal prohibitions against efforts to overthrow other countries' governments.
3. U.S. funds should be provided only to Arab League, European Union, UN, or other multilateral efforts to provide economic and humanitarian aid to civil society organizations and humanitarian institutions inside Iraq; Washington should provide no funds to unilaterally selected recipients or campaigns, including propaganda or political campaigns.
4. The best way to protect Kurdish interests would be through a reconciliation process aimed at establishing a nondiscriminating regional autonomy agreement with the Iraqi Kurds and guaranteeing that, with the lifting of sanctions, the region's economic well-being is protected. The fact that the leaders of both Kurdish parties are currently engaged in ongoing dialog and negotiations with the Baghdad regime makes such an effort viable.

## **Depleted Uranium and Other Health and Environmental Concerns**

### ***FRAMEWORK:***

The uncertainty regarding the dangers of depleted uranium (DU) for U.S. veterans of the Gulf War and their children, and most recently for European peacekeeping troops exposed to DU weapons in the Balkans, has made it one of the top domestic consequences of the Gulf War. There is considerable anecdotal evidence that DU is also responsible for dramatic growth rates in certain cancers and other health problems among the civilian population in southern Iraq who were downwind from where allied forces used DU weapons in the waning hours of the Gulf War. Recently revealed Pentagon concerns from 1991-92 about the deleterious health threats and the likelihood of plutonium contamination from DU ammunition, warrants a serious, epidemiologically sound study to definitively determine whether DU has a causal link to leukemia, other cancers, or other aspects of Gulf War Syndrome.

The fears regarding DU have been magnified by the Pentagon's refusal to initiate such a comprehensive study, its resistance to providing background information to NATO-member governments concerned about post-Balkans indications of a link, and its overall lack of concern regarding the health of the U.S. veterans who

fought in the Gulf War. In such an atmosphere, it has become virtually impossible to dispassionately examine the separate roles of DU, the fumes from oil fires that spread across Kuwait, the chemical weapons components that may have been released when U.S. troops destroyed Iraqi storehouses, and the vaccine cocktail administered to GIs, let alone the effect of their interactions.

***ALTERNATIVE U.S. POLICY PROPOSALS:***

1. The U.S should support efforts by the UN and other appropriate international agencies to investigate long-term effects of weapons of mass destruction and other toxic weapons including depleted uranium, deployed in the Iraq theatre of conflict since 1980.
2. The Pentagon should immediately provide completely open access to its research and development findings regarding DU for scientists, veterans' organizations, journalists, and other interested parties in the United States, Europe, the Middle East or elsewhere.
3. The U.S. should support international efforts to remove sources of ongoing contamination that may be continuing to harm civilian populations throughout Iraq and in neighboring countries.
4. The Pentagon should undertake a large-scale epidemiological survey of all the U.S. GIs who served in the gulf region.
5. The U.S. should support a moratorium on the production and use chemical, biological, and radiological weapons, and should support additional studies on the long-term effects of these weapons, including DU.

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