*Special Briefing for the Historical Committee*

**Date:** March 23, 2003

**Location:** Baghdad, Iraq

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

Iraq has been under international scrutiny since the Gulf War in 1991. Following Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the U.S.-led coalition expelled Iraqi forces in Operation Desert Storm. As a result of this conflict, the UN imposed economic sanctions on Iraq. They also conducted a series of inspections of Iraq throughout the 90s, which uncovered a variety of weapons prohibited in the earlier sanctions, eg chemical biological and nuclear weapons. While some progress was made, relations between Iraq and the international community—especially the U.S.—remained tense. With the rise of global terrorism following the September 11, 2001 attacks, the U.S. began to emphasize regime change in Iraq as a national security priority, accusing Saddam Hussein of harbouring WMDs and links to terrorist organizations. When calls from the west for Saddam to leave Iraq were not agreed to, a coalition between the UK and the US, as well as some other smaller contributors, invaded on the 20th of March. The UN was not consulted about this invasion.

### **A MORE DETAILED HISTORY OF THE ISSUE**

#### **The Gulf War and Its Aftermath (1990–1991)**

On August 2, 1990, Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait. The move was widely condemned and led to the formation of a U.S.-led coalition under the United Nations. After Iraq ignored the UN’s ultimatum to withdraw, Operation Desert Storm commenced in January 1991. The war ended in February with a decisive coalition victory.

Post-war, Iraq agreed to several UN Security Council Resolutions, most notably Resolution 687, which required Iraq to eliminate its WMDs and allow UN weapons inspectors access to verify compliance.

#### **The Sanctions and Inspections Era (1991–1998)**

The 1990s saw repeated confrontations between Iraq and the United Nations over weapons inspections. The **United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM)** was established to verify Iraq’s disarmament, but was frequently obstructed by Iraqi officials.

In 1998, Iraq expelled the inspectors, prompting **Operation Desert Fox**, a four-day U.S.-U.K. bombing campaign targeting Iraqi military and security installations. Following this, Iraq remained largely free of inspections for several years.

#### **The Rise of the Bush Doctrine (2001–2003)**

After 9/11, the U.S. adopted a new strategic outlook. The **Bush Doctrine** emphasized preemptive strikes and unilateral action. Iraq was labeled part of the “**Axis of Evil**,” alongside Iran and North Korea. The U.S. began pressing for regime change in Iraq, citing several claims:

* Iraq continued to possess and develop WMDs.
* Iraq violated multiple UN Security Council Resolutions.
* Saddam Hussein’s regime had ties to al-Qaeda.
* The Iraqi people were suffering under authoritarian rule.

In November 2002, **UNSC Resolution 1441** offered Iraq a “final opportunity” to comply. While Iraq allowed inspectors back under **UNMOVIC** and **IAEA**, the U.S. accused Iraq of continued noncompliance.

Despite widespread international opposition, particularly from France, Germany, Russia, and China, the U.S., along with the United Kingdom and a coalition of allies, initiated military action on March 20, 2003. The campaign began with a “decapitation strike” aimed at Iraqi leadership in Baghdad, followed by a massive ground invasion from Kuwait.

#### **The Global Divide**

The decision to invade has fractured international alliances. The United Nations Security Council failed to approve a new resolution authorizing force. NATO is divided. Massive global protests have taken place, with millions marching against the war.

Supporters of the war (the “Coalition of the Willing”) include the U.K., Australia, Spain, Italy, and Poland. Critics argue that the war is illegitimate without explicit UN authorization and that it sets a dangerous precedent for unilateral military intervention.

## **NEXT STEPS**

### **1. Military Developments to Watch**

The U.S. military strategy is to move swiftly toward Baghdad to collapse Saddam’s regime before widespread resistance can form. However, urban warfare and potential insurgency could delay progress and result in high civilian and military casualties.

Watch for:

* Fall of key cities: Basra, Nasiriyah, and ultimately Baghdad.
* Use of chemical or biological weapons by Iraqi forces.
* Iraqi military defections or uprisings from within.
* Emergence of guerrilla tactics or loyalist resistance.

### **2. Political Fallout and Regime Stability**

If Saddam Hussein is removed from power, the U.S. and its allies must prepare for post-war reconstruction, likely requiring significant resources and long-term engagement. Iraq is a complex society divided along ethnic and sectarian lines:

* **Shia Arabs** (majority): Historically repressed under Saddam’s rule.
* **Sunni Arabs** (minority): Core of Saddam’s regime and military elite.
* **Kurds** (in the north): Seek autonomy and have been victims of brutal crackdowns, including chemical attacks.

Questions remain:

* Will Iraq fragment along sectarian lines?
* Who will lead Iraq post-Saddam?
* How will the U.S. maintain order and rebuild the country?

### **3. International Legal and Diplomatic Ramifications**

The invasion has stirred legal controversy. Without a second UN resolution authorizing force, the legality of the war is disputed. This raises several diplomatic challenges:

* Will the UN be sidelined or reintegrated into the post-war process?
* How will the Security Council respond?
* Could this trigger shifts in global alliances or empower rival blocs?

Additionally, the war has strained relations within NATO and the European Union. The role of multilateral institutions is now under the spotlight.

### **4. Humanitarian and Economic Crisis**

Iraq’s infrastructure, already devastated by sanctions and two previous wars, faces further collapse. Key humanitarian concerns include:

* Access to food, water, and medicine for civilians.
* Protection of refugees and internally displaced persons.
* Preservation of cultural heritage, including museums, mosques, and archaeological sites.

There is also widespread fear of a humanitarian catastrophe in urban centers if the conflict drags on.

Economic concerns include:

* Stability of global oil markets.
* Reconstruction costs.
* Sanctions, aid programs, and the future of Iraqi oil exports.

### **5. The Role of the Committee**

This Historical Committee must:

* Assess the legality and justification of the invasion.
* Debate the appropriate international response.
* Consider resolutions that protect civilians and ensure aid delivery.
* Explore frameworks for post-conflict governance and peacekeeping.
* Mediate among divided global powers to prevent long-term fragmentation of the international order.

Delegates are urged to think not only in terms of military outcomes but also in terms of the political and human consequences of this intervention.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

With Baghdad bracing for assault and global opinion deeply divided, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 is not just a war; it is a test of international law, diplomacy, and the future role of the United Nations. As events unfold rapidly, delegates must remain vigilant, principled, and engaged. History is not just being written—it is being debated.

**Stay informed. Stay decisive.**

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