

Vote "NO" On Iraq War Resolution US

Statement by Representative Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), October 3, 2002

Before the House of Representatives

As the vote on whether or not this Nation goes to war approaches in this Chamber, a vote which most surely will come within a few days, I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, for us to be able to make the case to the American people as to why it is not appropriate for this country to go to war and to encourage the American people to call their Members to make sure that government of the people, by the people, and for the people does prevail.

The Members who joined me today, Members for whom I have the greatest gratitude, include the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. Brown), the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Brown), the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Capuano), the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. Clayton), the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. Conyers), the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. Davis), the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DeFazio), the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. Christensen), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Doggett), the gentleman from California (Mr. Farr), the gentleman from California (Mr. Filner), the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. Jackson-Lee), the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. Kaptur), the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. Moran), the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. Oliver), the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. Rivers), the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. Sanders), the gentleman from New York (Mr. Serrano), the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. Schakowsky), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. Solis), the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. Jones), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. Waters), the gentlewoman from California (Ms. Watson), and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. Woolsey).

One after another they came before the national press to make their case as to why this Congress should vote against any resolution which would put us on a path towards war. And one after another, in front of the National Press Corps, they called out to the American people to tell the American people to make sure that they called their Members of Congress; that if they did not want war, these Members told the National Press Corps, that if the American people do not want war, to call their Congressman.

So, Mr. Speaker, today, I intend to do a number of things. I intend to present to this Congress an analysis of the joint resolution which was offered to this Congress; and, after presenting that analysis, I want to put in perspective where we are in this moment in history.

The resolution which this Congress is facing says: ``Whereas in 1990 in response to Iraq's war of aggression against an illegal occupation of Kuwait, the United States forged a coalition of nations to liberate Kuwait and its people in order to defend the national security of the United States and enforce United Nations Security Council resolutions relating to Iraq."

The American people need to know that the key issue here is that in the Persian Gulf War there was an international coalition. World support was for protecting Kuwait. There is no world support for invading Iraq.

The resolution goes on to say: ``Whereas after the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, Iraq entered into a United Nations sponsored cease-fire agreement pursuant to which Iraq unequivocally agreed, among other things, to eliminate its nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons programs and the means to deliver and develop them, and to end its support for international terrorism;

``Whereas the efforts of international weapons inspectors, United States intelligence agencies, and Iraqi defectors led to the discovery that Iraq had large stockpiles of chemical weapons and a large scale biological weapons program, and that Iraq had an advanced nuclear weapons program that was much closer to producing a nuclear weapon than intelligence reporting had previously indicated."

But the key issue here that the American people need to know is that U.N. inspection teams identified and destroyed nearly all such weapons. A lead inspector, Scott Ritter, said that he believes that nearly all other weapons not found were destroyed in the Gulf War. Furthermore, according to a published report in The Washington Post, the Central Intelligence Agency, yes, the Central Intelligence Agency, has no up-to-date accurate report on Iraq's capabilities of weapons of mass destruction.

The resolution that is presented to this Congress says: ``Whereas Iraq, in direct and flagrant violation of the cease-fire, attempted to thwart the efforts of weapons inspectors to identify and destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction stockpiles and development capabilities, which finally resulted in the withdrawal of inspectors from Iraq on October 31, 1998."

What the American people need to know, and the key issue here, is that the Iraqi deceptions always failed. The inspectors always figured out what Iraq was doing. It was the United States that withdrew from the inspections in 1998, and the United States then launched

a cruise missile attack against Iraq 48 hours after the inspectors left. And it is the United States, in advance of a military strike, the U.S. continues to thwart, and this is the administration's word, weapons inspections.

Now, this resolutions, and what I am doing here obviously is stating the resolution as a point and then making the counterpoint so the American people can understand that this is a capsule summary of the debate that is going to take place in this House next week.

In the resolution the administration contends: ``Whereas, in 1998 Congress concluded that Iraq's continuing weapons of mass destruction programs threatened U.S. vital interests and international peace and security, declared Iraq to be in material and unacceptable breach of its international obligations and urged the President to take appropriate action, in accordance with the Constitution and relevant laws of the United States, to bring Iraq into compliance with its international obligations."

The resolution says: ``Whereas Iraq both possesses a continuing threat to the national security of the United States and international peace and security in the Persian Gulf region and remains in material and unacceptable breach of its international obligations by, among other things, continuing to possess and develop a significant chemical and biological weapons capability, actively seeking a nuclear weapons capability, and supporting and harboring terrorist organizations."

The American people deserve to know that the key issue here is that there is no proof that Iraq represents an imminent or immediate threat to the United States of America. I will repeat: there is no proof that Iraq represents an imminent or immediate threat to the United States. A continuing threat does not constitute a sufficient cause for war. The administration has refused to provide the Congress with credible evidence that proves that Iraq is a serious threat to the United States and that it is continuing to possess and develop chemical and biological and nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, there is no credible evidence connecting Iraq to al Qaeda and 9-11, and yet there are people who want to bomb Iraq in reprisal for 9-11. Imagine, if you will, as Cleveland columnist Dick Feagler wrote last week, if after this country was attacked by Japan at Pearl Harbor in 1941, if instead of retaliating by bombing Japan, we would have retaliated by bombing Peru. Iraq is not connected by any credible evidence to 9-11, nor is it connected by any credible evidence to the activities of al Qaeda on 9-11.

The resolution says, and I quote, continuing in this comparison point by point, the resolution says, that we will be voting on the administration's resolution: ``Whereas Iraq persists in violating resolutions of the United Nations Security Council by continuing to engage in brutal repression of its population thereby threatening international peace and security in the region, by refusing to release, repatriate, or account for non-Iraqi citizens wrongfully detained by Iraq, including an American serviceman, and by failing to return property wrongfully seized by Iraq from Kuwait."

The counterpoint, and what the American people deserve to know, the key issue here, is that this language is so broad that it would allow the President to order an attack against Iraq even though there is no material threat to the United States. Since this resolution authorizes the use of force for all Iraq-related violations of U.N. Security Council directives, and since the resolution cites Iraq's imprisonment of non-Iraqi prisoners, this resolution could be seen by some to authorize the President to attack Iraq in order to liberate Kuwaiti citizens, who may or may not be in Iraqi prisons, even if Iraq met compliance with all requests to destroy any weapons of mass destruction. The resolution goes on to say: ``Whereas the current Iraqi regime has demonstrated its capability and willingness to use weapons of mass destruction against any other nations and its own people;

``Whereas the current Iraqi regime has demonstrated its continuing hostility toward, and willingness to attack, the United States, including by attempting in 1993 to assassinate former President Bush and by firing on many thousands of occasions on United States and Coalition Armed Forces engaged in enforcing the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council."

The counterpoint of this, Mr. Speaker, and the key issue here, is that the Iraqi regime has never attacked, nor does it have the capability to attack, the United States. The no-fly zone was not the result of a U.N. Security Council directive. Now, many people do not know that. They think the U.N. Security Council established the no-fly zone. It did not. The no-fly zone was illegally imposed by the United States, Great Britain, and France, and is not specifically sanctioned by any Security Council resolution.

The resolution goes on to say, and I quote from the resolution: ``Whereas members of al Qaeda, an organization bearing responsibility for attacks on the United States, its citizens, and interests, including the attacks that occurred on September 11, are known to be in Iraq."

Well, the American people need to know there is no credible evidence that connects Iraq to the events of 9-11 or to participation in those events by assisting al Qaeda.

The resolution states, and I quote: ``Whereas Iraq continues to aid and harbor other international terrorist organizations, including organizations that threaten the lives and safety of American citizens."

The key issue here, and the counterpoint that the American people need to know, is that any connection between Iraq's support of terrorist groups in the Middle East, Mr. Speaker, is an argument for focusing great resources on resolving the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. It is not a sufficient cause for the United States to launch a unilateral preemptive strike against Iraq. Indeed, an argument could be made that such an attack would exacerbate the condition in the Middle East and destabilize the region.

The resolution states: ``Whereas the attacks on the United States of America of September 11, 2001 underscored the gravity of the threat posed by the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by international terrorist organizations."

And, again, and I stress, the American people need to know that there is no connection between Iraq and the events of 9-11. However, this resolution attempts to make the connection over and over and over. And just saying that there is a connection does not make it so, because the Central Intelligence Agency has not presented this Congress with any credible information that indicates that there is in fact a tie between Iraq and 9-11, between Iraq and al Qaeda, or Iraq and the anthrax attacks on this Capitol.

And if we are to go to war against any Nation, and I oppose us doing this in this case, we ought not be taking such action in retaliation, and ought not put it in a document like this in retaliation, attacking a nation that had nothing to do with 9-11.

The resolution goes on to say, ``Whereas Iraq's demonstrated capability and willingness to use weapons of mass destruction, the risk that the current Iraqi regime will either employ those weapons to launch a surprise attack against the United States or its Armed Forces or provide them to international terrorists who would do so, and the extreme magnitude of harm that would result to the United States and its citizens from such an attack, combine to justify action by the United States to defend itself"; that is the assertion.

The key issue here is that there is no credible evidence that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction. If Iraq had successfully concealed the production of such weapons since 1998, and let us assume that somebody has information they have never told Congress, they have never been able to back up, but they have this information and it is secret, and they secretly know Iraq has such weapons, there is no credible evidence that Iraq has the capability to reach the United States with such weapons, if they have them, and many of us believe no evidence has been presented that they do.

In 1991, the Gulf War, Iraq had a demonstrated capability of biological and chemical weapons, but they obviously did not have the willingness to use them against the Armed Forces of the United States. Congress has not been provided any credible information which proves that Iraq has provided international terrorists with weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution will be presented to this Congress to vote on as a cause of war. I am reading the exact quote from the resolution, and then I am making the counterpoint. In effect, this is the first step towards a debate on this issue on this floor.

The resolution says, ``Whereas United Nations Security Council Resolution 678 authorizes the use of all necessary means to enforce United Nations Security Council Resolution 660 and subsequent relevant resolutions and to compel Iraq to cease certain activities that threaten international peace and security, including the development of weapons of mass destruction and refusal or obstruction of United Nations weapons inspections in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 687, repression of its civilian population in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 688, and threatening its neighbors or United Nations operations in Iraq in violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 949."

The counterpoint and what the American people need to know is that the U.N. Charter, and we participate in the United Nations, we helped form the United Nations, we helped set up this international framework of law that is represented by the United Nations, that the United Nations Charter forbids all Member nations, including the United States, from unilaterally enforcing U.N. resolutions.

We cannot do this on our own. We cannot decide that some nation is in violation of U.N. resolutions and we take it upon ourselves to render justice.

The resolution states, that will be before this House as a cause of war, ``Whereas Congress in the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102-1) has authorized the President to use United States Armed Forces pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 678 (1990) in order to achieve implementation of Security Council Resolutions 660, 612, 664, 665, 666, 667, 669, 670, 674, 677"; and the point is the same.

If those Security Council resolutions are not being implemented, that is up to the United Nations and the Security Council to take up the matter. It is not up to the United States to initiate unilateral action enforcing U.N. resolutions with military force.

The resolution which is being presented to this House next week says, ``Whereas in December 1991, Congress expressed its sense that it supports the use of all necessary means to achieve the goals of United Nations Security Council Resolution 687 as being consistent with the Authorization of Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102-1), that Iraq's repression of its civilian population violates United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 and constitutes a continuing threat to the peace, security, and stability of the Persian Gulf region, and that Congress supports the use of all necessary means to achieve the goals of United Nations Security Council Resolution 688."

Well, the counterpoint here is this, and what we are going to be asserting on the floor of this House is that this clause demonstrates the proper chronology of international process in contrast to the current march to war. In 1991, the United Nations Security Council passed the resolution asking for enforcement of its resolution. Member countries authorized their troops to participate in a U.N.-led coalition to enforce the U.N. resolutions. Now the President is asking Congress to authorize a unilateral first strike before the U.N. Security Council has asked its member states to enforce U.N. resolutions.

If we believe in international law, then we ought to look to what this country did in 1991 when it joined the United Nations' effort on this matter on global security and not go it alone, not initiate a unilateral action or attack or preemptive strike.

The resolution here says, ``Whereas the Iraq Liberation Act (Public Law 105-338) expressed the sense of Congress that it should be the policy of the United States to support efforts to remove from power the current Iraqi regime and promote the emergence of a democratic government to replace that regime."

Well, the counterpoint is this, and the American people should know this, this sense of Congress resolution which is referred to in that paragraph was not binding. Furthermore, while Congress supported democratic means of removing Saddam Hussein, and I voted for that, we clearly did not endorse the use of force contemplated in this resolution.

