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## **The Democrats' Case Against Saddam Hussein**

As the date approaches for likely Congressional action on an Iraq resolution, Democrats have begun sounding the alarms of dissent. Hinting at a "Wag the Dog" scenario, they have questioned whether Iraq truly poses a clear and present danger to the United States and implied that the Bush Administration may only be acting with an eye toward November. Speaking on the floor last week, Senator Byrd appears to have gotten this latest ball rolling:

"What Congress needs is solid evidence. What we need are answers. Does Saddam Hussein pose an imminent threat to the United States? Should the United States act alone as this administration has been threatening to do? Should Congress grant the President authority to launch a preemptive attack on Iraq?" [floor statement, 9/20/02]

Al Gore followed suit on Monday, albeit in much stronger terms, expressing concern that "[the President] is demanding in this high political season that Congress speedily affirm that he has the necessary authority to proceed immediately against Iraq." Gore went on to add, "no international law can prevent the United States from taking actions to protect its vital interests, when it is manifestly clear that there is a choice to be made between law and survival. I believe, however, that such choice is not presented in the case of Iraq" [speech, 9/23/02].

Few would disagree that legitimate questions remain to be considered regarding our policy toward Iraq, among them such issues as the scope of the authority given the President to act and the likely long-term U.S. investment in a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq. However, questions over the evil nature of the regime and whether or not it poses a threat to our interests seem already to have been addressed, as the following statements attest.

These statements – by leading Democrat Senators – spell out a strong case against Iraq, and they have another thing in common – all were made in 1998. Yet, if the threat was real then, it only stands to reason that it has grown over the last four years, a fact supported by the testimony of Iraqi defectors as well as recent intelligence reports as to the chemical, biological and nuclear weapons capabilities of Baghdad.

### **Senator Daschle:**

"Iraq's actions pose a serious and continued threat to international peace and security. It is a threat we must address. Saddam is a proven aggressor who has time and again turned his wrath on his neighbors and on his own people. Iraq is not the only nation in the world to possess weapons of mass destruction, but it is the only nation with a leader who has used them against his own people. . .

. The United States continues to exhaust all diplomatic efforts to reverse the Iraqi threat. But absent immediate Iraqi compliance with Resolution 687, the security threat doesn't simply persist – it worsens. Saddam Hussein must understand that the United States has the resolve to reverse that threat by force, if force is required. And, I must say, it has the will” [*Congressional Record*, 2/12/98].

**Senator Biden:**

“An asymmetric capability of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons gives an otherwise weak country the power to intimidate and blackmail. We risk sending a dangerous signal to other would-be proliferators if we do not respond decisively to Iraq’s transgressions. Conversely, a firm response would enhance deterrence and go a long way toward protecting our citizens from the pernicious threat of proliferation. . . . Fateful decisions will be made in the days and weeks ahead. At issue is nothing less than the fundamental question of whether or not we can keep the most lethal weapons known to mankind out of the hands of an unreconstructed tyrant and aggressor who is in the same league as the most brutal dictators of this century” [*Congressional Record*, 2/12/98].

**Senator Lieberman:**

“Today, the threat may not be as clear to other nations of the world, but its consequences are even more devastating potentially than the real threat, than the realized pain of the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, because the damage that can be inflicted by Saddam Hussein and Iraq, under his leadership, with weapons of mass destruction is incalculable; it is enormous. . . . Mr. President, if this were a domestic situation, a political situation, and we were talking about criminal law in this country, we have something in our law called ‘three strikes and you are out,’ three crimes and you get locked up for good because we have given up on you. I think Saddam Hussein has had more than three strikes in the international, diplomatic, strategic and military community. So I have grave doubts that a diplomatic solution is possible here. . . . What I and some of the Members of the Senate hope for is a longer-term policy based on the probability that an acceptable diplomatic solution is not possible, which acknowledges as the central goal the changing of the regime in Iraq to bring to power a regime with which we and the rest of the world can have trustworthy relationships” [*Congressional Record*, 2/12/98].

**Senator Levin:**

“Mr. President, this crisis is due entirely to the actions of Saddam Hussein. He alone is responsible. We all wish that diplomacy will cause him to back down but history does not give me cause for optimism that Saddam Hussein will finally get it. . . . Mr. President, Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction programs and the means to deliver them are a menace to international peace and security. They pose a threat to Iraq’s neighbors, to U.S. forces in the Gulf region, to the world’s energy supplies, and to the integrity and credibility of the United Nations Security Council. . . . Mr. President, the use of military force is a measure of last resort. The best choice of avoiding it will be if Saddam Hussein understands he has no choice except to open up to UNSCOM inspections and destroy his weapons of mass destruction. The use of military force may not result in that desired result but it will serve to degrade Saddam Hussein’s ability to develop weapons of mass destruction

and to threaten international peace and security. Although not as useful as inspection and destruction, it is still a worthy goal” [*Congressional Record*, 2/12/98].

**Senator Kerry:**

“Mr. President, we have every reason to believe that Saddam Hussein will continue to do everything in his power to further develop weapons of mass destruction and the ability to deliver those weapons, and that he will use those weapons without concern or pangs of conscience if ever and whenever his own calculations persuade him it is in his interests to do so. . . . I have spoken before this chamber on several occasions to state my belief that the United States must take every feasible step to lead the world to remove this unacceptable threat. He must be deprived of the ability to injure his own citizens without regard to internationally-recognized standards of behavior and law. He must be deprived of his ability to invade neighboring nations. He must be deprived of his ability to visit destruction on other nations in the Middle East region or beyond. If he does not live up fully to the new commitments that U.N. Secretary-General Annan recently obtained in order to end the weapons inspection standoff – and I will say clearly that I cannot conceive that he will not violate those commitments at some point – we must act decisively to end the threats that Saddam Hussein poses.” [*Congressional Record*, 3/13/98.]

In fairness, a few of these Senators have continued to recognize this increased threat and maintained a certain level of consistency on the subject. Unfortunately, others have not.

Consider the following remarks by a key Democrat: “There should be no doubt, Saddam’s ability to produce and deliver weapons of mass destruction poses a grave threat to the peace of that region and the security of the world. . .Saddam should never doubt the will of the American people, their legislators, their military, or their commander-in-chief to protect our interests, defend our security, and ensure the well-being of our fellow citizens and that of our friends and allies around the world. He should know that when it comes to protecting our vital national interests, Americans will stand as one. We will speak as one. And whenever, necessary, we will act as one.”

Of course, these were the comments of Vice President Al Gore in February 1998, not those of presidential aspirant Al Gore in September 2002. And yet, they claim that Republicans are the ones politicizing the case against Iraq?

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