

GREENPEACE Briefing

Greenpeace statement impending US-led war on Iraq

Greenpeace is opposed to war in Iraq and will campaign actively to prevent it. We will remain opposed, whether or not an attack is sanctioned by the United Nations.

Greenpeace opposes the war because:

It would have devastating human and environmental consequences.

Most of the health, water, sanitation and power systems in Iraq, destroyed during the last Gulf war, remain unrestored. Food supplies depend almost entirely on rationing, which is vulnerable to civil disorder and administrative breakdown.

A conventional war (one in which no nuclear, chemical or biological weapons are used) could kill over a quarter of a million people, most of them civilians. (The last Gulf War killed 200,000 Iraqis). Famine disease and social dislocation could kill another 250,000. If the war escalates to involve chemical or nuclear attack, casualties could be as high as four million, and there would be a legacy of toxic and nuclear contamination to deal with for generations to come.

Bush is clearly trying to get control on Iraq's oil reserves.

As Nelson Mandela has said, an attack on Iraq would be "clearly motivated by George W Bush's desire to please the arms and oil industries of the USA". Iraq's known oil reserves are second in size only to Saudi Arabia's. The head of the Iraqi National Congress, an umbrella opposition group, has said that "American companies will have a big shot at Iraqi oil" if he is running the country.

The company that would benefit most from 'regime change' in Iraq, according to analysts at Deutsche Bank, is ExxonMobil, a company that funded Republican candidates to the tune of more than \$1.2 million in 2000. ExxonMobil is also behind Bush's rejection of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, and admits that it has a vested interest in keeping the US hooked on oil. This is why Greenpeace, with other groups, is calling on everyone to boycott its products.

The illegality of 'pre-emptive war', without support from the UN Security Council.

Even Henry Kissinger argues that "the notion of justified pre-emption runs counter to modern international law, which sanctions the use of force in self-defense only against actual - not potential - threats." Kissinger's piece and a more in-depth analysis prepared for the Australian Parliament demonstrate that not only would this war be illegal without a Security Council Resolution, a resolution allowing the use of force would set a highly dangerous precedent in its re-definition of the right of self defence. Some, including Kissinger, argue that an expanded definition is necessary in an era where terrorist organisations are conceivably able to use weapons of mass destruction. Yet once the US is allowed (or decides of its own accord) to proceed in this manner, there will be nothing to prevent any other country from dealing with its neighbours in the same fashion. If the Security Council can be convinced to uphold

international law and the Bush Administration takes unilateral action, it will be clearly acting outside customary international law and the UN Charter.

War is an ineffective way to deal with weapons of mass destruction

We fully support disarming Iraq, and indeed all nations that have weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including the United States. But pre-emptive military strikes against states possessing or suspected of possessing WMD do not provide a stable basis for controlling or abolishing them. This approach would require repeated armed interventions against numerous countries. States known to have nuclear weapons outside of any form of international control include India, Pakistan and Israel; North Korea is openly seeking to acquire them . The Bush administration has stated that at least 13 countries are pursuing biological weapons research. Does Bush intend to attack each of these in turn?

What is needed instead is a collective international arms control and disarmament system. The framework already exists through formal bodies such as the UN Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Comprehensive Test Ban treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

But rather than being strengthened, this delicate framework is being undermined by the hypocrisy of existing nuclear weapons states, and by the actions of the Bush administration in particular. If Bush and Blair are genuinely concerned about WMD, they should recommit themselves to the processes of arms control, nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

Five steps to ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction and building real security.

1. Full implementation and strengthening of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

This would mean non-signatories signing up, and also the nuclear weapons states living up to their obligations. The NPT is a contract: the non-nuclear signatories promise not to acquire nuclear weapons, and the nuclear signatories promise to negotiate away those they possess. The USA, Britain, France, Russia and China have been in material breach of this article of international law for three decades.

Since Bush took office the US has been developing new nuclear weapons that can be used first in a conventional conflict. The US is committed to retaining an arsenal of around ten thousand nuclear weapons. At the NPT review conference in 2000, the US and other signatories agreed 13 specific disarmament commitments to move towards implementation of the NPT, beginning with an end to nuclear weapons testing. Last year the Bush administration said it would not abide by the additional commitments.

2. Fast phase out of so-called ‘civil’ nuclear power

States seeking to acquire nuclear weapons do so through nuclear energy programmes. This enables them to get the material, and also to evade detection by inspectors, since many materials are so-called ‘dual use’ (ie military or civil). Any radioactive material, including all the waste which remains radioactive for hundreds of thousands of years and cannot be safely disposed of, is an ingredient for a ‘dirty bomb’. It is lunacy to allow the nuclear industry to continue creating radioactive material.

3. Minimising the risk from existing nuclear material.

Unfortunately, the world has a dangerous legacy of nuclear material from the last five decades of irresponsible construction of nuclear power stations and nuclear weapons. The most widespread problem is in the states of the former Soviet Union. The international community should pay to make the Soviet nuclear legacy less insecure. This would cost a fraction of the cost of a war on Iraq, and would contribute much more to preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. Yet the Bush administration has slashed funding for programmes safeguarding nuclear materials in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

The least sensible management option for nuclear waste is to reprocess it. This separates out the uranium and plutonium, making material for weapons more easily accessible, and emitting a large quantity of radioactivity in the process. Reprocessing must end immediately.

4. Strengthening the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions.

Instead of strengthening them, the Bush Administration is undermining them. For example, in 2001 it vetoed the adoption of a Protocol to the BWC which would have established a verification regime, on the grounds that this would involve intrusive inspections and threaten the commercial interests of its biotechnology industry.

5. Ending dependence on fossil fuels and nuclear power by developing the renewable economy.

The world economy's dependence on fossil fuels, and oil in particular, distorts international relations and stokes conflicts. Fossil fuels must be phased out, not just for security reasons but also to protect the global climate. We do not need nuclear power to replace fossil fuels. With sufficient investment and political will, renewables could provide all the energy we need; not just the electricity, but the energy for industry, for heating and for transport as well.

However 'surgical' military strikes are claimed to be, they will not solve the issues facing our planet in the 21st century. Real security will not be built on military power. It depends on tackling the causes of conflict: poverty, competition for scarce resources, injustice. Greenpeace does not have expertise in all these areas, but we are contributing through our work on promoting energy security (by developing renewable power which all countries can access), and food security (by developing sustainable agriculture rather than intensive chemical and GM agriculture), as well as our campaigns to strengthen international disarmament treaties. Such measures are not an alternative to national security - they are its only hope.