

Once again on “weapons of mass destruction”

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The *World Socialist Web Site* has frequently pointed out the fraudulent character of the Clinton administration's claim that its motivation in the conflict with Iraq is to prevent Saddam Hussein's government from acquiring or making use of “weapons of mass destruction.”

This phrase has become a buzzword in media propaganda in favor of war with Iraq, employed to prevent any critical thought about the real imperialist interests which are at stake in the region. These revolve around Iraq's strategic geopolitical position and its proximity to Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea oil supplies.

A column in Sunday's *Chicago Tribune* by a former UN weapons inspector confirms that Iraq's alleged possession of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons has been used as a pretext for US intervention in the Persian Gulf.

Raymond Zilinskas, who was appointed to UNSCOM in 1994 and inspected biological research and production facilities in Iraq, writes: “Iraqi facilities and equipment that could produce nuclear and chemical weapons already have been destroyed and cannot be resurrected for some years. Therefore bombings cannot be expected to weaken Iraq's already poor capacity in this regard.

“And biological weapons? If the Iraqis managed to hide stockpiles of pathogens or toxins from the gulf war—which I find doubtful—the short shelf-lives of these agents ensure that they have since become inactive. The routine monitoring by the UN inspectors and the destruction of relevant sites would have prevented the Iraqis from restocking their supply.

“Therefore, there are no biological facilities that would seem to be obvious targets for a new round of US bombing. Admittedly, the most important component of any biological warfare program—the people who make the agents—remains in Iraq. The 200- to 300-person force—composed of scientists and technicians who know how to produce biological

agents and the engineers and munitions experts who load them into bombs, rockets and missiles — are still there. But these workers are civilians and are not supposed to be targeted during bombing missions. Furthermore, the more than 80 biological facilities that exist in Iraq are also civilian, and most are located in urban settings.”



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