

Blix report to the UN: diplomatic charade masks US imperialist war aims

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The report delivered Monday by chief weapons inspector Hans Blix to the United Nations Security Council was clearly crafted to placate the Bush administration and provide a measure of grist to its war mill. Blix was unable to produce a single piece of evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, but nevertheless indicted Baghdad for failing to comply fully with last November's Security Council resolution.

On cue, Washington's ambassador to the UN, John Negroponte, appeared before the TV cameras with a denunciation of Iraq that stopped just short of declaring war. There followed similar statements from President Bush's press spokesman Ari Fleischer and Secretary of State Colin Powell. The stage was thus set for President Bush's State of the War address the next evening.

The entire proceeding had the air of an absurd but ghastly charade, in which all of the actors, including the media, maintained the pretense that the UN inspectors' reports could spell the difference between war and peace in the Persian Gulf.

Any serious commentary on the day's events, however, must start from one overriding fact: the entire debate about the existence or nonexistence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction has absolutely nothing to do with the real motivations behind the American war drive. The United States is going to war against Iraq for a whole series of economic and geopolitical reasons that center on the country's vast oil reserves and, more broadly, Washington's pursuit of global hegemony.

All of the charges of Iraqi weapons stockpiles and programs—chemical, biological and nuclear—are extrapolated from previous UN estimates of weapons produced in the 1980s, prior to the first Gulf War. No one has produced a shred of evidence of Iraqi production of such weapons since UN sanctions were imposed and inspections began in 1991.

Even Blix in his report admitted that previous inspectors never claimed they had proof of existing chemical or biological weapons. The entire dossier against Iraq is based on the alleged failure of Iraq to provide conclusive documentation to prove that it had destroyed all such weapons that it once possessed. (Weapons, it should be added, produced with the financial support and political sanction of the US, which generally supported Iraq in its war against Iran in the 1980s.)

American spokesmen routinely distort UN claims that previously existing weapons have not been accounted for to assert, without any evidentiary proof, that such weapons exist today and are being stockpiled in secret locations.

The unsupported allegations, distortions and lies that comprise the US justification for war constitute a colossal fraud, in which the UN is complicit. They are aimed at duping American and international public opinion and concocting a pretext for a war of aggression for which the most influential forces within the Bush administration have been pressing and preparing for more than a decade.

One need only consider the background against which the UN proceedings were played out. For weeks the Bush administration has been seeking to undercut the inspections, demanding that they be wound up in time for the US military to launch a campaign of saturation bombing that will make the carnage of the first Persian Gulf War pale in comparison. Bush himself, in his inimically sadistic and stupid manner, complained only recently that the inspections reminded him of the rerun of a "bad movie" that he had no desire to see.

The US has been placing enormous pressure on Blix and the Security Council, using a combination of threats and bribes to whip the inspectors and

Washington's European "allies" into line. Blix himself met privately with Bush administration officials on the eve of his report.

US propaganda has consisted of a motley assortment of charges—weapons stockpiles, Iraqi-Al Qaeda connections, assassination threats against Iraqi scientists—picked up, dropped and recycled with cynical abandon. As each allegation is exposed as a lie, either by on-site inspections of supposed weapons sites, the testimony of nuclear experts, or reports from international intelligence agencies, it is temporarily shelved, only to be revived at the next turn of events.

Meanwhile, the US continues its furious buildup of air, naval and ground forces in the region, and commentators from inside and outside the government estimate the most likely date for the onslaught to begin. Right-wing media pundits close to the administration publish urgent commentaries warning that the Bush White House has so deeply committed itself to war, its political survival depends on a bloody settling of accounts with Iraq—sooner rather than later.

The drumbeat for war unfolds, moreover, against the backdrop of an increasingly desperate economic and social crisis within the US, for which the Bush administration has no answer. With the dollar falling sharply on international currency exchanges, US trade and budget deficits spiraling upward, state governments across the country going bankrupt, and the domestic economy hovering on the brink of recession, war becomes the sole axis of government policy.

Under these conditions, to even discuss the content of US allegations of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction runs the risk of implying a degree of legitimacy to an exercise in mass deception.



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