

# Leading Democrats line up behind Bush on Iraq war

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Following US Secretary of State Colin Powell's presentation to the United Nations Security Council February 5, leading Democrats rushed to support the Bush administration's war drive.

The Democratic response was entirely predictable. Having voted last October to authorize Bush to attack Iraq, the Democrats are now solidarizing themselves with the imminent military onslaught. It should simply be noted for the historical record that the Democratic Party is fully complicit in this criminal enterprise.

In particular, the candidates for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination were most anxious, with one exception, to applaud Powell's report.

Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, a longtime supporter of a US war on Iraq, was the most bloodthirsty, calling for an invasion in the coming weeks. Lieberman suggested that UN support, while preferable, is not necessary. "Patience is a virtue," he said, "but too much patience with dangerous lawlessness is a vice."

Rep. Dick Gephardt of Missouri and Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts urged Bush to strengthen international alliances as part of the preparation for a military assault. Kerry declared, "With such strong evidence in front of them, it is now incumbent on the UN to respect its own mandates, and stand up for our common goal of either bringing about Iraq's peaceful disarmament or moving forward with the decisive military victory of a multilateral coalition."

Kerry claimed his decision to support a war was based on the facts, not politics. "It's about doing what's right for the country. I'm worried about the national security of our nation and doing what's correct. I want the president to continue to work through the multilateral structure, and I'd like to see us get the support of other countries, but I've always recognized that you need to face up to the threat of weapons of mass destruction."

Not content with expressing support for Powell's

speech, Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina indicated his retroactive support for the Bush administration, saying that he has "long argued that Saddam Hussein is a grave threat and that he must be disarmed. Iraq's behavior during the past few months has done nothing to change my mind." Edwards commented, "Secretary of State Powell made a powerful case. This is a real challenge for the Security Council to act."

Recovering from heart surgery before deciding whether to enter the presidential race, Senator Bob Graham of Florida indicated his concern about the links Powell alleged between Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and terrorist groups. "I am outraged that four months have passed with little effort having been made to increase the security of our people," Graham said.

While expressing their support for Powell, none of the leading Democrats cared to explain what it was about the presentation that they found so "compelling."

The only candidate for the Democratic nomination not expressing support for an imminent war was Vermont Governor Howard Dean, who observed that Powell had not made a case for a unilateral assault. "Terrorism around the globe is a far greater danger to the United States than Iraq. We are pursuing the wrong war," he remarked.

Other leading Democrats echoed the views of the majority of would-be presidential nominees. Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota asserted that Powell "made a powerful, methodical case that put the onus on Saddam Hussein now." Asked how much longer the inspectors should be given, Daschle said, "I don't know ... not indefinitely."

Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware, top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called the Powell litany of lies a "powerful and irrefutable case." Senator Hillary Clinton of New York termed it "compelling," while Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy said, "It's

clear that, after today's indictment, Saddam Hussein has only one final chance to comply and disarm." California's Senator Diane Feinstein declared that Powell made "the most comprehensive and compelling case that may have been made," adding, "I no longer think inspections are going to work."

The Democrats continued their display of effusive support the next day when Powell made an appearance before the Foreign Relations Committee. Biden gushed, "I am proud to be associated with you. I think you did better than anyone could have because of your standing, your reputation and your integrity as it is understood by our European friends as well as others around the world."

Kerry told Powell, "We are all gratified that the administration finally came to the United Nations and made its case to the world. This is a vindication of your position and that of many of us in the Congress who have long pushed for something less unilateral and more the hard work of diplomacy."

None of the Democrats who expressed continuing hesitations about an imminent war questioned the veracity of Powell's allegations or the right of the US to invade Iraq and overthrow its government.

Representative Jim McDermott of Washington praised Powell's speech along the same lines as Kerry. "I believe it's good they've come forward with the information," he said. "They should have done it a long time ago. Give it to the inspectors and let the inspectors go out and decide."

Democratic House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi merely noted that Powell had presented no new evidence. She said, "We must exhaust all alternatives, such as the continuation of inspections, diplomacy and the leverage provided by the threat of military action." Rep. Charles Rangel of New York came the closest to actually criticizing Powell, commenting, "I've read things here that as a former federal prosecutor I couldn't take to a grand jury. I feel sorry for Secretary Powell. There's no way he's an Adlai Stevenson."



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