

JULY 31, 2002

**SHOULD THE UNITED STATES INVADE IRAQ?
IF SO, WHAT MIGHT BE THE CONSEQUENCES?**

-----GulfWire~~Perspectives-----

A Discussion with Voice of America Producer Carol Pearson, Timothy Trevan, and Dr. John Duke Anthony on Voice of America's "Talk to America Program"

Yesterday, from 1:00-2:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, Ms. Carole Pearson, Program Producer for the "Voice of America," conducted a discussion with Mr. Timothy Trevan, a former United Nations Weapons Inspector in Iraq and author of the book, "Saddam's Secrets," and "GulfWire" Publisher Dr. John Duke Anthony.

The topic was, "Should the United States Invade Iraq? If So, What Might Be the Consequences?"

VOA's "Talk to America Program," on which the program was aired, is broadcast live to all of Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and South as well as Southeast and East Asia. For reasons of time differences, the program is rebroadcast throughout Asia. This particular program permitted callers from different countries to put questions to the speakers.

GulfWire Perspectives presents an unofficial transcription of the questions and discussion followed by a summary of current reporting on the issue.

Patrick W. Ryan
Editor-in-Chief, GulfWire

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VOA: Jordan's King Abdalla recently said that he is against any American or other attack against Iraq. Dr. Anthony, can you envision any time in the future when it might be appropriate for Jordan to change its position?

ANTHONY: From the vantage point of the present and near-term future, the answer is, "No." That is, it is difficult for me to imagine any point at which the atmosphere would be receptive, or the moment propitious, for Jordan to be involved in such a campaign.

In saying this, it is important to emphasize that, in some ways, Jordan continues to be constrained by the same factors that it faced on August 2, 1990, and indeed much more so, given what is going on at the present time between the Israelis and Palestinians.

In 1990, barely days after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, King Hussein unfortunately went almost immediately from being the world's one head of state who up until then had enjoyed the longest standing relationship of trust, confidence, and intimacy with the United States government, to being, for all practical purposes, politically paralyzed. Because of his domestic situation at the time, he was unable to do what many

poorly informed and exceptionally shortsighted Americans argued he should do in terms of U.S. needs, concerns, and interests, given what Iraq had just done to Kuwait.

To say this is not just because it is clear in the clarity of hindsight. To specialists at the time, it was abundantly clear that there was no way that King Hussein could have done what many American policymakers wanted him to do.

Not least among the reasons was that as many as 60% of Jordan's citizens were of Palestinian origin, and because, in part, having shrewdly calculated the implications of this fact, Saddam Hussein took care to couch his rationale for invading Kuwait in ways that appealed to Palestinians generally and to those in Jordan in particular.

In order to survive, and in terms of what were American, Israeli, and many other countries' longer term strategic interests at the time, King Hussein did what he had to do. Had he done other than what he did, he would not likely have lived long afterwards to tell about it. These same constraining constants are in play at the present with regard to King Hussein's successor, his son, King Abdalla.

TREVAN: That's true, but one should not forget that, in 1991, King Hussein did say that, "Saddam must go."

VOA: If the United States were to decide to attack Iraq, could it do so without authorization by the UN Security Council? Is it necessary to have UN approval?

TREVAN: Depending on how one interprets UN Security Council resolutions already in place, the answer could be yes -- that is, that it would not be absolutely necessary to have the UN's specific authorization.

VOA: Dr. Anthony, what do you think?

ANTHONY: Ideally, in any such circumstances, one would of course want to have the support and backing of the United Nations Security Council. However, having said that, it is possible that a case could be made, as Mr. Trevan just did, for using force in Iraq in certain extraordinary scenarios -- for example, either to prevent or bring about an end to a humanitarian crisis.

If so, it might be that already existing UN Security Council resolutions could be interpreted as providing sufficient leeway to move on those grounds. That is, the United States chose to interpret UN Security Council resolutions subsequent to Resolution 687 of 1991, which produced the ceasefire, as allowing the United States to intervene in Iraq's airspace for the specific purpose of preventing a further humanitarian crisis than the two that very quickly erupted following the ceasefire.

These crises, respectively, were the flight of nearly a million Kurds out of northern Iraq into Turkey, on one hand, and Saddam's use of helicopters and other force to suppress the rebellion among the largely Shi'a Arab populace in the south, on the other.

To this day, the strategic objective of avoiding a recurrence of either of those two horrors that were visited upon large numbers of Iraqis in the immediate aftermath of the ceasefire in the last war is the primary rationale for the United States continuing its overflights of Iraq. These overflights are conducted in conjunction with what is called Operation Northern Watch, so as to protect Iraq's Kurdish population, and what is called Operation Southern Watch, so as to protect Iraqis living in the southern part of the country.

A CALLER FROM LONDON WHO IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS AN IRAQI: Given Saddam's ruthless record on human rights, and the fact that, privately, even if not publicly, the heads of virtually all the Arab governments want to see him go, why doesn't the United States put its weight behind a UN Security Council resolution under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter, which is the Charter's enforcement chapter, and use that as a rationale for invading and doing away with Saddam?

TREVAN: There is much to say in favor of this. Indeed, in 1991 the United States tried very hard to put such a resolution under Chapter Seven. However, it was unable to gain the support of others.

VOA: Dr. Anthony, what do you think? And what is one to make of reports that, region-wide, so many Arabs, with regard to how the United States relates to the United Nations, are said to believe that the United States is "arrogant, selfish, and hypocritical?"

ANTHONY: I think one has to be very careful here. To begin with, on the matter of human rights violations, there isn't a country on this planet that has a human rights record that is bereft of blemish. For anyone thinking about proceeding in this direction, they need to be exceptionally mindful of what could happen.

In particular, one needs to consider the implications of possibly inadvertently setting a precedent that could later backfire. In other words, without due consideration of everything that is involved here, and there is a lot that is involved here, one could end up ruining the day that one decided to take a particular course of action that turns out to have unintended or unanticipated consequences.

Having said that, it is one thing to pass such resolutions and act upon them with decisiveness, as we have done, and others have done, and rightly so, in such clear-cut cases as Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor.

In the event that something comparable was underway in Iraq, there is little doubt in my mind that there would rightly be a crescendo of international pressure in favor of UN, American, or someone else's intervention to put an end to such horrors.

However, let's look at the larger picture here. The caller is correct in stating that virtually every Arab head of state would like to see Saddam gone. That's true. But, as I see it -- I concede maybe I don't see it -- that's not the point. Neither is the point as to whether the United States and others have or do not have the capability to invade Iraq and topple its government. Such capability exists.

Rather, to me, the point is, then what? To me, the point is, at what price? To me, the point is, at what level of consequences? Until now, the point is that no one has any clear and credible answers to these questions.

The point is that, for these reasons alone, many of our Arab, Islamic, and other friends, allies, and strategic partners are, in my view, fully justified in being hesitant and unwilling to put their shoulders to the wheel, so to speak, and reluctant to declare in advance, or certainly at this stage, that they are "with us" in the campaign being mounted in the United States media and in some quarters within the Congress in support of invading Iraq to get rid of Saddam Hussein.

But to get back to your point about American hypocrisy. On the grounds of human rights, it strains credulity that one could expect Arab and Islamic states to come on board with Washington on this issue when the United States, beyond indulgences in lofty rhetoric here and there, has materially done next to nothing to pressure the Israeli leadership to cease not just its violations of Palestinian human rights but, also, its violation of Palestinian civil rights and Palestinian national rights to be free in their own land.

In this context, from an Arab regional perspective, for Americans to be in favor of invading Iraq sooner rather than later is to be seen, at a minimum, as trying to place the cart before the horse.

TREVAN: It's true that no country is clean with regard to human rights abuses across the board. But what one is talking about here are not ordinary abuses of a people's rights. Rather, what one is talking about is crimes against humanity -- war crimes, if you will, such as genocide.

VOA: Mr. Trevan, then, in your view, does the United States have sufficient reason to invade Iraq? And, if so, what are the likely consequences?

TREVAN: I think it does. Iraq is known to be developing biological and chemical weapons. It is known to have an active interest in developing nuclear weapons as well.

When I was a United Nations inspector in Iraq, we found what we believed were 95% of the missiles that Saddam, if he had wanted to, could have used to launch chemical and biological weapons. But the problem is that the country still has the intellectual capability to acquire the means to develop these and also nuclear weapons.

If a link between Al-Qaeda and Iraq is established, I think that would certainly make it much easier for the United States to go in.

VOA: Dr. Anthony, what do you think?

ANTHONY: My response is that we keep the bigger picture in mind. That picture includes the overriding wish of all of Iraq's neighbors and other countries further field that, at the end of the day, we will do whatever is necessary in support of regional peace, stability, and security.

In this context, however objectionable and heinous a person Saddam may be -- and he is certainly objectionable and heinous, and, indeed, many in the region regard him as a butcher -- it is an unassailable fact that, thus far, no connection between al-Qaeda and Iraq has been proven.

Moreover, in recent years, in fact for three and a half continuous years, indeed since Operation Desert Fox in December 1998, which is a significant period of time, there has not been a single credible Iraqi threat to anyone or anything anywhere in the region.

In this light, there is much to be said in favor of the view that, for nearly half a decade and counting, the ongoing robust deterrence and promotion of enhanced defense capabilities -- between ourselves and our regional partners in the form of maneuvers, pre-positioned equipment, joint training, and constant exchange of information -- has worked with regard to the larger strategic objectives that we and our key allies are pursuing.

VOA: But if we are going to invade Iraq, what might be some of the costs?

TREVAN: No one can say for sure. But there is no doubt that the United States, by itself, could topple the Iraqi government, just as it toppled the Taliban government in Afghanistan.

Certainly, the United States has adequate air and naval forces in order to prevail. As it did before, in 1991, the U.S. would likely take out very quickly the Iraqi military's ability to see and communicate. The problem is what it would take in terms of ground forces.

ANTHONY: I'm not sure that what Trevan made reference to with regard to what we have achieved thus far in Afghanistan is the best or even a good example of what, in this instance, may be relevant. For example, many point out that, more than half a year after launching Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) with regard to Afghanistan, the United States is still unable to claim success in having achieved the goal of getting the two top people it said it was after when it went in.

In addition, in the course of conducting OEF, many American officials seem to be averse to using the word "nation-building." This is seen by many as saying that we are uncertain as to how long we might be staying.

Moreover, besides the fact that the number of forces we have deployed to date is quite limited, and relatively few to date have been positioned outside Kabul, there is already talk about our handing over various responsibilities to other countries. The ones most frequently mentioned are the Turks and the British.

What is worrisome in the case of what some American analysts are contemplating in the case of Iraq is that, even before going in, one hears that serious consideration is being given among U.S. officials to the idea that, once Saddam is toppled, it might not be a bad idea to hand over responsibilities to the Turks and the British in Iraq, too.

This is not to deny that the Turks and the British know a great deal more about Iraq than we do. They do. But for historical and cultural reasons

[editor: the Ottoman Turks ruled Iraq for centuries, and the British administered the League of Nations Mandate for Iraq from 1921 to 1932], many Iraqis would argue that these would be among the last two countries to whom Iraqis would want to see responsibility handed for administering a defeated Iraq.

But this is not the question. The question that was asked was related to costs. To me, this is altogether appropriate. That is, the question of costs, especially if the focus is on money, is one of the most important questions of all. Indeed, if the focus is on the financial aspects of a campaign to get rid of Saddam Hussein, and to put an end to Iraq's development of weapons of mass destruction, and on what one expects to be the costs of mobilization, deployment, invasion, and, possibly, an occupation of Iraq of indeterminate length, this is a question that has hardly been asked, let alone answered, with any degree of credibility.

I'm of the view that the financial costs of invading Iraq, and, indeed, of any defense, and particularly national and regional defense, can be every bit as important as, and in some cases more important than, the question of the nature and number of weapons and military technology one is prepared to devote to a campaign, especially one such as that which is being considered in the case of Iraq.

In any effort to calculate the costs, there is no need to start from zero. There's a ready frame of reference to hand. It's important to recall that, in 1990 and 1991, in order to liberate Kuwait and reverse Iraq's aggression, some 550,000 Americans -- half a million airmen, marines, seamen, and soldiers -- were mobilized and deployed to the region. In addition, 500,000 troops and related assets from more than 30 other countries were also activated and dispatched to Arab coalition member countries.

After all the expenses were tabulated, Saudi Arabia reimbursed the United States 64 billion dollars for that portion of the overall costs that entailed preventing the war from spreading to the Kingdom.

But this time around, among many other things that are different than before, Saudi Arabia doesn't have the means to underwrite such a campaign. Neither does anyone else, including us.

This being the case, where's the money going to come from? To date, there's been almost no public debate on this vital facet of what people are talking about and planning.

VOA: But what if it becomes clear that we are going to invade anyway? What might Saddam do? Dr. Anthony, if you were Saddam, what would you be thinking about doing?

ANTHONY: What I might be thinking is not as important as what Saddam is doing even as we speak. Look, the last time around, among American and other military and strategic analysts there was almost universal agreement that it would be highly unlikely for the United States, or any other country for that matter, ever again to have as much as SEVEN months to prepare for a major military operation, which is exactly how much time Saddam gave us to prepare to liberate Kuwait and to roll back his aggression.

But, guess what. We have already given Saddam more than seven months to prepare for what we are talking about doing to him. If it is true that it is unlikely that we would militarily be ready to invade Iraq before 2003, then we're talking about giving him an additional half a year, if not longer, than what we have already given him to prepare.

If it is of any interest, for at least the past ten months, I have received from various sources a minimum of three reports daily - on many days, the number varies between six and eight -- that convey a range of reasons why the United States should invade Iraq. The tone of most of these reports is that preparations for the invasion, if anything, need to be accelerated, and that the act of attacking Iraq and of soon after landing troops needs to be launched as soon as possible.

Accordingly, it would be foolhardy in the extreme for anyone to think for a moment that Saddam has not been preparing, for some time now, what to do and not to do before and during such an invasion.

VOA: Like doing what?

ANTHONY: For one thing, he's already doing what is in his interest to do with regard to convincing everyone he possibly can that they should not have anything to do with what the United States is contemplating. One need only look at the situation from his perspective to realize that this much, at a minimum, is what he could do, should do, and must do. Indeed, thus far, one can say that he has succeeded in this.

But, in my view, it would be wrong for anyone to attribute the pan-Arab and other international lack of support for what the United States proposes to do to Iraq to this or anything else that Saddam has done or has not done. In fact, the reasons for region-wide opposition to an American-led invasion of Iraq at this time or any other time in the near-term are rooted not in this, but in a host of other factors.

TREVAN: I agree with what has just been said.

VOA: Then, what else might Saddam do?

ANTHONY: Certainly, if Saddam was sure we were going to attack Iraq, in strategic terms he would be forgiven for thinking, "Why not hit the United States first, or, if not the United States, then some important American interest nearby, or perhaps the vital interests or important resources of a friendly Arab country, or even Israel?"

Saddam would have reason for thinking along these lines, if only because of the potential for such actions to deflect the United States, or, possibly, to involve Israel in some disruptive way, or, alternatively, especially if Turkey were to take a role of some kind in any invasion of Iraq, to get Ankara to do something that might alter the course of events in ways that one cannot imagine.

And if Saddam was convinced that we were going to attack him on his home turf, so to speak, he would be understood if he were logically to react by

thinking and deciding, "I have no choice but to direct my operatives in the United States to attack Americans and American interests in their land."

VOA: But, if we were to wait to invade Iraq until after Saddam had nuclear weapons, would he likely use these or his other weapons of mass destruction?

TREVAN: I doubt it, for the same reason he did not use his weapons of mass destruction before. Whether he would or would not use whatever weapons of mass destruction he has this time around would depend in part on whether he had the capability to deliver them. That, in turn, would depend not only on what medium or longer-range missiles he had at the time, and whether they were operational, but whether he could effectively attach the proper agents to them.

It would also depend on Saddam's command structure. I believe that any decision to launch weapons of this nature would be held in his hands and his hands alone. In any case, I believe it would take him as long as three months to ready his biological weapons and as much as six months to prepare his chemical weapons.

ANTHONY: I come at some of this from a different perspective. I disagree that Saddam alone would be the determining factor as to whether such weapons would, in fact, be launched. In my mind, there is no possible way that he could or would be the sole person pulling all the triggers, pressing all the buttons behind every control panel, firing each missile launcher or every howitzer that might be able and authorized to lob chemical-tipped artillery shells, or the one unleashing bomb racks aboard aircraft.

No matter how one looks at it, Saddam, like every other head of state in a comparable situation, would be dependent upon the Iraqi armed forces' command structure. It may indeed prove to be the case that he is the sole person authorized to give the orders to use such weapons. But the actual firing, and the operational and logistical details involved in carrying out such orders, would, in my mind, likely be in the hands of individuals other than himself.

Whether each and every one of these individuals would obey such a command from Saddam, whether some of these individuals would obey him and others would not, and even the possibility that not a single one of them would pay him any heed are terribly important questions, but ones for which no one, and I stress no one, presently has the answers.

In actuality, it could come down to each and every individual Iraqi in possession of whatever codes or other enabling devices exist having to determine in their own minds whether it is in their interests to obey or disobey such commands. Hanging in the balance of such determinations, among other things, is likely to be such ponderous variables as the prospects for their living or dying one way or another depending upon what, in the final moment of action or inaction, their decision might be.

From where we are now, much would turn on what is, in any case, unknown. Among the unanswerable questions are whether Saddam would be killed immediately, if at all, whether he would elect to stay put and go down fighting, if fight at all, whether he would try to flee Baghdad to Tikrit in an effort to reach the safety of his extended family, whether key elements

of the armed forces, the security forces, or Ba'ath Party cadres, or any other forces, domestic or foreign, clandestine or overt, are at the center of what brings the regime to its knees, or inexplicably fails miserably in an effort to do so, and so on.

As to whether Saddam would unleash what we know he has in the way of chemical weapons, and what many believe he may also have in the way of biological weapons, I'm not sure I agree with what Trevan said in terms of how long it would take Saddam to "weaponize" such weapons.

We already know that Saddam has used such weapons during the latter part of the Iran-Iraq war and that, in Halabja, he did so against his own people [editor: against Iraqi Kurds alleged to have sided with Iran]. Moreover, among specialists, it seems to be accepted that he certainly has the precursors, if not much more than that, for the manufacture and weaponization of lethal biological agents.

Regarding Saddam's potential use of biological weapons, there's an aspect that is problematic. That is, to the best of my knowledge, the kind of missile delivery system that Iraq presently has is one where the missilized weapon explodes only upon impact. This means that, in the case of a biological agent, the agent would be incinerated at the moment of explosion.

Yet, in recent days, I have heard some specialists say that a way to get around this limitation would possibly be to release dried anthrax through an aerosol device. Alternatively, one specialist opined that a more lethal way, one that would be exceptionally difficult if not impossible to defend against, would be to infect with smallpox one or more Palestinians who could spread the disease, knowingly or unknowingly, merely by walking around Israel and breathing normally.

TREVAN: I of course did not mean that Saddam himself would personally be the one in operational control of the weapons ...

CALLER FROM GERMANY: What bothers me is that the United States might actually do what it is contemplating doing without regard to the United Nations Charter. The Charter specifically enjoins all the member states to respect the sovereignty of all the other members.

TREVAN: Yes, that's true. But such a right is not unlimited. That is, the Charter also has provisions that enable member-states to exercise their right of self-defense without regard to considerations relating to national sovereignty. For example, there are occasions when, for humanitarian purposes, a member's invocation of sovereignty has not been allowed to stand in the way of an international peacekeeping mission. In other words, under prevailing international law, it is possible that one can take actions against a country without regard to matters of that country's sovereignty, depending on the circumstances.

ANTHONY: What Trevan just said is true. And to be absolutely clear about what we are talking about here, what he said is, in some ways, all the more true in the case of Iraq, at least in the case of what happened to it for its having invaded and occupied Kuwait.

That is, when Iraq invaded Kuwait and effectively trampled underfoot - indeed, it did more than that: it erased Kuwait's sovereignty, independence, and territory from the map -- it forewent, or, rather, it forfeited, any United Nations Charter or other principle related to sovereignty when it came to what the UN Security Council determined would be necessary to liberate Kuwait and roll back Iraq's aggression.

But it is important here to come back to the larger issue, which is the achievement and sustainment of regional peace, stability, and security. In this regard, no one in the region and no one anywhere else doubts for a moment that the United States, if it so chooses, has the ability to do away with the current Iraqi regime.

But to focus on that aspect is to focus on what one can call, for lack of a better word and concept, the LEAST important of the issues in focus here: namely, "takeoff." What has not been sufficiently addressed to date is a far more important issue, namely, that of "landing" - to wit: the many untold consequences and nightmarish scenarios that, all too easily, could follow in the wake of an American near-term invasion, and possibly an extended occupation, of Iraq.

Indeed, to date, there has been no public debate in the United States as to whether its citizens are ready to shoulder the burden of what an American invasion of Iraq and its consequences might bring.

But it is possible that one may take heart that tomorrow, Wednesday, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, late though it is, there is scheduled to take place the first of what one can hope will be more than one Congressional debate on these and related issues.

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O Mr. Timothy Trevan, a former UN Inspector of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, is author of the book, "Saddam's Secrets --The Hunt for Iraq's Hidden Weapons."

Book Info: <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/000653113X/arabialink>

O Dr. John Duke Anthony is President and CEO of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, Secretary of the U.S.-GCC Corporate Cooperation Committee, and Publisher of GulfWire. All three are nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations dedicated to the education of Americans and others about the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world.

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U.S. intelligence analysts have been closely examining satellite images of the west bank of the Tigris River in Baghdad for signs of a laboratory rumored to exist there. Called Tahhaddy, or "Challenge," the lab is purported to have 85 employees and a top-secret mission: making biological weapons for Iraq's military..." Complete report...

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BOOKS ON SADDAM HUSSEIN AND IRAQ:

"The Greatest Threat: Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Crisis of Global Security" by Richard Butler

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1586480391/arabialink>

"ENDGAME: Solving the Iraq Problem -- Once and For All" by Scott Ritter

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0684864851/arabialink>

"Brighter than the Baghdad Sun" by Shyam Bhatia, Daniel McGrory, Dan McGrory

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0895262517/arabialink>

"Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq" by Kanan Makiya
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0520214390/arabialink>

"The Reckoning: Iraq and the Legacy of Saddam Hussein" by Sandra MacKey
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