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Why Millions Of Americans Are Anti-War

By U.S. Congressman Bernard Sanders
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I want to let our friends in the UK know there are millions of Americans, including a growing number of Congress members, who oppose Bush's war plans with Iraq.

There are numerous reasons why the president's efforts are extremely misguided. Here are just five:

A WAR against Iraq could result in massive loss of life for innocent men, women and children in that country, as well as serious casualties for American and British troops.

In the 1991 Gulf War tens of thousands of innocent Iraqi men, women and children were killed or injured, and many are still dying as an after-effect of that battle.

Among American casualties, not only were 148 killed in action but close to 100,000 are suffering from the debilitating effects of Gulf War Illness. Five thousand British servicemen are also suffering from the condition. A new war with Iraq could bring massive destruction and pain.

The United States is becoming an increasingly violent society. As we enter the first years of the 21st Century we must reverse that trend and do everything we can to make war the last option in resolving conflict, not the first.

Unfortunately, the proposed war against Iraq should not be seen as an aberration of Bush's foreign policy.

It is an integral part of his "preventive war doctrine" that would allow the US to go into battle anytime and any place that he deems appropriate.

With the end of the Cold War people throughout the world looked forward to a century of peace and improved international relations. The Bush Doctrine could result in decades of unending warfare, and billions of dollars for weapons of destruction rather than for human needs.

The most serious external threat facing the US today is international terrorism, al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden - not Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

While Saddam is a terrible dictator, very few people outside of the White House believe he would actually launch an attack on America.

His country is militarily weak, we know where he is and if he ever launched an attack he could be met with an overwhelming military response.

Al-Qaeda is far more dangerous because it is not a state but an amorphous organisation that operates underground in numerous countries.

In recent months we have seen the reactivation of al-Qaeda with attacks in Kenya, Bali, Afghanistan, Jordan, Kuwait and elsewhere.

It is likely that, at this moment, they are planning terrorist attacks against the United States and other countries.

After September 11 President Bush told the US people we would destroy al-Qaeda and capture bin Laden "dead or alive." We have done neither.

Instead, with the help of the corporate media, Bush has deflected attention away from bin Laden and international terrorism and onto Saddam Hussein, a much easier and more convenient target.

It's time that the US and the rest of the international community focused their intention on the most serious threat that we face, not the easiest.

A US-led war with Iraq will increase the likelihood of terrorist attacks against America and other countries.

When the most powerful nation on earth unleashes a premeditated, offensive attack against a poor and relatively defenceless nation, killing thousands of innocent people and occupying that country, there will be massive resentment not only among a billion Muslims, but among people throughout the entire developing world.

Already, within the last year, respect and admiration for the US has plummeted in almost every nation.

A pre-emptive war against Iraq would increase anti-Americanism and could result in a massive recruiting boost for bin Laden and other terrorist leaders.

How many new suicide bombers would we create as a result of this war?

IF the United States goes to war without UN approval it will move the world toward international anarchy and a mind-set in which all nations will feel freer to attack other nations for whatever reason. In a world where at least eight countries have nuclear weapons, this is not a good idea.

What moral authority will the US have in calling for peace and negotiations in the Middle-East, or between India and Pakistan, after it launches, a major offensive war against Iraq?

The UN and its mediating mechanisms must be strengthened, not undermined. The international threshold for waging war must become higher, not lower.

At a time when the US has a six trillion dollar national debt and a growing deficit, a war with Iraq and the ensuing occupation of that land will cost American taxpayers tens of billions of dollars.

Unlike the 1991 Gulf War, it will be the US that will pick up the cost of this fight.

The Bush Administration has already made it clear that war preparation will result in massive cutbacks in health care, veterans' needs, education, environmental protection and other measures designed to protect the well-being of the American people.

A war with Iraq will increase both the suffering of the present generation and the financial liabilities of future generations."

- Bernard Sanders is the only Independent member in the US Congress.

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