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AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY OPPOSING A U.S. INVASION OF IRAQ

This Open Letter was originally written by faculty members at the University of Minnesota. It subsequently spread to other universities, and was placed on the web by faculty at MIT.

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We the undersigned members of the academic community are opposed to an invasion of Iraq by the United States. The decision to start a war is perhaps the most significant decision the leaders of a democracy can make. It requires ordering fellow citizens to kill and be killed in the name of the entire nation, in our names and in yours. For this decision to be just and legitimate, the reasons offered for war must be principled and arrived at through public debate. To date, the justifications offered by President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, National Security Advisor Rice, their subordinates, or an array of commentators in the media do not justify a U.S. invasion of Iraq.

We oppose a U.S. invasion of Iraq for these reasons:

Invasion to replace the Hussein regime is not in the best interests of the United States, the region, or the world. An invasion of Iraq and destruction of the Hussein regime may lead to prolonged instability in Iraq; destabilization of the wider Middle East including the possibility of a prolonged and heightened conflict between Israel and the Palestinians; increased popular appeal of radical Islamic movements and increased anti-Americanism worldwide; and increased terrorism in the U.S. and abroad. Invading Iraq therefore will probably make both the region and the world less secure, not more secure.

Key U.S. allies do not support an invasion of Iraq. Many governments allied with the U.S. are urging restraint, demanding more evidence of an Iraqi threat, or opposing a U.S. invasion of Iraq. Governmental and popular support in Great Britain, the most stalwart U.S. ally, is weak at best. Any military action against Iraq should have the moral force of international consensus behind it.

The U.S. Government is not unified in support of invasion. Some senior elected officials, including members of President Bush's own Republican Party such as Rep. Dick Armey (TX) and Sen. Chuck Hagel (NE), do not support a U.S. invasion of Iraq. Secretary of State Colin Powell, a retired four star General with 35 years of military service who was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Gulf War, is known to oppose a U.S. invasion without broad international support. Major media outlets have been reporting for several months on widespread opposition to an invasion of Iraq among senior officers in the Pentagon, including several or all of the Chiefs of Staff. The decision to go to war should have the clear support of the U.S. Congress, the Secretary of State, and the commanding officers of the armed forces.

The Iraqi threat is not credible. The opposition to an invasion among senior U.S. government and military leaders as well as most U.S. allies in the Middle East suggests that the Iraqi threat is not credible. The Bush Administration has presented no credible evidence of Iraqi progress toward making nuclear weapons. If they have such evidence, they should have presented it by now in the face of mounting international and domestic opposition to an invasion of Iraq.

An invasion of Iraq would be illegal under the Charter of the United Nations, to which the U.S. is a signatory. According to the Charter, only the Security Council has legal authority to start wars, with the single exception of national self-defense against armed attack. If the U.S. is indeed a land of laws, then our government should adhere to the basic principles of the Charter, which are intended to govern the relationships between nations for the collective security of all people.

For these reasons, we oppose a U.S. invasion of Iraq and urge others to do so also. Although we recognize the Hussein regime is reprehensible, the war being planned will not decrease and MAY increase the suffering of the Iraqi people for many years to come. The likelihood of a high cost in lives of both combatants and non-combatants is too great given the weak justifications that have been offered for an invasion and the limited considerations for post-war Iraq. If pursued, war should be the last resort, undertaken collectively by a U.N. sponsored international coalition only after renewal of weapons inspections and diplomacy have utterly failed to bring Iraq into compliance with all Security Council Resolutions.

As educators and scholars we hope our message sparks informed discussion on and off campus that reaches to Washington D.C. Furthermore, we intend this statement to provide support for those who are also opposed to an imminent U.S. invasion of Iraq on moral, ethical, and humanitarian grounds originating from any political or religious view point.

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