

Arming Iraq and the Path to War

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2003-03-31 | This is an accurate chronology of United States' involvement in the arming of Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war. It is a powerful indictment of the current bush administration attempt to sell war as a component of his war on terrorism. It reveals our ambitions in Iraq to be just another chapter in the attempt to regain a foothold in the Mideast following the fall of the Shah of Iran.

A crisis always has a history, and the current crisis with Iraq is no exception. Below are some relevant dates.

September 1980. Iraq invades Iran. The beginning of the Iraq-Iran war. [8]

February 1982. Despite objections from Congress, President Reagan removes Iraq from its list of known terrorist countries. [1]

December 1982. Hughes Aircraft ships 60 Defender helicopters to Iraq. [9]

1982-1988. Defense Intelligence Agency provides detailed information for Iraq on Iranian deployments, tactical planning for battles, plans for air strikes and bomb damage assessments. [4]

November 1983. A National Security Directive states that the U.S would do "whatever was necessary and legal" to prevent Iraq from losing its war with Iran. [1] [15]

November 1983. Banca Nazionale del Lavoro of Italy and its Branch in Atlanta begin to funnel \$5 billion in unreported loans to Iraq. Iraq, with the blessing and official approval of the U.S. government, purchased computer controlled machine tools, computers, scientific instruments, special alloy steel and aluminum, chemicals, and other industrial goods for Iraq's missile, chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs. [14]

October 1983. The Reagan Administration begins secretly allowing Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt to transfer United States weapons, including Howitzers, Huey helicopters, and bombs to Iraq. These shipments violated the Arms Export Control Act. [16]

November 1983. George Schultz, the Secretary of State, is given intelligence reports showing that Iraqi troops are daily using chemical weapons against the Iranians. [1]

December 20 1983. Donald Rumsfeld, then a civilian and now Defense Secretary, meets with Saddam Hussein to assure him of US friendship and materials support. [1] [15]

July 1984. CIA begins giving Iraq intelligence necessary to calibrate its mustard gas attacks on Iranian troops. [19]

January 14 1984. State Department memo acknowledges United States shipment of "dual-use" export hardware and technology. Dual use items are civilian items such as heavy trucks, armored ambulances and communications gear as well as industrial technology that can have a military application. [2]

March 1986. The United States with Great Britain block all Security Council resolutions condemning Iraq's use of chemical weapons, and on March 21 the U.S. becomes the only country refusing to sign a Security Council statement condemning Iraq's use of these weapons. [10]

May 1986. The U.S. Department of Commerce licenses 70 biological exports to Iraq between May of 1985 and 1989, including at least 21 batches of lethal strains of anthrax. [3]

May 1986. US Department of Commerce approves shipment of weapons grade botulin poison to Iraq. [7]

March 1987. President Reagan bows to the findings of the Tower Commission admitting the sale of arms to Iran in exchange for hostages. Oliver North uses the profits from the sale to fund an illegal war in Nicaragua. [17]

Late 1987. The Iraqi Air Force begins using chemical agents against Kurdish resistance forces in northern Iraq. [1]

February 1988. Saddam Hussein begins the "Anfal" campaign against the Kurds of northern Iraq. The Iraq regime used chemical weapons against the Kurds killing over 100,000 civilians and destroying over 1,200 Kurdish villages. [8]

April 1988. US Department of Commerce approves shipment of chemicals used in manufacture of mustard gas. [7]

August 1988. Four major battles were fought from April to August 1988, in which the Iraqis massively and effectively used chemical weapons to defeat the Iranians. Nerve gas and blister agents such as mustard gas are used. By this time the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency is heavily involved with Saddam Hussein in battle plan assistance, intelligence gathering and post battle debriefing. In the last major battle with of the war, 65,000 Iranians are killed, many with poison gas. Use of chemical weapons in war is in violation of the Geneva accords of 1925. [6] [13]

August 1988. Iraq and Iran declare a cease fire. [8]

August 1988. Five days after the cease fire Saddam Hussein sends his planes and helicopters to northern Iraq to begin massive chemical attacks against the Kurds. [8]

September 1988. U.S. Department of Commerce approves shipment of weapons grade anthrax and botulinum to Iraq. [7]

September 1988. Richard Murphy, Assistant Secretary of State: "The US-Iraqi relationship is . . . important to our long-term political and economic objectives." [15]

December 1988. Dow chemical sells \$1.5 million in pesticides to Iraq despite knowledge that these would be used in chemical weapons. [1]

July 25, 1990. U.S. Ambassador to Baghdad meets with Hussein to assure him that President Bush "wanted better and deeper relations." Many believe this visit was a trap set for Hussein. A month later Hussein invaded Kuwait thinking the U.S. would not respond. [1]

August 1990. Iraq invades Kuwait. The precursor to the Gulf War. [8]

July 1991. The *Financial Times* of London reveals that a Florida chemical company had produced and shipped cyanide to Iraq during the 80's using a special CIA courier. Cyanide was used extensively against the Iranians. [11]

August 1991. Christopher Droguol of Atlanta's branch of Banca Nazionale del Lavoro is arrested for his role in supplying loans to Iraq for the purchase of military supplies. He is charged with 347 counts of felony. Droguol is found guilty, but U.S. officials plead innocent of any knowledge of his crime. [14]

June 1992. Ted Koppel of ABC Nightline reports: "It is becoming increasingly clear that George Bush, Sr., operating largely behind the scenes throughout the 1980s, initiated and supported much of the financing, intelligence, and military help that built Saddam's Iraq into [an aggressive power]." [5]

July 1992. "The Bush administration deliberately, not inadvertently, helped to arm Iraq by allowing U.S. technology to be shipped to Iraqi military and to Iraqi defense factories . . . Throughout the course of the Bush administration, U.S. and foreign firms were granted export licenses to ship U.S. technology directly to Iraqi weapons facilities despite ample evidence showing that these factories were producing weapons." Representative Henry Gonzalez, Texas, testimony before the House. [18]

February 1994. Senator Riegle from Michigan, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, testifies before the senate revealing large U.S. shipments of dual-use biological and chemical agents to Iraq that may have been used against U.S. troops in the Gulf War and probably was the cause of the illness known as Gulf War Syndrome. [7]

August 2002. "The use of gas [during the Iran-Iraq war] on the battle field by the Iraqis was not a matter of deep strategic concern . . . We were desperate to make sure that Iraq did not lose." Colonel Walter Lang, former senior U.S. Defense Intelligence officer tells the *New York Times*. [4]

This chronology of the United States' sordid involvement in the arming of Iraq can be summarized in this way: the United States used methods both legal and illegal to help build Saddam's army into the most powerful army in the Mideast outside of Israel. The U.S. supplied chemical and biological agents and technology to Iraq when it knew Iraq was using

chemical weapons against the Iranians. The U.S. supplied the materials and technology for these weapons of mass destruction to Iraq at a time when it was known that Saddam was using this technology to kill his Kurdish citizens. The United States supplied intelligence and battle planning information to Iraq when those battle plans included the use of cyanide, mustard gas and nerve agents. The United States blocked U.N. censure of Iraq's use of chemical weapons. The United States did not act alone in this effort. The Soviet Union was the largest weapons supplier, but England, France and Germany were also involved in the shipment of arms and technology.

So what do these events have to do with the current conflict?

Just this: If we do go to war with Iraq, it is important to know why! War will not really be about terrorism! Twenty years ago the United States threw its support behind Saddam Hussein in a geopolitical bid for enhanced access to oil. The trajectory given him by our support lead directly to the Gulf War and to the current crises. War, after all, will be about a history of misdeeds and miscalculations. And war will not be about morality. War will be about cynicism, deceit and a thirst for oil that knows no boundaries.

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Please also read:

Iraq-Gate; How The United States Illegally Armed Saddam Hussein

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