

Bush 41 Armed the Iraq, Which Bush 43 Wants To Destroy

by Edward Spannaus

President George H.W. Bush (Bush 41) in 1992: “As you may remember in history, there was a lot of support at the time [the 1980s] for Iraq as a balance to a much more aggressive Iran under Khomeini. . . . So that was part of the policy of the Reagan Administration. I was very proud to support that.”

President George W. Bush (Bush 43) in 2002: “Saddam Hussein launched a large-scale chemical attack against Iraq’s Kurdish population in the late 1980s, killing thousands. On at least ten occasions, Saddam Hussein’s military forces have attacked Iranian and Kurdish targets with combinations of mustard gas and nerve agents through the use of aerial bombs . . . rockets . . . and conventional artillery shells. . . .”

The above 1992 statement by Bush 41, came after a series of news reports documenting how he had personally intervened to get the U.S. ExIm Bank to approve loans to Iraq in the mid-1980s. In 1987, Vice President Bush had met with the Iraqi Ambassador to the UN, to assure him that Iraq could buy more dual-use equipment from the United States.

It is therefore the height of hypocrisy for the Bush 43 Administration today to cite Saddam Hussein’s use of chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq War, or other conduct on the part of Saddam during the 1980s, as evidence of his brutality and aggressive intent—when it was the policy of the Reagan and Bush 41 Administrations, from 1982 up until the eve of Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in the Summer of 1990, to supply Iraq with military equipment and many “dual use” materials, including chemical and biological agents, which were used in Iraq’s programs for the development of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. It was the intention of top circles in the United States and Britain that such weapons would be used against Iran.

(As is well known to those who have seriously studied the matter, Iraq developed chemical weapons in response to Iranian “human wave” infantry attacks, and used them as part of an integrated battle plan. They were not used as “weapons of mass destruction”)

Even after the end of the Iran-Iraq War, and after the reports of atrocities allegedly committed by Iraqi military against the Kurds, Bush 41 continued to press for closer ties

with Iraq. In October 1989, President Bush signed a secret order, National Security Decision Directive 26, directing that his Administration establish closer ties with Iraq. Over objections from officials in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bush pushed through \$1 billion in agricultural credits.

In November 1989, the State Department sent a cable to the U.S. Ambassador in Baghdad, April Glaspie, instructing her to deliver a message from Secretary of State James Baker III, to Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, advising that “this decision by the Administration reflects the importance we attach to our relationship with Iraq.”

Earlier, in 1983-84, the current U.S. Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, went to Baghdad at least twice to develop closer ties between the United States and Iraq, and to pave the way for expanded U.S. military assistance.

Newsweek Tells Story

In its Sept. 23, 2002 issue, *Newsweek* magazine’s cover story was “How We Helped Create Saddam.” *Newsweek* announced the story in a Sept. 15 press release which stated: “During the 1980s, when Iraq was at war with Iran, the United States decided to help Iraq and began supplying Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein with supplies and military hardware, including shipments of ‘bacteria/fungi/protozoa’ to the Iraq Atomic Energy Commission.” It added that former U.S. officials say that the bacteria cultures could be used to make biological weapons, including anthrax.

The *Newsweek* article begins: “The last time Donald Rumsfeld saw Saddam Hussein, he gave him a cordial handshake. The date was almost 20 years ago, Dec. 20, 1983. An official Iraqi television crew recorded the historic moment.” The article says that Rumsfeld, then a private citizen, had been sent by President Reagan as a special envoy, and, according to a declassified State Department cable, Rumsfeld “conveyed the President’s greetings and expressed his pleasure at being in Baghdad.”

The article goes on to describe how “the Reaganites were seeking to support Iraq in a long and bloody war against Iran. . . . For the next five years . . . the United States backed Saddam’s armies with military intelligence, economic aid, and covert supplies of munitions.”

Others have reported that, after Rumsfeld’s first trip to Baghdad in December 1983, he returned to Iraq and met with

Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz on March 24, 1984, to prepare the groundwork for the normalization of U.S.-Iraqi relations. This was a few weeks after the U.S. State Department had issued a report saying that Iraq had used lethal chemical weapons, and U.S. Ambassador to the UN Jeane Kirkpatrick had denounced Iraq publicly for this.

Shortly after Rumsfeld's second meeting, the *New York Times* reported that "American diplomats pronounce themselves satisfied with relations between Iraq and the U.S. and suggest that normal diplomatic ties have been restored in all but name." Full diplomatic relations were in fact restored in May 1984.

Rumsfeld Admits It

A few days after the *Newsweek* article hit the newsstands, Rumsfeld appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee. At this Sept. 19 hearing, the only Senator who had the courage to question Rumsfeld about the *Newsweek* report, was Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), who read portions of the article to Rumsfeld, and compelled Rumsfeld to admit that he had in fact travelled to Iraq and met with Saddam Hussein.

Byrd asked: "Did the United States help Iraq to acquire the building blocks of biological weapons during the Iran-Iraq War? Are we, in fact, now facing the possibility of reaping what we have sown?"

Rumsfeld responded: "I have not read the article. As you suggest, I was, for a period in late '83 and early '84, asked by President Reagan to serve as Middle East envoy after 241 Marines were killed in Beirut.

"And as part of my responsibilities I did visit Baghdad. I did meet with Tariq Aziz. And I did meet with Saddam Hussein and spent some time visiting with them about the war they were engaged in with Iran."

Rumsfeld then went on to claim that "I've never heard anything like what you've read," and said that he doubted it was true. But, when Byrd pressed him, Rumsfeld would not say that the story was inaccurate. He ended up whining through his dentures: "Senator, I think it would be a shame to leave this committee and the people with the impression that the United States assisted Iraq with chemical or biological weapons in the 1980s. I just do not believe that's the case."

At the end of this exchange, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.), said that the committee will ask the State and Commerce Departments, as well as the Defense Department, to review their records concerning the matters reported in the *Newsweek* article, and will ask the Senate Intelligence Committee to hold a briefing on the subject.

Syndicated columnist Robert Novak then wrote a column describing Rumsfeld's December 1983 visit to Baghdad, and added the following report: that Rumsfeld was carrying a secret letter from then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to the Iraqis, in which Shamir offered Israeli assistance to Iraq in its war against Iran. Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz

refused to even pass the offer on to Saddam Hussein, saying he would be executed on the spot if he did so.

A number of other news articles have appeared recently, mostly "outside the Beltway," citing documentation from 1994-95 Senate hearings, which showed how United States laboratories had provided biological cultures to Iraq that could be used for biological weapons. For example, the *Buffalo News* reported on Sept. 23, that from 1985-89, Iraq had received at least 72 shipments of clones, germs, and chemicals, including a nerve gas far more lethal than sarin, crop-destroying germs, *E. coli*, salmonella, staphylococcus, anthrax, botulism, and West Nile virus.

"Iraq was considered an ally of the U.S. in the 1980s," says an officer of one of the companies that made such shipments. "All these were properly licensed by the government; otherwise they would not have been sent."

The *Buffalo News* said that it was alerted to the 1994 Senate testimony by associates of then-Sen. Don Riegle (D-Mich.), who had held the hearings on the health problems of some of the returning Gulf War veterans.

Particularly remarkable was the Oct. 1 *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, which ran a banner headline, "U.S. Gave Germs to Iraq," complete with a color graphic entitled "Deadly agents," listing and describing anthrax, gas gangrene, and botulinum, which were provided to Iraq by the United States.

It should be noted that Iraq had a highly developed civilian public-health program, and was legitimately developing vaccines and the like. An Iraqi government statement issued on Oct. 2, noted that Iraq was forced to destroy biological research facilities, including equipment and material which were used for purely civilian purposes, as well as that used for weapons programs, as part of the UNSCOM inspection program in the early 1990s.

'Let Them Fight Each Other'

Now, consider the statement made by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, to the British House of Commons on Sept. 24, which included the following:

"The biological agents we believe Iraq can produce include anthrax, botulinum, toxin, aflatoxin, and ricin. All eventually result in an excruciatingly painful death.

"He has used these weapons, thousands dying in chemical weapons attacks in Iraq itself. He used them in the Iran-Iraq War, started by him, in which 1 million people died."

One could fruitfully remind the Prime Minister, that it was not only the United States that provided the materials for these weapons to Iraq, but, as is well documented, Britain also provided training for Iraqi scientists in the 1980s.

Of course, as *EIR* has reported, the United States and Britain were also providing arms and equipment to Iran at that same time! As British Trade Minister Alan Clark admitted from the witness stand in 1992, "The interests of the West are well served by Iran and Iraq fighting each other, the longer the better."