

Wandsworth Stop-the-War Coalition

Don't Attack Iraq

The Stop-the-War Coalition (StWC – www.stopwar.org.uk) is a national coalition of anti-war groups, comprising CND, Greens, socialists, trade unions, and independent peace activists. It was formed in the immediate aftermath of the Sep11 WTC atrocity, at a packed public meeting in central London attended by over 2,000 people. It resolved to campaign for a balanced, non-military response, and adopted 3 basic principles:

- Stop the war
- No to a racist backlash
- Defend civil liberties

Local campaigning groups were rapidly set up around the country, and the Wandsworth Coalition covers the London Borough of Wandsworth. We have been manning stalls around the borough on a regular basis since September 2001, and have encountered a very positive response from the general public.

We are a local branch of the national Stop-the-War Coalition, and anybody living or working in Wandsworth Borough is welcome to join us, and participate in our activities to oppose the threatened assault on Iraq.

We run a regular anti-war stall on St Johns Rd (at intersection with Eckstein Road - near Clapham Junction) every Saturday, as well as on Putney High Street and Tooting Broadway, plus ad-hoc stalls and vigils elsewhere.

We hold regular planning meetings, at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month, in Northcote Library, Northcote Road, SW11.

New members are welcome at any of our events, or you may contact us first - phone Steve on (07932)009821, or visit our website at <http://www.wandsworth-stopwar.org.uk>.

Blair's ever-shifting excuses for war have been exposed as a hollow deceit:

- This is not a war about terror. Brutal as Saddam's domestic regime is, Iraq has no history of terrorist acts against Western targets, and its Soviet-oriented secular regime is no friend of Al-Qaida (who were originally sponsored by the US, against the USSR). Furthermore, the emphasis on Iraq has actually detracted from the campaign against Al-Qaida, and this war will nurture further terror, while destroying the international cooperation which is ultimately required to successfully tackle terrorists like Bin Laden.
- This is not a war about weapons of mass destruction: Iraq's military and industrial infrastructure was smashed in the 1991 Gulf War, and then formally destroyed by the UN weapons inspectors. Lead inspector Scott Ritter has stated that Iraq was effectively disarmed by 1998. Even Iraq's conventional armaments are now substantially inferior to most of its immediate neighbours, let alone the wider world. Furthermore, Israel's possession of nuclear weapons and its defiance of UN resolutions passes without censure.
- This is not a war about democracy: The CIA helped Saddam come to power, and they now seek to replace him with a more malleable, but equally iron-handed dictator. The US will not permit a democracy in Iraq, as that would inevitably seek greater control over its own sovereign oil resources, and stand up for the Iraqi people.
- This is not a war about freedom: The Iraqi people are already shattered by 12 years of bombing and sanctions, that have killed over 1.5 million people. It is lunacy, to speak of saving the Iraqi people from Saddam, by killing even more of them. Furthermore, despite their pious declarations of sympathy for the Kurds, America will not permit them any real freedoms either, as this would threaten the integrity of its strategic Turkish ally.

So what are the real reasons for this war ?

- Oil: Iraq sits on a major portion of the world's oil reserves, and the oil executives who constitute Bush's administration are anxious to get their hands on it, and start pumping its massive profits into their corporations. This will also enable the US to control the supply of oil to the rest of the world, and dictate terms to Europe, Russia, China and any other potential rivals.
- Israel: The destruction and subjugation of Iraq will confirm Israel's already overwhelming dominance of the Middle East. This war may also provide Israel with the cover to inflict even greater horrors on the occupied Palestinian people, and carry out further ethnic cleansing and settlement expansion.
- Empire: This war is a test case for Bush's new doctrine of "preventive warfare", and is intended to demonstrate American dominance, and cow critics of US policy into submission, while paving the way for a further series of

wars. The Axis of Evil is only a start, and Bush's aides have brandished hit lists containing dozens of countries, and have spoken of war without end. Current US policy is framed by extremist neo-conservative think tanks that have spent the past decade calling for the US to openly assert its military hegemony. Their overweening arrogance is exemplified by the bile directed towards "Old Europe", for daring to question Bush's aims.

The fact is, President Bush and his circle of Dr Strangelove advisors are out of control, and plunging us headlong into global conflict. The Pentagon's military budget is already more than all its European allies plus Russia and China combined. What they are now planning, will amount to little less than a rolling 3rd World War waged across large areas of the Third World. The risks of direct great-power conflict, and a truly global conflagration are incalculable. Far from reducing terror, the world will become a vastly more violent place.

The US is blatantly seeking a pretext for war against Iraq, and if it was genuinely concerned about weapons of mass destruction, it would not have blocked the return of the inspectors to Iraq, after the UN had agreed terms for them in September '02. When it comes to negotiating Iraqi acceptance of the inspection regime, Bush's advisor, Condoleezza Rice said in mid-2002: *"We will not take 'Yes' for an answer"*. The bellicose draft UN resolution proposed by the US, amounted to a legalised invasion *before* the inspectors even began work, and its conditions were clearly designed to be impossible to satisfy. The actual UN resolution (1441), eventually passed on Nov 8th, was not much more subtle. Nevertheless, even that has not tripped Iraq up quickly enough for the Pentagon's military timetable (which has always been the driving factor, even while the US postured at the UN), so now the US threatens war anyway, and with Blair feebly in tow, they cite their failure to find Weapons of Mass Destruction as a reason for war ! Meanwhile, the UN Security Council has been exposed as a theatre of bribery and bullying.

We should be under no illusions, that this will be a horrific war. The 1991 war is estimated to have killed over 100,000 Iraqi conscript soldiers, and another 100,000 civilians. Well over a million more have died since, due to the lethal sanctions blockade. Forget the Pentagon's Nintendo imagery. The threatened war will be even bloodier, with fighting throughout Iraq, including urban centres.

Southern Iraq has already been blanketed with deadly uranium dust, a product of NATO's new depleted-uranium (DU) ammunition first used in that war. Up to 900 tonnes of DU were used, resulting in massive increases in childhood leukemia and other cancers (the majority of which prove fatal, due to the sanctions), and birth deformities since 1991. DU has a radioactive half life of **4.5 billion years** (could this be what Bush meant, by 'war without end' ?), and at Ground Zero of this unfolding war crime, in Basra General Hospital in southern Iraq, cancer rates are still increasing, and there is at least one deformed birth on most days.

DU is also widely blamed for the "mysterious" Gulf War Syndrome, which has led over 200,000 American Gulf War vets (out of the 700,000 who served) to file for disability benefits, while another 8,000-plus have died. British statistics for Gulf War Syndrome are similar (over 10,000 ill vets), and the USA also used DU against Yugoslavia, from where similar reports have emerged, of a so-called Balkans Syndrome.

In Afghanistan, the US used new "bunker buster" warheads containing up to 1.5 tonnes of DU each, and the inevitable deployment of such horrendous weapons on an already decimated Iraq does not bear thinking about.

What can you do ?

Tony Blair is the only world leader supporting Bush, and if he were to withdraw that support, then for all America's overwhelming military power, Bush would be politically and diplomatically isolated. This would also be a major boost, for the largely unpublicised but surprisingly strong anti-war movement in the US.

A clear majority of people in this country are opposed to war on Iraq, and over 1.5 million of us marched through London on February 15th to say so. We allegedly elected Blair as Prime Minister of the UK, not Vice Poodle of the USA, nor its roving ambassador at large, so it's time to step up our protests.

- Contact the media, to publicise anti-war events and sentiments, and correct biased pro-war reporting.
- Lobby politicians: Write to your MP (see www.faxyourmp.com for help), MEP and Blair himself.
- Take part in the ongoing anti-war activities – check Stop-the-War and other anti-war websites, for the latest news and events, and contact your local groups. Donate money. Spread the word by wearing anti-war badges and T-shirts, and displaying anti-war posters. Organise your own events (eg. talks, film showings, leafletting sessions), in your community, workplace and college.
- Move beyond symbolic protest, into mass civil disobedience.

How is it that Blair can allocate unlimited resources to unjust wars, yet claims he can't afford to fund our schools, hospitals, pensions and transport, nor pay our public servants (firefighters, nurses, teachers) a decent wage ?

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