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## Open Letter to the President

February 19, 1998

Dear Mr. President,

Many of us were involved in organizing the Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf in 1990 to support President Bush's policy of expelling Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. Seven years later, Saddam Hussein is still in power in Baghdad. And despite his defeat in the Gulf War, continuing sanctions, and the determined effort of UN inspectors to fetter out and destroy his weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein has been able to develop biological and chemical munitions. To underscore the threat posed by these deadly devices, the Secretaries of State and Defense have said that these weapons could be used against our own people. And you have said that this issue is about "the challenges of the 21st Century."

Iraq's position is unacceptable. While Iraq is not unique in possessing these weapons, it is the only country which has used them -- not just against its enemies, but its own people as well. We must assume that Saddam is prepared to use them again. This poses a danger to our friends, our allies, and to our nation.

It is clear that this danger cannot be eliminated as long as our objective is simply "containment," and the means of achieving it are limited to sanctions and exhortations. As the crisis of recent weeks has demonstrated, these static policies are bound to erode, opening the way to Saddam's eventual return to a position of power and influence in the region. Only a determined program to change the regime in Baghdad will bring the Iraqi crisis to a satisfactory conclusion.

For years, the United States has tried to remove Saddam by encouraging coups and internal conspiracies. These attempts have all failed. Saddam is more wily, brutal and conspiratorial than any likely conspiracy the United States might mobilize against him. Saddam must be overpowered; he will not be brought down by a coup d'etat. But Saddam has an Achilles' heel: lacking popular support, he rules by terror. The same brutality which makes it unlikely that any coups or conspiracies can succeed, makes him hated by his own people and the rank and file of his military. Iraq today is ripe for a broad-based insurrection. We must exploit this opportunity.

Saddam's long record of treaty violations, deception, and violence shows that diplomacy and arms control will not constrain him. In the absence of a broader strategy, even extensive air strikes would be ineffective in dealing with Saddam and eliminating the threat his regime poses. We believe that the problem is not



only the specifics of Saddam's actions, but the continued existence of the regime itself.

What is needed now is a comprehensive political and military strategy for bringing down Saddam and his regime. It will not be easy -- and the course of action we favor is not without its problems and perils. But we believe the vital national interests of our country require the United States to:

- Recognize a provisional government of Iraq based on the principles and leaders of the Iraqi National Congress (INC) that is representative of all the peoples of Iraq.
- Restore and enhance the safe haven in northern Iraq to allow the provisional government to extend its authority there and establish a zone in southern Iraq from which Saddam's ground forces would also be excluded.
- Lift sanctions in liberated areas. Sanctions are instruments of war against Saddam's regime, but they should be quickly lifted on those who have freed themselves from it. Also, the oil resources and products of the liberated areas should help fund the provisional government's insurrection and humanitarian relief for the people of liberated Iraq.
- Release frozen Iraqi assets -- which amount to \$1.6 billion in the United States and Britain alone -- to the control of the provisional government to fund its insurrection. This could be done gradually and so long as the provisional government continues to promote a democratic Iraq.
- Facilitate broadcasts from U.S. transmitters immediately and establish a Radio Free Iraq.
- Help expand liberated areas of Iraq by assisting the provisional government's offensive against Saddam Hussein's regime logistically and through other means.
- Remove any vestiges of Saddam's claim to "legitimacy" by, among other things, bringing a war crimes indictment against the dictator and his lieutenants and challenging Saddam's credentials to fill the Iraqi seat at the United Nations.
- Launch a systematic air campaign against the pillars of his power -- the Republican Guard divisions which prop him up and the military infrastructure that sustains him.
- Position U.S. ground force equipment in the region so that, as a last resort, we have the capacity to protect and assist the anti-Saddam forces in the northern and southern parts of Iraq.

Once you make it unambiguously clear that we are serious about eliminating the threat posed by Saddam, and are not just engaged in tactical bombing attacks unrelated to a larger strategy designed to topple the regime, we believe that such countries as Kuwait, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, whose cooperation would be important for the implementation of this strategy, will give us the political and

logistical support to succeed.

In the present climate in Washington, some may misunderstand and misinterpret strong American action against Iraq as having ulterior political motives. We believe, on the contrary, that strong American action against Saddam is overwhelmingly in the national interest, that it must be supported, and that it must succeed. Saddam must not become the beneficiary of an American domestic political controversy.

We are confident that were you to launch an initiative along these line, the Congress and the country would see it as a timely and justifiable response to Iraq's continued intransigence. We urge you to provide the leadership necessary to save ourselves and the world from the scourge of Saddam and the weapons of mass destruction that he refuses to relinquish.

Sincerely,

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Former Member, Foreign Affairs Committee, U.S. House of Representatives

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