

# 10 Reasons Environmentalists Oppose the War on Iraq

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As organizations and individuals working for the environment and environmental justice, we raise our voices in opposition to this war and invite others to join us in support of peace. We oppose the war on Iraq for the following reasons:

## 1 The attack on Iraq could kill thousands of people. Most of the people killed would be innocent civilians.

In addition to the Iraqis who have died immediately from the US attack, other deaths will result from famine and disease. The UN warns that the attack could create a flood of refugees.

## 2 War destroys human settlements and native habitats. War destroys wildlife and contaminates the land, air and water. The damage can last for generations.

The United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) has documented lasting damage from the 1991 Gulf War. Oil, chemical and radiological pollution still contaminates the region. More than 60 million gallons of crude oil spilled from pipes. Some 1,500 miles of coast were tarnished with oil and cancer-causing chemicals. The deserts were scarred with 246 "lakes" of congealed oil. More than 700 oil wells burned for nine months, producing toxic clouds that blocked the sun and circled the Earth.

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, more than a dozen countries submitted environmental claims to the United Nations totaling \$48 billion.

## 3 US clusterbombs, thermobaric explosions, electromagnetic bursts and weapons made with depleted uranium are indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction.

In the 1991 Gulf War, US forces reportedly fired nearly a million rounds of depleted uranium (DU) bullets and shells, leaving 300 tons of DU scattered across Kuwait and southern Iraq. According to the Army Environmental Policy Institute, ingesting DU "has the potential to generate significant medical consequences." The World Health Organization (WHO) warns "children could receive greater exposure to DU when playing in or near DU impact sites. Typical hand-to-mouth activity could lead to high DU ingestion from contaminated soil." In the aftermath of the profound chemical and radiological contamination released during the 1991 war, cancer and leukemia rates in southern Iraq have increased six-fold.

## 4 Bombs pollute, poisoning the land with unexploded shells and toxic chemicals. Bombs can't locate or neatly destroy hidden chemical or biological weapons (CBW), but they can cause the uncontrolled spread of deadly CBW agents.

According to Saudi Foreign Policy Advisor Adel al-Jubeir, the 1991 US attack on Iraq destroyed "not a single chemical or biological weapon." That may have been fortunate. On March 10, 1991, after the Gulf War had ended, US troops destroyed several weapons bunkers at Khamsiyah in southern Iraq. Five years later, the Pentagon admitted that the explosion released a cloud of CBW agents, exposing 100,000 US soldiers to mustard gas and sarin nerve gas.

## 5 Fighting a war for oil is ultimately self-defeating.

Our fossil-fuel-based economy pollutes our air, fouls our lungs and contributes to global climate change. The world needs to burn less oil, not more. Earth's remaining recoverable oil reserves are expected to peak soon and decline well before the end of the century. Waging wars to control an energy source that is finite will never achieve long-term national security. Oil-based economies must be replaced by technologies powered by clean, sustainable, renewable fuels.

## **6 Pre-emptive attacks are acts of aggression.**

This pre-emptive attack constitutes an attack on the rule of international law, the dream of world peace embodied in the United Nations Charter, and the promise of environmental security enshrined in a host of global treaties. Attacking a city of 5 million people with hundreds of cruise missiles constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity.

## **7 Aggression invites retaliation.**

The CIA had concluded that Saddam Hussein would only be provoked to use chemical or biological weapons in self-defense - if the US launched an invasion bent on replacing him. Attacking Iraq has increased the probability of chemical, biological, and radiological attacks directed against US cities.

## **8 Increased military spending (to control access to the fuel that powers our oil-based economy drains funds from critical social, educational, medical and environmental needs.**

The war (and subsequent occupation of Iraq) is projected to cost as much as \$200 billion. Meanwhile the economy teeters and unemployment soars while the administration cuts funding for environmental stewardship and basic human needs.

## **9 Militarization and the war on terrorism are eroding America's freedoms at home.**

The US PATRIOT Act has been used to persecute immigrants and fuels an atmosphere of racism and fear. The terrorist threat has been used to justify removal of public information databases that provided communities with critical data on industrial hazards. There has been a clamp down on the Freedom of Information Act, a valuable tool that had been used to hold polluting corporations accountable for their actions. The PATRIOT Act criminalizes legal forms of political opposition to controversial government policies, thereby threatening legitimate political and environmental activism.

## **10 The US had threatened to strike Iraq with nuclear weapons - the ultimate weapons of mass destruction.**

In December 2002, a US strategy report claimed that the US "reserves the right to respond with overwhelming force - including through resort to all out options - to the use of WMD (weapons of mass destruction) against the US, our forces abroad, and friends and allies." Bush administration officials stated that the threat of a nuclear first-strike did not constitute a policy change.

Bush's 2002 Nuclear Posture Review called for development of new nuclear weapons including earth-penetrating "bunker busters" and five-kiloton "mini-nukes" (four "mini-nukes" would contain the explosive force of the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima).

The British health professional organization, Medact, estimates that if nuclear weapons were used in Iraq, 3.9 million people could die. The radioactive fallout would eventually circle the planet, dooming even more people to an early death.

**To endorse this statement contact Environmentalists Against War at  
info@EnvirosAgainstWar.org or (650) 223-3306.**