

Project New American Century

This is a letter from the “*The Project for the New American Century*” (PNAC):

“January 26, 1998

The Honorable William J. Clinton

President of the United States

Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing you because we are convinced that current American policy toward Iraq is not succeeding, and that we may soon face a threat in the Middle East more serious than any we have known since the end of the Cold War. In your upcoming State of the Union Address, you have an opportunity to chart a clear and determined course for meeting this threat. We urge you to seize that opportunity, and to enunciate a new strategy that would secure the interests of the U.S. and our friends and allies around the world. That strategy should aim, above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein’s regime from power. We stand ready to offer our full support in this difficult but necessary endeavor.

The policy of “containment” of Saddam Hussein has been steadily eroding over the past several months. As recent events have demonstrated, we can no longer depend on our partners in the Gulf War coalition to continue to uphold the sanctions or to punish Saddam when he blocks or evades UN inspections. Our ability to ensure that Saddam Hussein is not producing weapons of mass destruction, therefore, has substantially diminished. Even if full inspections were eventually to resume, which now seems highly unlikely, experience has shown that it is difficult if not impossible to monitor Iraq’s chemical and biological weapons production. The lengthy period during which the inspectors will have been unable to enter many Iraqi facilities has made it even less likely that they will be able to uncover all of Saddam’s secrets. As a result, in the not-too-distant future we will be unable to determine with any reasonable level of confidence whether Iraq does or does not possess such weapons.

Such uncertainty will, by itself, have a seriously destabilizing effect on the entire Middle East. It hardly needs to be added that if Saddam does acquire the capability to deliver weapons of mass destruction, as he is almost certain to do if we continue along the present course, the safety of American troops in the region, of our friends and allies like Israel and the moderate Arab states, and a significant portion of the world’s supply of oil will all be put at hazard. As you have rightly declared, Mr. President, the security of the world in the first part of the 21st century will be determined largely by how we handle this threat.

Given the magnitude of the threat, the current policy, which depends for its success upon the steadfastness of our coalition partners and upon the cooperation of Saddam Hussein, is dangerously inadequate. The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use weapons of mass destruction. In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing. In the long term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power. That now needs to become the aim of American foreign policy.

We urge you to articulate this aim, and to turn your Administration’s attention to implementing a strategy for removing Saddam’s regime from power. This will require a

full complement of diplomatic, political and military efforts. Although we are fully aware of the dangers and difficulties in implementing this policy, we believe the dangers of failing to do so are far greater. We believe the U.S. has the authority under existing UN resolutions to take the necessary steps, including military steps, to protect our vital interests in the Gulf. In any case, American policy cannot continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council.

We urge you to act decisively. If you act now to end the threat of weapons of mass destruction against the U.S. or its allies, you will be acting in the most fundamental national security interests of the country. If we accept a course of weakness and drift, we put our interests and our future at risk.

Sincerely,

Elliott Abrams (National Security Council, [Elliott Abrams](#))

Richard L. Armitage (Deputy Secretary of State, [Richard Armitage](#))

William J. Bennett (speechwriter for George W. Bush, [William J. Bennett](#))

Jeffrey Bergner (His lobbying firm, Bergner, Bockorny, Castagnetti, Hawkins & Brain, represents a number of high profile firms, including Bristol-Myers Squib, Boeing, Hewlett-Packard, Phillip Morris, Monsanto, Lucent, and Dell, [Jeffrey Bergner](#))

John Bolton (Under Secretary, Arms Control and International Security, [John Bolton](#))

Paula Dobriansky (Under Secretary, Global Affairs, [Paula Dobriansky](#))

Francis Fukuyama (professor of political economy at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, [Francis Fukuyama](#))

Robert Kagan (co-founder of the Project for the New American Century, [Robert Kagan](#))

Zalmay Khalilzad (special envoy to Afghanistan, advisor for the Unocal Corporation, counsellor to United States Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, senior United States State Department official advising on the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the Iran-Iraq war, and from 1991 to 1992, he was a senior Defense Department official for policy planning, [Zalmay Khalilzad](#))

William Kristol (advocate for Israel, political contributor to the Fox News Channel, [William Kristol](#))

Richard Perle (Advisory Board of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, former chairman of the Defense Policy Board, [Richard Perle](#))

Peter W. Rodman (Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs in the Department of Defense, [Peter W. Rodman](#))

Donald Rumsfeld (Secretary of Defense, [Donald Rumsfeld](#))

William Schneider, Jr. (Chairman of the Defense Science Board, [William Schneider Jr.](#))

Vin Weber (former U.S. Representative from Minnesota, [Vin Weber](#))

Paul Wolfowitz (Deputy Secretary of Defense, [Paul Wolfowitz](#))

R. James Woolsey (former director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, [James Woolsey](#))

Robert B. Zoellick (member of President George Walker Bush's Cabinet, [Robert B. Zoellick](#))