

### ***Week 7: On the Brink of War***

Last night President Bush addressed the world. In about a 15-minute speech, Bush set an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein and his family, calling for them to step down from their positions as leaders of the Iraqi government, and to leave the country immediately. He backed this ultimatum with the promise of the use of force if his orders are not carried out within 48 hours.

Saddam Hussein and his eldest son, Uday, have openly rejected Bush's ultimatum, saying "The proposal should be that Bush leaves the office in America, he and his family" and that Americans "should not imagine that they will have a safe spot inside the land of Iraq or outside it."

With this rejection, Bush has declared that after 8pm on Wednesday, the United States will attack Iraq "at a time of our choosing." I would like to briefly analyze the current US military situation as we begin this war and look at what Homeland defenses we are currently using to prevent attack on US soil. After analyzing this tactical situation, I will pose the question, is going to war now a good idea?

The United States currently has 280,000 troops in the mid-east – 150,000 in Kuwait, 10,000 in Saudi Arabia, and 50,000 at sea. Australia has 2000 troops, including elite troops, fighter jets and warships. Britain is also providing support. So far, these are the only countries providing military support to the US. This is in contrast to the 35 countries that provided military assistance to the US during the Gulf War. However, if Saddam uses illegal biological or chemical weapons, France, among other countries could very well join the war.

Hussein claims Iraq is ready to repel any US led attack. Baghdad, in particular, has increased its anti-aircraft defenses tremendously since the Gulf War. The Iraq-Kuwait border is heavily mined, making ground invasion difficult.

Meanwhile, Tom Ridge is preparing the US for the war on the home front, through the so-called *Operation Liberty Shield*. Homeland Security is increasing Coast Guard patrols of shorelines and ports, security at airports and making tighter restrictions on petroleum and chemical plants as well as radioactive material facilities. They are also taking measures to prevent information warfare through cyberterrorist attacks including protecting the nation's financial network and payment systems. Also, with Bush's ultimatum, the US terrorist threat level has been raised to orange, meaning high risk of terrorist attack.

Sadly, the department is also ordering "the detention of all immigrants seeking political asylum in the US if they arrived here from any one of 34 countries where Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups are known to have operated," as well as requesting interviews with 10,000 of the 131,000 Iraqi immigrants since the Gulf War.

The clock is ticking for Iraq. All 150 UN inspectors, as well as journalists, diplomats, etc. are evacuating. War seems imminent. Is the US ready for this war? Are we prepared defensively? Is going to war now a good idea? I must say that during Bush's speech one statement hit me hard. From here on out, the Iraqi threat of terrorism toward the US will only increase – now is the best time, if any, to hinder that threat. I actually find myself agreeing. I believe that backing out now, without the full compliance of Hussein, is not an option – only war is an option.