

## A BUNCH OF BULL

Malcolm Lagauche  
Oct. 10, 2004



A weapon of mass destruction during the Clinton administration

From 1990 until the middle of 2003, Iraq suffered through the most encompassing and devastating embargo the world has ever seen. This embargo led to the deaths of more Iraqis than did military intervention on the part of the U.S. According to former Iraqi Minister of Trade, Mohammed Mahdi Saleh, "If it was possible, the Bush administration would have kept the air from coming in."

Recently, the embargo has reared its ugly head again. However, instead of being ashamed at the cowardly act perpetrated for 14 years by the U.S., American officials are now talking about the sanctions as an honorable method of diplomacy.

First, let's go to the embargo and what Iraq had to do to have it lifted. In 1991, the United Nations presented an inhumane embargo (written by the U.S.) proposition to Iraq. If Iraq complied, the embargo would be lifted. Until that time, the air-tight sanctions would remain in place.

More than two million people died in Iraq because of the sanctions. Thousands of items were not allowed to be imported; not just military hardware, but things such as pencils and toilet paper. The U.S. held the power to negate any sale to Iraq. There did not have to be a reason: a U.S. veto and the order was negated.

All the time this was occurring, official-after-official in the U.S. stated, "We don't know what they're complaining about. They are shipping oil and they can buy whatever they want as long as it's not on the prohibited list." What these liars did not say was that the U.S. had a say in negating any sale no matter if it was on a list or not. At one time, Iraq had almost five billion dollars worth of items on hold because of U.S. intervention. These were all everyday items a society needs to perform. Then, when the U.S. occupied Iraq, stories of students not having pencils were broadcast and the Americans said, "Look. Saddam wouldn't even give the kids pencils." The average brain-deficient American bought into the propaganda.

There are millions of stories to tell about the ludicrous embargo, but I will highlight only one here.

By 1999, Iraqi livestock was suffering from a hoof-and-mouth disease epidemic. In 1993, Iraq had to destroy its facility that manufactured the medicine for the disease. In addition, the factory exported the vaccine worldwide. After the destruction of the factory, hoof-and-mouth disease began to multiply in Iraq. For years, there was not even one case prior to 1993.

Iraq could not produce the vaccine so by 1999, the entire country's livestock was in terrible shape. The Iraqis ordered 15 live bulls from France to help replenish the stock (order no. 600787 by the Ministry of Agriculture). On November 29, 1999, the U.S. negated the order under the pretense that the bulls could be considered "dual-use" items (items that had a civilian and a military function). One would have to stretch his/her imagination quite far to describe what military capabilities a bull would have.

The Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations complained to Kofi Annan in a letter. He began the communication with: "The fact that live bulls could be considered dual-use items is a blatant example of the contempt shown by the representatives of the United States for the authority of the United Nations."

Multiply the above farce by millions and you will have the results of the embargo. It affected every person in Iraq.

Now, let's get current. From information received in the past few months from David Kay and Charles Duelfer on the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMD), it is now clear that Iraq had long ago lived up to its end of the bargain to destroy its stockpile of weapons. Since 1993, the world was living a lie by keeping the embargo in place. Millions of lives and billions of dollars could have been saved if the U.S. adhered to its end of the bargain and accepted that Iraq had performed the duties required.

However, the U.S. did not care that Iraq had destroyed its WMD. It had a policy of overthrowing Saddam Hussein even if it meant the deaths of many people, mostly the young and the elderly. Even today, this blatant fact is being distorted to the benefit of both Republicans and Democrats.

Scott Ritter, the former head of the U.N. inspection team in Iraq, was an outspoken opponent of the illegal March 2003 invasion of Iraq. He knows the Iraqi people and the country better than possibly any U.S. citizen. He predicted a long and violent resistance to the occupation at the same time pro-war spokespeople were predicting a welcome of the U.S. troops with flowers and candy. On October 9, 2004, *The Guardian* newspaper of Great Britain published an article by Ritter called, "The Source Duelfer Didn't Quote." In it, he gives details about the recent report from Duelfer and states that Iraq had absolutely no plans to resurrect its weapons program. Ritter also makes it quite clear that the U.S. intentionally made the Iraqi people suffer under false allegations. Here is a paragraph in which Ritter stated how Iraq was wrongly accused of shenanigans it did not perform:

Duelfer's report slams the door on that line of thinking, since it is now clear that Iraq had in fact disarmed in compliance with security council resolutions. One of the tragic ironies of the decision to invade Iraq is that the Iraqi WMD declaration required by security council resolution 1441, submitted by Iraq in December 2002, and summarily rejected by Bush and Blair as repackaged falsehoods, now stands as the most accurate compilation of data yet assembled regarding Iraq's WMD programmes (more so than even Duelfer's ISG report, which contains much unsubstantiated speculation). Saddam Hussein has yet to be contradicted on a single point of substantive fact. Iraq had disarmed; no one wanted to accept that conclusion.

Absolutely no member of the U.S. Congress or any other government agency has yet to admit to the facts. Democrats and Republicans alike still debate about the nuances of the wording of the 2003 invasion without even addressing that after 1993 or so the world was living a lie perpetrated by the U.S.

Now, let's get back to the "flowers and candy" attitude and see how ridiculous it was to even think of such a scenario. In the March 2003 invasion, Iraq was devastated, yet not every person in the country could say he/she was subject to the results of warfare. During the embargo, every Iraqi citizen suffered. They did not forget the embargo after March 2003. In all probability, every one of the tens of thousands of current resistance fighters in Iraq had a parent or grandparent who died because of lack of medicine that could not be imported; or a younger brother or sister who died because of malnutrition; or an uncle or cousin who is mentally or physically disabled today because of the embargo. And one wonders why they are attacking U.S. troops.

911 is a convenient excuse that people used to justify an attack on Iraq. Multiply the effects of 911 by 1,000 and you will get a better idea of the effect of the embargo on Iraq. Nobody mentions that.

During the embargo years, most of the U.S. military people now in Iraq were playing video games that depicted the "dirty Arabs" as the enemy. They did not miss a meal because their country was under illegal sanctions. Their family members did not drop off like flies because there was no medicine in the country for what would normally be non-life-threatening diseases. These people today are facing their Iraq equivalents in age, but not in life experience. The mix is quite volatile.

And, we have the naysayers who maintain that Saddam Hussein did not distribute the food and medicine gained in the "oil for food" program equally. This is another fabrication and tweaking of history. Two U.N. heads of the oil for food program quit in disgust at U.S. actions that tried to halt the shipments into Iraq. They told the truth. One was Irish and the other German. When they spoke out, both were put on a list of people whom the U.S. will not allow on its soil. Both said the oil for food program was administered equally and comprehensively. Many experts said the Iraqi program was the finest and most efficient mass distribution of food ever seen in history.

Today, the people who created the unbelievable inhumane conditions in Iraq are still calling the shots. The former Iraqi government that complied with U.N. resolutions is in prison. Even Mohammed Saleh, who did a wonderful job in attempting to keep Iraq's head above water while he was trade minister is incarcerated and his family does not know where he is or his physical condition.

Kofi Annan has designated the invasion of Iraq as illegal. Normally one who had been designated a criminal must pay the price. However, today in Iraq, the criminals are still torturing innocent civilians in prisons and the criminals are still breaking down doors of innocent people and looting their houses.

And, don't blame all this on Bush. As despicable as he is, he had help from Democrats. Even today, with all the information known, Bush's opponent still does not get it. On October 7, 2004, in Pittsburgh, while gloating over the Deulfer report, Kerry blasted Bush for not using diplomacy in confronting Iraq. But, what did Kerry call good diplomacy? According to the Democratic candidate for president, "If you're doing good diplomacy, you wouldn't lift the sanctions. This underscores the failure of this administration's diplomacy."

In two sentences, Kerry negated many things that the U.S. is supposed to represent. First of all, keeping deadly sanctions in place is contrary to the U.S. principle of fair play. The U.S. said Iraq had to perform certain duties, which it did, yet a Kerry U.S. would negate the agreement and keep a deadly concept alive. Next, by keeping the sanctions in place when Iraq had destroyed its WMD, the U.S. would outright be saying, "We lied." Agreements are two-sided, yet Kerry did not take this into account.

In 1962, Charles de Gaulle was approached by the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and was told that Cuba had Soviet missiles on its soil. When the U.S. Ambassador offered to show de Gaulle the photos, de Gaulle said it was not necessary because if the president of the United States said it was true, it was true.

Today, de Gaulle's successors would have to see the photos and take them to a lab to insure they were not doctored. Times have changed.

A Bush presidency will keep the status quo in Iraq. A Kerry presidency will make cosmetic changes, yet will not even scratch the surface of the 14-year Iraq tragedy. In this current atmosphere of "anybody but Bush," it is unfortunate that "anybody" happens to be John Kerry.