

Baghdad and the Bank

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Come Clean on Iraq

Maybe it is a sign of the political season that five months after Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger admitted that the U.S. pre-war policy toward Iraq was a "failure", national security adviser Brent Scowcroft attempts to defend that policy in "We Didn't Coddle Saddam" [op-ed, Oct. 10].

Not only is Scowcroft's perception different from that of the administration's foreign policy experts at the State Department, it is also at variance with the events of the last half decade. Moreover, he continues to attempt to gloss over what I believe to be the critical fact of this entire discussion: George Bush's presidency virtually coincided with the end of the Iran-Iraq war. Whatever policy rationale existed to support Saddam Hussein during the war with Iran evaporated subsequent to that war. Yet President Bush forcefully reestablished the tilt to Iraq when he signed National Security Directive 26—14 months after the end of the Iran-Iraq war.

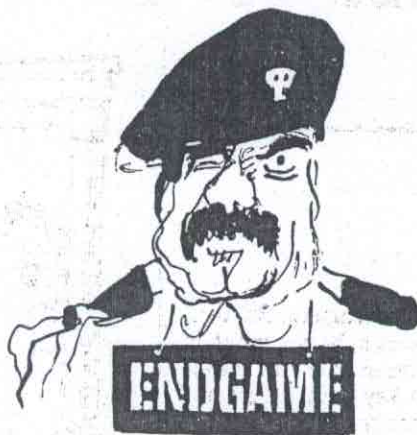
In NSD 26, Bush stated that "the United States Government should promote economic and political incentives for Iraq to moderate its behavior and to increase our influence with Iraq." Scowcroft continues to defend the president's policy of "trying to moderate Iraqi behavior with a mix of limited incentives and strong disincentives." Scowcroft fails to mention that the president's policy was all incentives and no disincentives. He does not point to a single disincentive established by the Bush administration, other than statements critical of Iraq policies—hardly an attention getter in the macho Middle East.

In fact, there was virtually nothing in George Bush's experience that should have led him to believe that such coddling of Saddam Hussein would produce positive results. From the time the United States took Iraq off the terrorist list in 1982, provided Iraq with a panoply of militarily significant equipment and handed over \$5 billion in Commodity Credit Corp. agricultural credits, Iraq harbored all manner of terrorists throughout the rest of the decade. So much for our ability to moderate Iraq behavior with positive reinforcement.

As has been repeatedly offered by the White House, Scowcroft suggests that the administration's critics in Congress are simply Monday morning quarterbacks and that Congress was supportive of the administration's policies. This is simply untrue.

When Saddam Hussein killed 5,000 Kurds with poison gas in 1988, it was Congress and not the administration that wanted to impose sanctions. The administration's own documents indicate that in the spring and summer of 1990, it was the administration that opposed sanctions against Iraq in the face of a Congress that was eager to impose them. Through the 1980s, once the administration had taken Iraq off the terrorist list, contrary to the evidence of Saddam's support of international terrorism, it was Congress that wanted to return Iraq to the list and the administration that resisted. Finally, on July 27, 1990, just six days before the invasion of Kuwait and with Iraqi troops massing on the Kuwaiti border, the administration opposed Congress's attempt to cancel CCC credits to Iraq.

Scowcroft asserts that the "most egregious falsehood that our political critics have forced on the public is that the Bush administration sold high technology to Saddam to enhance his nuclear, chemical and biological weapons program," and concludes that "our export control policy succeeded." If, as Scowcroft asserts, our export controls succeeded, then it must have been our intention to enhance Iraq's nonconventional weapons programs. Because that is just what we did. For example, the administration's own computer printouts clearly indicate that



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between 1985 and 1990, there were 162 instances in which it approved the sale of nuclear components to Iraq.

In a memorandum of July 25, 1990, on which James Baker's initials can be found signaling his approval, it acknowledges that "Iraq is actively engaged in developing chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missile systems, and may be seeking to develop nuclear weapons as well. Iraq has been attempting to obtain items to support these proliferation activities from U.S. exporters, *in some cases successfully.*" (Emphasis added.)

Nor were these simply nondescript exports to legitimate end users (even if any legitimate end users can be found in Iraq). The State Department itself admits that licenses were granted to a known procurement agent for Iraqi missile programs to export computers to a missile activity and computers and electronic equipment to the Iraq Atomic Energy Commission; to export a computer for a "fertilizer plant" to Iraqi Ministry of Minerals, which was known (by the State Department) to be associated with the Iraqi chemical weapons program; and to export equipment to the Nassr Establishment for "general military applications such as jet engine repair, rocket cases, etc."

Scowcroft also points to the fact that "we followed a strict policy of denying the export of weapons to Iraq." What Scowcroft fails to mention is that, as stated in a cable of November 1989 from Deputy Secretary Eagleburger: "Although the U.S. severely limits the sale of our own munitions list items to Iraq, we have not had a policy of discouraging other countries' arms sales to Iraq." So the United States could proudly assert that we were not selling arms directly to Saddam Hussein while nodding and winking as others did so.

Scowcroft expresses righteous indignation at the charge of a coverup, saying it is "outrageous and irresponsible." Why then did President Bush deny enhancing Saddam's nuclear, biological or chemical weapons capability? Why has the White House steadfastly refused to make public the cables from Ambassador April Glaspie reporting on her critical meetings with Saddam Hussein prior to the invasion of Kuwait? Why have James Baker and Scowcroft himself refused to testify before Congress on this issue? And why are the CIA, the FBI and the Department of Justice embroiled in mutual investigations trying to figure out whose actions resulted in information being withheld from Congress and from a U.S. District Court judge in Atlanta?

The time for stonewalling is over. It is time for the White House to come clean and to make this information available to the American people.

The writer, a Democratic representative from Connecticut, is chairman of a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee that has been investigating U.S. pre-war policy toward Iraq.