

PAX Tab Letter on Iraq

PAX AGAINST ATTACKING IRAQ

Brookline PAX, formed as an antiwar group in the 1960's, is compelled by current, unfortunate events to return to those roots. The PAX Board opposes any U.S. attack on Iraq until and unless (1) there is clear and convincing evidence of a serious and imminent threat of aggression by Iraq, and (2) the U.N. has determined that collective action is necessary against Iraq. At this time, neither of these conditions has been met.

We as a people and a nation must not retreat from our commitment to act as a constructive force within the community of nations. Human progress resides in the respect for international law and the sovereignty of nations. As the strongest of these nations, the U.S. has a special responsibility to uphold and abide by broadly supported principles of international behavior such as those laid out in the U.N. Charter, which decrees: 1. No nation can use military force except in self-defense (arts. 39, 51); 2. The Security Council is the only body that can authorize the use of force (art. 24; ch. VII); and 3. Only the Security Council can decide what action can be taken to maintain or restore international peace and security. (art. 39)

PAX views with great alarm two major changes in U.S. foreign policy advanced by the Bush administration: a new policy of "preemptive" attack, and a concerted determination to act unilaterally (or with a thin veil of "coalition") in world affairs. Both policies fly in the face of a half-century of successes in establishing safeguards minimizing violence in the conduct of international relations.

To falsely market its idea of "preemptive war," the administration blurred its important distinction from the more pertinent and far more treacherous notion of "preventive war." U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Massachusetts, recently said: "'preemptive' action refers to times when states react to an imminent threat of attack. ... By contrast, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor ... was a 'preventive' action. The coldly premeditated nature of preventive attacks and preventive wars makes them anathema to well-established principles against aggression."

Finally, PAX also regrets Congress' abdication, reminiscent of the shameful Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. As stated by U.S. Sen. Robert Byrd, D-West Virginia, the recently-passed Resolution "... is a blank check for the president to take whatever action he feels 'is necessary and appropriate in order to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq.' ... Congress must not attempt to give away the authority to determine when war is to be declared."

The desire of people the world over is to feel safe and secure. The surest long-

term path to safety and security, both domestic and abroad, is through collaborative efforts under international law - not through belligerence and unilateralism.

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