

Global Journalist: President George W. Bush Addresses U.N. on Iraqi Sanctions

Abstract: On this September 12, 2002 show, host Stuart Loory discusses the one-year anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attack by al-Qaida and then- President George W. Bush's address to the United Nations on bringing sanctions against Iraq and its ruler, Saddam Hussein. Four journalists discuss how the U.N. should deal with Bush's request for sanctions against Iraq.

Host: Stuart Loory

Guests:

- [Semih Idiz](#)
- [Simon Tisdall](#)
- [Martin Schram](#)
- [Bruce Crumley](#)

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Mentioned: Iraq, Iran, counterterrorism, United States, United Nations, George Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Turkey, Saddam Hussein, Arab world, Middle East, democracy.

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Stuart Loory 00:08

Welcome to KBIA. This is Global Journalist. Many Missourians, indeed many Americans are interested in international news. I'm Stuart Loory of the Missouri School of Journalism. The first anniversary of September 11, 2001, the attack, is now behind us, and today the world's political leaders turn their attention to the future. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan said the United Nations must be in the forefront in dealing with Iraq as a nation that scorned sanctions against its behavior. He offered forceful criticism of the United States for threatening to make war against Iraq alone, though he did not mention the United States by name. Then came President Bush, who told the General Assembly that Iraq must obey UN sanctions, permit weapons inspectors in to determine whether any weapons of mass destruction are being built and that it should replace Saddam Hussein as a leader. He said that if the UN does not join in disciplining Iraq, the United States would go it alone. Many world leaders oppose the president and that means the United States could be headed for a serious break in relations with friends and neutrals. So do we know any more after today's UN speeches than before on whether or not there will be a new Gulf War sometime soon? To consider that question today we have in

Ankara, Turkey Semih Idiz, a freelance columnist; in Paris, Bruce Crumley, a correspondent for Time Magazine; in London, Simon Tisdall, assistant editor of the newspaper, The Guardian, and in Washington, Martin Schram, a syndicated columnist for the Scripps Howard newspapers. Let's start in Ankara, Semih, what do you think the reaction will be in Turkey, or what reaction has there been already to this speech into what's going to happen?

Semih Idiz 02:11

Well, of course, the reaction in Turkey is colored very much by the fact that Turkey has a very close relationship with the United States, a relationship that many refer to as a strategic relationship. But the dilemma for Turkey is that the last thing it wants is a United States intervention in Iraq. So, Turkey at the moment has to steer a very close, very careful course in this. But while not liking President Bush's, I think rather assertive tone, it will nevertheless try to moderate its approach in view of the fact that this is a strategic ally. But I think in its heart of hearts, it will veer towards coffee and arms position in all this.

Stuart Loory 02:58

Yeah, but Semih, Turkey itself has been intervening unilaterally in Iraq, there are Turkish troops in northern Iraq.

Semih Idiz 03:10

That is absolutely true, because Turkey has its own kind of inner involvement in all this. And it's an involvement that takes in its ongoing situation in the southeast of Anatolia, where there is a separatist Kurdish movement there that uses northern Iraq and the authority vacuum that appeared in northern Iraq, after the Gulf War; and so there is a war within a war going on there. So, you're absolutely right about that.

Stuart Loory 03:39

There is some feeling in the United States, that it would be helpful for the United States government to support the Kurds in Iraq against Saddam Hussein, would that become dangerous to the government in Turkey?

Semih Idiz 03:56

Well, you know, I think that the central point here is that while the two strategic allies have a very close relationship, I think their interests are at odds in Northern Iraq. And this is where the crux of the matter lies, because Turkey's side is worried, given that it's very concerned about an independent Kurdish entity appearing in northern Iraq that might have a sort of reverberations and ramifications in southeast Anatolia, which has been Kurdish. So it is very concerned that whatever America does in Iraq might fix and force dynamics that end up with a kind of independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq. And I think this is really the only thing that Turkey has in office. Of course, there is the other concern about loss and income and revenues because border trade with Iraq has been picking up and all that, but I think in the political sphere, this major fear, is that what America sets in motion in Iraq, by some kind of operation against once the against Saddam Hussein, may result in what Turkey does not need in the region.

Stuart Loory 05:09

Let's move if we made to Western Europe and Bruce Crumley. What was the reaction and what do you think the reaction will be to what President George Bush had to say today?

Bruce Crumley 05:20

Well, I haven't seen any major rush of, you know, political figures, with microphones, I think everyone's just kind of waiting to see what Bush had to say. And my feeling is, is that as a whole, even though Europe itself is rather is rather disorganized and not at all in agreement exactly about where they want to go visa via Iraq, I think the one uniting sentiment is they don't want to see the Americans go it alone, that there are not only reasons of principle, i.e. if the if the US starts acting unilaterally, essentially treading upon not only international law, but but the UN as an icon. What keeps any other country from following that example? The other major question, I think strategically, is is does the U.S. realize just how, in what turmoil Arab populations are, regarding the US. I mean, there's a very deep anti-American sentiment, and that has only gotten worse since September 11. So I think there's a certain amount of relief in that after all, the saber rattling and quite frankly, I think a lot of theatrical saber rattling that Vice President Cheney did earlier this month, pushing the bar so high and making it seem like it was a foregone conclusion, the US would go it alone. I think there's a lot of, there will be a lot of relief people saying well, you know, at least he's talking about giving the UN a crack at, you know, coming up with with new, you know, conditions and to fulfill before before a strike is launched.

Stuart Loory 07:01

Simon Tisdall. The President seems to be able to rely on Tony Blair, the Prime Minister in the United Kingdom for support. Do you think that's going to continue?

Simon Tisdall 07:14

I think in the case of firstly, Mr. Blair, yes, it will continue. He believes this is the right thing to do. He sees it in partly immoral terms. And as he said, before we went to Camp David and again when he visited last weekend, he believes United States is in the right in this issue, and that the authority of the UN must be upheld. A lot of people in the Labor Party and in the Labor government who don't agree with that view entirely. And Mr. Blair today, has finally conceded an early recall of the British Parliament to discuss this issue hadn't been due to come back to debate it until mid-October. Now it's coming back, I think next week. And in the country at large, there's a lot of majority, according to opinion polls who don't quite understand the reasons why this has become such an urgent and such a pressing issue and what is the evidence that sat down presents such an immediate threat, whereas a year and a day ago, for instance, he wasn't really so much on the agenda. There is a suspicion that Iraq has become the next stage of the war on terrorism otherwise has run out of steam.

Stuart Loory 08:23

Marty Shrim. We have had stories in the last couple of days about American military forces moving to the Middle East. A contingent of Marines going to Kuwait, a command structure from the central command in Florida moving to Qatar, is the United States really going to go it alone?

Martin Schram 08:47

I don't think the United States wants to go it alone in the end, Stuart. But I must say I'm very puzzled at the chain of policy affecting events that happened within the Bush administration in the past, let's say

four months. If ever, there was a case of ready fire aim, that's what we seem to have seen now. Suppose, for example, that the speech that George Bush gave at the United Nations was the first speech that was given, the first the first declaration of what the United States is saying that needs to be done about Saddam. I have a hunch that opinion around the world and the debate would be considerably different than it is now because of course, it was just the last after a whole series of pronouncements by Rumsfeld and Cheney and George Bush, about how the United States must go it alone if it is really to take him on alone and there was not any agreement within the administration from the beginning that the way to do it is to go to the UN first and say, 'Look, it's your sanctions. We have to enforce those sanctions or the UN becomes irrelevant. We're ready to help.' That would have been a different case.

Stuart Loory 10:08

It certainly would have been. But the President still did go out of his way to say to the UN, please enforce your own sanctions and if you do, we want to help and if you don't, we are going to go it alone. Will that have an impact on the United Nations? Who wants to deal with that? Simon, why don't you start?

Simon Tisdall 10:37

Well, I think there was an element of calling of the UN's bluff here, United States or simply saying that, since 1991, the first Gulf War, innumerable resolutions and motions and pressures have been put upon Iraq, and it's defied and we've left them all. And for the last four years, it's been even worse, because there's been no inspections, and supposedly, the weapons of mass destruction have been built out. And this is a big problem for the UN's credibility. The other way of looking at that, of course, is that if as has been suggested, many times by US officials over the last few weeks, the US does not get the sort of backing from the UN that it wants and goes ahead anyway, then the blow to the UN credibility will be even greater. With Kofi Annan pointing out today that major powers, all countries in fact, must abide by international law and must know whenever possible, acting against these situations multilaterally. I think Tony Blair, is quite pleased, probably by today's speech, in that he did urge the President to take the UN route, and to give diplomacy one last chance. And that was against the advice that we understand the President was getting from some of his more hardline advisors. So, the British government will be quite relieved, as one of the other, one of my colleagues said, that they're gonna be talking about this rather than making more military moves at this moment. But they haven't dispelled the impression that Mr. Bush is to expect him to fight, ready to fight, and in fact many of these people want to fight.

Stuart Loory 12:16

I have to say, I am somewhat puzzled by what the UN route would be. Can somebody explain to me what the UN can do?

Bruce Crumley 12:25

Well, quite frankly, I'm a bit puzzled also. I mean, this reminds me of the of the v-chip debate of the you know, parents saying, you know, 'Government stay out of my life, but invented a v-chip, because I can't keep my kids off the TV,' is some... You know, you can't just look at the UN and say, do something. The U.S. for years has well, had refused to pay its bills, showed a great amount of disdain for the UN, and almost regarded it as some sort of, you know, a hollow shell for for evil intentions in the world, or

certainly anti- American intentions, and now they seem to turn around and say, you know, do something, It's got to kind of contribute to that whole do something process. I'm really a little bit puzzled about George Bush disassociating America from the UN. It's part of the UN, and as such, has to also provide something to a collective argument before they even would be able to say, 'Well, this doesn't work, we're going to go it alone.' So I don't see where that that proposals coming from.

Simon Tisdall 13:26

Coming in on that side in London. I mean, one thing that the UN can do, is the UN of course being only the sum of its parts, is those are countries are so concerned about another, US military action in their in their in their neighborhood, could make a good start by actually applying the UN sanctions that are already in place. Because we know over the last two or three years, there's been a great hemorrhaging of that whole sanctions regime, and it has been revised to alleviate some of the burdens on the ordinary Iraqi people. But nevertheless, there's a massive illegal trade in the region now, whether our including large sales, illegal sales of rocket oil, connived in and collaborated in with all of Iraq's neighbors. So those Arab countries could do a lot in terms of enforcing existing containment policies.

Martin Schram 14:13

I agree with the assignment. I think they certainly could do a lot. This is Marty Schram in Washington, but the question I have is, do you think they would? Because I think those Arab neighbors that could do a lot will probably be about the last people who would try to do something.

Simon Tisdall 14:32

Maybe they haven't been given the choice plan enough, either. You know, if they have the choice between a major conflict on their doorstep and applying sanctions, maybe it should be put to them more starkly.

Stuart Loory 14:43

Okay, we have to take a break now. This is Global Journalist on KBIA. I'm Stuart Loory. We'll be right back. Welcome back to Global Journalist, you may listen to this program again, ask questions, or make comments by going to www.globaljournalists.org. or hear in mid-Missouri by calling us at 573-882-9641. Before the break, we were talking about the hemorrhaging of sanctions and the illegal sale, if you will of Iraqi oil around the world. Last week we had on this program a Russian journalist who said that Russians were selling much Iraqi oil, perhaps even to the United States, and calling it Russian oil. Is it generally well understood in Western Europe that this may be happening, Bruce?

Martin Schram 15:45

Well, I think there's certainly a degree of cheating going on. And one that everybody knows and there's also a lot of, you know, ulterior motives be, you know, setting policies and positions I mean, whether it's visa v. Iran, or whether it's in positive engagement or constructive engagement and or Iraq in which a lot of Western European companies would like to be the first in there and our thought for that reason is to show a little bit more tolerance or playability. But I think also that, quite frankly, when you get down to it, we're dealing with a region in which people have been willing to deal with the least bad choice for a long time, including the Reagan administration, under whom George Bush was Vice President and who

continued providing Saddam Hussein with military assistance, even after the discovered he had used chemical weapons on his own eyes on people.

Stuart Loory 16:34

Okay, excuse me Bruce, but if I just may, George Bush Vice President was George Bush, the first.

Bruce Crumley 16:42

Right, exactly.

Martin Schram 16:43

Let me let me This is Marty Schram. Let me let me agree with you and what you were saying about the Reagan years. For example, just note that this is a very old game. At the time when the State Department was listing Iran at the very top of the list of, of terrorist sponsoring nations, and trade with them was forbidden, the United States became the number one purchaser of Iranian oil in the world, topping Japan. And they did it because they would get this oil that would go to the TARG, refinery base, and then it'd be brought in as European oil, but it was really Iranian oil. So that's an old dodge.

Bruce Crumley 17:24

And I didn't mean to suggest even to say that, because George Bush senior as President was aware of this, that George Bush Jr. is somehow responsible, that would be unfair. That said, there are a lot of ex-Reagan administration, officials, or advisors in this administration. And just, it seems like given the post September 11. situation, this would be a perfect time as pie in the sky, this may sound to finally say, 'Okay, if we're going to turn the page, let's really turn it and start with a clean slate and get somebody in there is actually serious about about democracy,' because that could be hopefully infectious to the entire region sooner or later.

Stuart Loory 18:03

Do you think we can get anybody in there who is serious about democracy? Is Iraq the the kind of country that could become a good democracy?

Martin Schram 18:10

More serious than Saddam? I think so.

Stuart Loory 18:15

More serious than Saddam, yeah. But still, Sehmi what do you have to say about that?

Martin Schram 18:22

Well, you know, with all due respect to everybody, you know, when everybody anybody talks about democracy, and Iraq, I take a little cringe, because, you know, we are living in a part of the world where democracy has not been part of the scene in any sense, or in any way for centuries, if not millennia. We are talking about a very tribal base, we're talking about a very feudal based political system in this part of the world. So for for the the idea of democracy, the Swiss type democracy to counteract where everybody's in living in a state of happy spaces, I think it's from my perspective, with all due respect, as I say, appear as a bit of a fantasy. The best we can, I think, hope for Iraq is a is an amenable

administration. Something like for example, that we have in Jordan or in Egypt. These are not democracies, but they have amenable administrations. I think this is the best we can hope for in the region. Stuart. I was going to just say that I think that what's going to happen in short order, is that the United Nations Security Council will act. I think they will at least hear enough of the President Bush's call to to say we don't want to be irrelevant, so we are going to call upon Saddam to accept the inspections unannounced and so on with new urgency. And I think Saddam may even say yes, we'll do it.

Stuart Loory 20:01

That's interesting that Saddam, you think would give in to that.

Martin Schram 20:09

In exchange for dropping the sanctions.

Stuart Loory 20:10

In exchange for dropping the sanctions and he said of more...

Semih Idiz 20:14

Hey, may I? Jumping in from Ankara, and say that there is a good precedent for that if we stretch our memory back a few decades, to a certain Idi Amin, who today is living happily in Saudi Arabia, having been the scourge of the decade. So maybe such a formula for Saddam may be the happy ending, after all.

Martin Schram 20:35

Do you really believe that Saddam would be allowed to go and, you know, occupy some, you know, Saudi or or Somali, you know, air-conditioned palace? And I think the knives are sufficiently out for him that he that's the I think the fear is that the knives are so loud for him and they've been so demonstrably sharpened in public, that he's probably saying, 'I better I better stay right where I am, because if I move on any concessions is just, it's just giving into my, you know, my enemy strength.'

Semih Idiz 21:02

Yeah may, I just jump in again and say of course, knives are out for Saddam, but there are countries and I'd say the majority of countries that have not personalized Saddam Hussein as a phenomenon as perhaps America and obviously for obvious reasons Israel has. So in this part of the world, if Saddam that is quarantined, if we talk in sort of Microsoft virus terms, is going to contribute to world stability, this may be the choice in the end that the majority of countries represented under the United Nations may offer. But I admit, that this is a complete fantasy scenario that I'm talking about.

Martin Schram 21:44

If Saddam decides that he is going to allow inspections again, after all this time because the UN Security Council does take a bold step in Russia permits it let's say. The real question, is what does the Bush administration do resume fighting among itself as again with Dick Cheney insisting that inspections are no good and can't work and Powell saying they can?

Stuart Loory 22:09

What do you think Marty, to answer your own question?

Martin Schram 22:11

Yes, they'll fight among themselves and George Bush will not unilaterally intervene in the fight among his own party advisors.

Stuart Loory 22:20

So for that reason, as you're talking about a domestic political or ideological dispute, perhaps roiling the international waters for a long time to come.

Martin Schram 22:33

At least at least the rest of this first term of the Bush presidency.

Stuart Loory 22:38

I get the feeling that President Bush is very happy that Congress has stepped into this debate and is going to hold hearings that are going to last beyond the November elections. And that makes me think that maybe the Bush administration, including all of the the opponents within the administration, may realize that they have gone too far in being so belligerent against Iraq.

Martin Schram 23:06

I think Cheney is unhappy. I think Don Rumsfeld is unhappy with that. And I think that, that Colin Powell is happy and Condoleezza Rice will take whatever position George Bush takes. And he doesn't know what he's gonna do.

Stuart Loory 23:23

Why is it that Cheney and Don Rumsfeld wants so badly to go to war against Iraq?

Martin Schram 23:28

I can't figure it out Stuart.

Stuart Loory 23:32

You can't figure it out, but but be a little bit of a reporter and...

Martin Schram 23:36

I'll tell you what I do know. They, are truly convinced that, that if you sit back and wait for the rattlesnake to strike as they use the analogy, repeatedly, then you only going to get bitten in a poisonous way. So the thing to do is to kill it before it strikes and don't wait for it to strike. And that's what they keep saying. But George Bush in his speech never explained what has changed in the past year to make this more urgent than he ever thought it was in any other time.

Simon Tisdall 24:13

That's crucial. That's a crucial point, (unintelligible) when Bush didn't, he said there was a gathering and grave danger, but he didn't really explain why it was so much more urgent or impressing than it was a

year ago. As for the question of Cheney and Rumsfeld and the holes in the administration, on the basis of my experience in when I lived in Washington as the Guardian's correspondent, then, during the last Gulf War, I think these two men are examples of right wingers who've watched as America's wishes and intentions and hopes have been dashed across the world and have been misinterpreted and thwarted. And I've always felt that the United States, the most powerful country, was fighting with one arm tied behind its back. They really feel that the US value system works for everybody. There's a universal benefit. And they feel that now is the time following the end of the Cold War, to polish off some of these tin pot dictators like Saddam, who incur the obstacle to a Pax Americana, which would be truly universal.

Martin Schram 25:19

I do not know what they think that Pakistan is going to be able to do if there's a unilateral action like that, because I think Musharraf is going to find it impossible to be America's ally afterwards.

Bruce Crumley 25:32

I'm not sure that the Saudis are very comfortable in all this either. I mean, they've got a population of, you know, with it's increasingly out of jobs, angry and feeling like they've been duped in this, you know, everybody gets rich. Just you know, the Saudis got a kind of Chinese situation, is you don't protest that much, you don't vote at all, but everybody gets rich and that's broken down and that's produced, quite frankly, the kind of radical, you know, Wahhabism, that that bin Laden is a radical expression of. So, I'm not sure that the Saudis are all that keen on this, either.

Stuart Loory 26:06

Simon, you were just talking about polishing off tin pot dictators, and and you put that into the plural. Is there an implication in what you were saying that once we do polish off Saddam Hussein, if the United States does, that the United States will move on to other dictators?

Simon Tisdall 26:26

Well, absolutely, there's, I am suggesting that....

Stuart Loory 26:29

Iran? North Korea?

Simon Tisdall 26:31

Yes, I think my phrase is not appropriate in terms of Iran, for instance, where there is an elected government and elected president. But a presidential statement from the White House in June, made it clear that United States is on the side of the Iranian people in achieving a more democratic system and a more responsive government system in Iran, and in many ways, Iran fulfills the criteria for attack under the creative and inventive rules and the Bush Doctrine and the war on terrorism. I mean, it's deeply implicated in terrorism in Israel. It's implicated in harboring al-Qaeda, it has, according to the Pentagon, a nuclear weapons program, and it's a collaboration with that with Russia, it has chemical biological weapons. In many ways, Iran qualifies for attention more than Iraq does. And then we can move on to North Korea. And then there are other people that they clearly don't like...

Martin Schram 27:32

But how about the tin pot dictators who are America's biggest allies? I guess they get a pass on?

Stuart Loory 27:37

Well, okay...

Bruce Crumley 27:38

For example...

Stuart Loory 27:39

Right, fellas? I'm sorry, but the tin pot is now full. We are out of time. Our guests today have been Martin Schram in Washington, Simon Tisdall in London, Brian Crumley, or Bruce Crumley in Paris and Semih Idiz in Ankara. Our directors Pat Akers, and our producer Sarah Andrea Fajardo. For all, I'm Stuart Loory, Global Journalist. We'll be back next week.