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McCain: Containing Saddam Has Failed; Regime Change Only Path to Disarmament

*B McCain Addresses Intellectual, Practical and Moral Failure
of Containment B*

Washington, DC B U.S. John McCain (R-AZ) today gave the following address regarding the failure of containment and need for regime change in Iraq:

AThe United States= containment of Soviet power was arguably the most successful exercise of grand strategy in history. It preserved peace between the superpowers in an age when war between them would have had unthinkable consequences, and held the Soviets in check until inherent political and economic faults and the just demands of its subject populations forced an empire to collapse. Today, new threats to civilization again defy our imagination in scale and potency. I believe Iraq is a threat of the first order, and only a change of regime will make Iraq a state that does not threaten us and others, and where a liberated people assume the rights and responsibilities of freedom.

ABut there can be no moral defense of war that does not comprehensively explore and reject, because they fall short, every other means of achieving our objective. Articulate critics of war against Iraq argue that containment has worked, that it serves our interests in preventing the spread and use of weapons of mass destruction, and that a regime with a history of aggression, development and use of such weapons can somehow be isolated and sanctioned into a benign state where it does not threaten its neighbors or the wider international community.

AProponents of containment claim that Iraq is in a Abox.® But it is a box with no lid, no bottom, and whose sides are falling out. Within this box are definitive footprints of germ, chemical and nuclear programs, and from it has come blood money for Palestinian terrorists, and support for the international terrorism of Al Qaeda and Ansar al-Islam. And as he has done before, at a time of his choosing, Saddam Hussein will spring, like a jack-in-the-box, to reign devastation on his people and his neighbors, a devastation against which the daily curse of living in the shadow of his terror will pale.

AA strategy of containment that tolerates Saddam Hussein's threat by allowing him the means to achieve his ends is a triad of failure: a failure of policy that risks devastating consequences based on hope without cause; an intellectual failure to come to grips with a grave and growing danger; and a moral failure to understand evil and our obligation to confront it.

For a policy of containment to work, as it did in the Cold War, four components are necessary: reliable allies; a clear goal with a consistent doctrine; the economic and military capability to enforce the doctrine; and the political will to support the demands of the policy. We had each of these assets B allies, doctrine, capabilities, and political will B during the Cold War, when a policy conceived in the 1940s endured over four dangerous and tumultuous decades until our adversary collapsed. We enjoy none of these assets today with regard to Iraq. Today, Iraq is growing stronger, not weaker, under a policy of containment. We are also dealing with a regime driven more by the unstable character of a risk-taking mass murderer than by the caution that mutually assured destruction encouraged in an enemy with a more intelligent appreciation of its vulnerability. A policy of containing Iraq is unsustainable, ineffective, unworkable and dangerous.

The United States does not have reliable allies to implement a policy to contain Iraq. West Germany was a front-line state in the Cold War, as Saudi Arabia is today a front-line state and key ally in the confrontation with Iraq. During the Cold War, West Germany welcomed the deployment of hundreds of thousands of Americans and hundreds of military installations on its soil; placed few restrictions on American forces stationed there; worked hand-in-glove with us to conduct military training and exercises; and permitted us to station tactical and theater nuclear missiles on its soil sufficient to defend Western Europe.

Compare this cooperation with that of Saudi Arabia in the containment of Iraq. Saudi elites have provided material and political support to Islamic extremists; assailed democratic Israel's resistance to terror while they accommodate the threatening tyrant next door; greatly complicated our efforts to enforce sanctions; placed severe restrictions on our troops that not only impair our military preparedness but offend our values; condoned Iraq's defiance of every norm of international law; and seem more concerned with the possibility of instability in a post-Saddam Iraq and the influence that a democratizing Iraq might have on their restive population than they are with the grave threat posed by Saddam's growing arsenal of the world's most dangerous weapons, and his never far-out-of-mind territorial ambitions.

Containment requires cooperation from front-line states committed to the policy's success. There has been some recent improvement in cooperation. But consider the past practices of our front-line partners against Iraq beyond Saudi Arabia: Syria, which constructed and operates a 200,000-barrel-per-day oil pipeline into Iraq in open contravention of U.N. sanctions, and profits enormously from resale of illicit Iraqi oil; Iran, with the longest border with Iraq, remains a hostile terrorist state with which we have no diplomatic relations; and Jordan and Turkey, where a lucrative commerce in smuggling with Iraq B in open violation of UN sanctions B may be tolerated for understandable economic and political reasons, but is hardly reassuring when looking at containment options.

Successful containment also requires cooperation from our great power allies. Our Cold War alliances with Japan and South Korea in the East, and a unified NATO in the West, underscored allied resolve and unity in the daily shadow of Soviet power. Compare our great power allies in the Cold War with those with whom we act today in dealing with Iraq.

France has unashamedly pursued a concerted policy to dismantle the UN sanctions regime, placing its commercial interests above international law, world peace and the political ideals of Western civilization. Remember them? Liberte, egalite, fraternite. It withdrew from enforcing the no-fly zones and did not

participate in Operation Desert Fox to punish Iraq for expelling UNSCOM. France abstained from Security Council Resolution 1284, which created a weakened UNMOVIC successor to UNSCOM, because it knew that Saddam Hussein would otherwise refuse to steer lucrative Iraqi contracts under the oil-for-food program to Paris. France was among the first countries to violate the U.N. ban on air travel into Iraq after Saddam signaled that future oil-for-food contracts were contingent on making sanctions-busting commercial flights. Today, the French foreign minister, who voted for Resolution 1441 and warned of the serious consequences Iraqi defiance would entail, says that "Nothing justifies military action" against Iraq. And President Chirac, who once approved the sale to Iraq of a nuclear reactor knowing that in a country floating on a sea of oil it could have only one real purpose, today says he sees no irrefutable proof of Iraq's WMD program.

Like France, Russia opposed Operation Desert Fox, abstained on Resolution 1284, and was the first to take advantage of Saddam's invitation to break the U.N. ban on air travel into Iraq. Russia has sold Baghdad gyroscopes for its advanced missile programs. Today, Russia opposes enforcing the terms of Resolution 1441 in the face of Iraq's defiance. Just as Soviet envoy, Yevgeny Primakov, tried to come to Saddam's rescue on the eve of the Gulf War, today Russia joins a coalition of the willing to find "peace at any price" for Baghdad.

Gerhard Schroeder's Germany looks little like the ally that anchored our presence in Europe throughout the Cold War. A German Rip Van Winkle from the 1960s would not understand the lack of political courage and cooperation with its allies on the question of Iraq exhibited in Berlin today. Does the Schroeder government demonstrate anything approaching the kind of resolve that helped Germany and the United States successfully contain Soviet power?

Besides requiring resolute allies, a successful containment policy also requires a clear strategic goal, backed by the will and capability to achieve it.

Over the course of several decades, the containment of the Soviet Union looked remarkably similar to the policy enunciated by George Kennan in the 1940s. There was a constancy of purpose to America's approach to containment, matched by U.S. power and leadership of our allies. The US stationed troops throughout the world, spent billions on conventional and nuclear forces, and supported armed resistance groups in the Third World and political opposition movements behind the Iron Curtain. And, lest we forget, containment of the USSR envisioned as its eventual accomplishment a change in the Soviet regime, based on the premise that confronting Soviet power would lead to internal pressures that could not be sustained.

Constancy of purpose and the dedication of necessary capabilities to achieve it have not characterized American policy towards Iraq. It should be no surprise that containment collapsed. It was never expected to be an enduring policy. Senior officials in the Administration of President George H.W. Bush did not expect Saddam Hussein to survive in office following his humiliating defeat in the Persian Gulf War. In 1991, Security Council Resolution 687 gave Iraq 15 days to declare and disarm its weapons of mass destruction. Officials of the first Bush Administration assumed, after constructing a broad alliance and winning decisively in combat, that the international community would cooperate in compelling Iraq's full disarmament and in keeping tough sanctions in place. Twelve years later, Saddam survives in power; his weapons of mass destruction programs are intact and growing; sanctions are in tatters; and the international coalition to contain him has disintegrated.

Nearly every Iraqi act of defiance is met with accommodation. The worst offenders have been members of the UN Security Council, who have the responsibility for enforcing its mandate. It bears reminding that the Security Council declared

Iraq in material breach of its Gulf War cease-fire obligations as early as January 1993. Yet throughout the 1990s, whenever U.N. inspectors did find evidence of a smoking gun exposing Iraqi cheating B the biological weapons program revealed by defector Hussein Kemal, the Russian missile gyroscopes illegally imported by Iraq, proof that the VX nerve agent had been weaponized in Scud warheads, the AAir Force@ document that demonstrated massive deception on chemical weapons B the Security Council took no action to enforce compliance. In 1998, when Iraq denied UNSCOM access to so-called sensitive sites, the UN Secretary General went to Baghdad to negotiate a weaker inspections regime. With every failure to hold Saddam accountable, the logic of containment withered away and exposed the great powers= unwillingness to enforce it.

AUnlike during the Cold War, when containment became more robust with the passage of time and with the allied defeat of Soviet adventurism around the world, containment of Iraq did less to constrain Saddam than to constrain the United States and the international community from meeting Iraqi defiance with an effective response. In the Cold War, the rigors of containment actually drew our allies together despite sustained Soviet efforts to divide us B through diplomacy, through funding so-called Apeace@ movements, through economic incentives, and through nuclear and conventional military intimidation. Today, Iraq has succeeded in dividing the Security Council, in driving a wedge between certain US allies.

ADuring the 1990s, Saddam Hussein, with international support, methodically eviscerated the sanctions regime by sequentially limiting UNSCOMs powers and access, rendering its work impossible, booting inspectors out of the country, agreeing to a new and far weaker inspections regime that protected Iraqs Asovereignty,@ and ultimately making it impossible for UNSCOM to function B even as many nations, at Baghdad-s urging, rushed to throw off the shackles containment imposed on them by restoring diplomatic relations, abandoning the ban on commercial air travel, neglecting border controls on lucrative smuggling routes, and pursuing Iraqi commercial contracts under the oil-for-food program. Open sanctions-busting and craven pandering to Baghdad defined a new order of accommodation disturbed only by the self-defense of U.S. and British aircraft patrolling the no-fly zones.

AFinally, American leaders lacked the political will to uphold the demands of containment at home. In its first use of military force, the Clinton Administration launched 23 cruise missiles against an Iraqi intelligence facility in the middle of the night in response to Saddam Hussein-s attempt to assassinate former President Bush. What President Clinton termed Aa devastating blow to Iraq-s ability to plan and carry out [terrorist] operations in the future@ in fact sent Saddam the message that in response to his attempts to kill an American president, the United States would kill a few janitors. A similar fecklessness characterized the Administration-s dealings with the Iraqi democratic opposition, which it had pledged to support but abandoned when Saddam struck back.

AThe 1998 Desert Fox air campaign against Iraq was limited to four days of bombing, and the force used was insufficient to destroy Saddams weapons program. While it degraded a little of Saddams WMD capability, no follow-on military action was taken to prevent its restoration. Nor did the administration pursue aggressive diplomacy to re-invigorate containment. And it allowed Saddam to crush the stirrings of Iraqi resistance to his rule. The principal effect of Desert Fox was to merely confirm the collapse of the inspection regime.

AWhen Hans Blix proposed sending inspectors back into Iraq in 2000, his plan was quietly squashed by the White House for fear of complicating the Administration-s efforts to secure an Arab-Israeli peace. Neither weapons inspections nor military action impeded Iraq-s military research and production programs in the last two years

of Clinton's term. By its end, Iraq had emerged as the world's second-largest oil exporter, with air and commercial traffic thriving, diplomatic missions flourishing, weapons production lines up and running, and the Security Council quiescent. Baghdad had regained a degree of international legitimacy that bequeathed the Bush Administration a containment policy in complete disarray, and set the stage for the crisis in which we find ourselves today.

Containment in Iraq failed largely because we lost the support of both the front-line states and our great power allies for the rigorous demands of enforcing it, because we had no clear and understandable goal, and because we could not muster the political will to make it work. It may have been fatally flawed from the very beginning, when much of the world believed we left Saddam Hussein in power for a reason in 1991. Containment during the Cold War could also have failed, if we had heeded the voices calling for a nuclear freeze, if we had canceled SDI, the MX missile and the rebuilding of our conventional military, if we had not deployed Persing II's to Germany. It could have failed had we heeded those who criticized President Reagan for calling the Soviet Union the Aevil empire@ it was; for expressing a desire to leave communism on the Aash heap of history;@ for calling on Gorbachev to Atear down@ the Berlin Wall.

During the Cold War, American leaders demonstrated the will to confront the danger of Soviet ambitions and provided the necessary resources and commitment to do so. But the policy became increasingly difficult to sustain, and it was only President Reagan's victory that ensured containment would follow its original logic. The postwar bipartisan unity in favor of containment died in the jungles of Vietnam, and, most regrettably, has yet to be completely recovered.

Perhaps most fundamentally, the very character of Saddam Hussein's regime explains why containment cannot work. The Soviet Union never directly attacked front-line states or American allies. But the logic of mutually assured destruction that provided strategic stability in the Cold War has been replaced by false hope in the reasonableness of a pathological risk-taker. Saddam's will to power has so affected his judgment that he has started two major wars and lost them, despite the obvious risk to his own hold on power. Given this record, containment, deterrence and international inspections will work no better than did the Maginot Line, when it was overrun by another gambler 63 years ago.

Some say we can deter Saddam B even though deterrence has failed utterly in the past. Human history is filled with examples where deterrence failed. Deterrence requires a credible threat to work. It also requires an adversary who makes realistic cost-benefit calculations. Even now, with the armed might of a superpower gathering at his doorstep, with an international community that at least B for the moment B is no longer discussing an end to the sanctions regime, Saddam continues to defy UN Security Council resolutions demanding his disarmament. Does anyone believe Saddam would see the implementation of the Franco-German plan, aptly named AProject Mirage,@ as a credible threat? Does anyone believe a Saddam armed with nuclear weapons will be more readily deterred or better contained than he is today?

If fail to see how waiting for some unspecified period of time, allowing Saddam's nuclear ambitions to grow unchecked, could ever result in a stable deterrence regime. The proponents of containment claim it is unlikely that Saddam would share his chemical, biological and nuclear weapons with terrorist movements because he would fear the consequences should he be detected. But would there be a smoking gun? Unlike missile launches, terrorist attacks don't always leave a return address. We still aren't certain which individuals, movements or states were behind the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the Khobar Towers attack, or the anthrax

attacks. The links between Iraq and al Qaeda are hotly debated today. Terrorist trails are designed to be obscure. Saddam knows that. And he's a gambler, a gambler whose courage will only increase should he survive his current dilemma.

Not only would deterrence condemn the Iraqi people to more unspeakable tyranny, it would condemn Saddam's neighbors to perpetual instability. It would send the world a signal to continue the deal-making with Saddam because there is no other option. As Vice President Cheney has said of those who argue that containment and deterrence are working: The argument comes down to this: yes, Saddam is as dangerous as we say he is. We just need to let him get stronger before we do anything about it. @

The threat posed by Saddam Hussein will not diminish until he is removed from power. Disarmament by regime change must be our goal. After one war, twelve years, seventeen Security Council resolutions, various bombing campaigns, the threat of a new war, and the continuing expansion of Saddam's stockpile of devastating weaponry, placing hope in containment as a means to diminish Iraq's threat to its neighbors and the world flies in the face of history and ignores the obvious consequences of abdicating to his allies now. Rather than keeping Saddam in a box, an anachronistic attachment to a once effective doctrine actually constrains the United States.

We cannot keep our forces indefinitely staged in the region. Were we to attempt again to contain Saddam, we would eventually have to withdraw them. The world is full of dangers and, more likely than not, we will need some of those brave men and women to face them down. Does anyone really believe that the world's will to contain Saddam won't eventually collapse as utterly as it did in the 1990s? Does anyone really believe that a sanctions regime won't erode again? Does anyone really believe that Saddam, having faced down an imminent threat of war with the greatest military power in history, will call it a day, abandon his weapons programs and his grandiose dreams of leading the Arab world, armed with the weapons most sought after by the other ambitious tyrants of the Middle East, and whose death defying resistance to the world's will would likely inspire several imitators?

Containment failed yesterday in Iraq. Containment fails today. And containment will fail tomorrow. We would be placing hope before experience to think otherwise, and we will have bequeathed to our children a much more dangerous world. For if you embrace containment, you must accept proliferation, and proliferation -- not just unchecked but accelerated -- will make the violent century just passed seem an era of remarkable tranquility in comparison.

It is in the nature of democracies to be patient. But as history has shown, they can delay to their peril. Placing faith in containment today recalls Churchill's admonition in the 1930s about placing faith in a collective defense that lacked the teeth or the will to confront a common enemy. As Churchill said of the League of Nations failure to respond to Italian aggression in Abyssinia, there is not much collective security in a flock of sheep on the way to the butcher. We must keep our nerve, have the courage to understand what our experiences have taught us, have faith in the necessity and rightness of our cause, and do what must be done to make this a safer, freer, better world. We must settle, once and for all, the problem of Saddam @

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