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## Book Review

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# Scott Ritter: ‘J’Accuse’

by Michele Steinberg

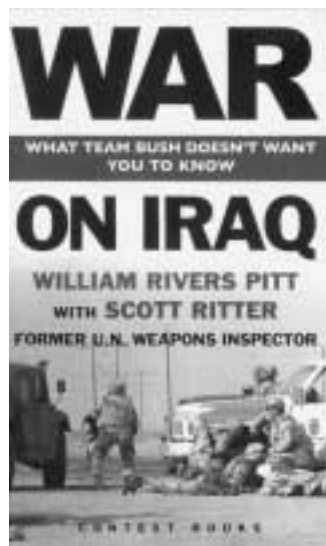
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### War on Iraq: What Team Bush Doesn't Want You to Know

by William Rivers Pitt, with Scott Ritter  
New York: Context Books, 2002  
96 pages, hardbound, \$8.95

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The interview with former UN chief weapons inspector Scott Ritter that makes up the bulk of this book, should have appeared as his testimony to a joint session of the Congress. The questions that author William Rivers Pitt poses, should have been asked by a panel of Senators and Congressmen, at the beginning of public hearings whose outcome could prevent a deadly war that could shape global politics for decades to come. If such an inquiry had taken place, the October 2002 vote in the U.S.



Congress on a “war resolution,” might have ended differently.

Ritter dispels hard-core myths that surround Iraq—he shows that the credentials of “Saddam’s Bombmaker”—Khidir Hamza, a frequent witness at Congressional hearings—are not what they are trumped up to be. He reveals crucial facts about the biased testimony of Richard Spertzl, former head of the UN biological weapons inspection team; and more importantly, about the political agenda of Richard Butler, the former Australian diplomat who became chairman of UNSCOM, the UN’s first weapons inspection team.

It is not too late for the U.S. Congress to get to the truth. Hearings that features Ritter’s valuable testimony on Iraq could be a priority for the incoming 108th Congress.

As an example of how dangerous these myths are, Ritter cites the “pre-emptive war” speech by Vice President Dick Cheney in August 2002. He says, “The Vice President has been saying that Iraq might be two years away from building

a nuclear bomb. Unless he knows something we don’t, that’s nonsense. And it doesn’t appear he does, because whenever you press [Cheney] . . . or other Bush Administration officials on these claims, they fall back on testimony by Richard Butler, my former boss, an Australian diplomat, and Khidre Hamza, an Iraqi defector who claims to be Saddam’s bomb-maker. Neither of these people provide anything more than speculation to back up their assertions. . . . [The] record is without dispute. It’s documented. We eliminated the nuclear program, and for Iraq to have reconstituted it would require undertaking activities eminently detectable by intelligence services.”

In October 2001, Ritter told this author that he had challenged Butler to a debate about Iraq “anywhere, anytime,” and that he has the knowledge and particulars that can prove that Butler is not truthful in his allegations about what Saddam Hussein and Iraq did. Ritter repeats the challenge to Butler in this new book. Hearings that challenge Butler, and investigate the possibility that an interlinked group of Iraqi dissidents, think-tankers, U.S. intelligence officials, and private financial conduits have provided *false* information about Iraq’s danger, should also be a priority.

As someone who has covered the Iraq situation for *EIR* for years, I have spoken with and interviewed Scott Ritter on several occasions. I have read and watched his testimony to Congress; his speeches to peace groups, to a British parliamentary meeting, and to the National Assembly of Iraq. This interview with Ritter stands as one of the most important that has been published. There is much fresh information that is especially important in the “countdown” to Jan. 27, when the inspection teams from UNMOVIC and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) make their report to the UN Security Council.

### Technical Details

This book puts on the record technical details about chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, that are extremely important in determining whether we will have war or peace. Ritter systematically takes up every allegation and refutes most that have been made about Iraq’s weapons programs. He rigorously questions his own assumptions, and the assumptions of those who accuse Iraq of threatening the world with weapons of mass destruction.

These challenges—many of them quite simple—are eye-opening. The descriptions of UNSCOM’s seven years of work, 1991-98, are crucial. Ritter’s team were not librarians and accountants collecting figures. For example, Ritter describes the destruction of the Muthana State chemical weapons factory, first by bombing in the Gulf War, then by the UNSCOM teams. “We destroyed thousands of tons of chemical agent. . . . We had an incineration plant operating full time for years, burning tons of the stuff every day. We went out and blew up in place bombs, missiles, and warheads filled with this agent. . . . We hunted down this stuff and destroyed it.”

Ritter doesn't excuse Iraq for lying from 1991 to 1996, about VX gas and about its nuclear weapons program. He details how Iraqi officials falsified reports on the VX program again and again; but ultimately the production facility and stockpile were destroyed. Other agents like Sarin and Tabun "have a shelf life of five years"; therefore even if Iraq hid these chemicals in vast amounts, as many have claimed, they are now harmless.

On ballistic missiles, Ritter reveals that the 1989 missile program was full of problems. Test missiles "cartwheeled" and failed in many tests. In this area Ritter argues most strenuously for competent inspections, since even if ballistic missiles have been built *indoors* or underground, they must be tested *outdoors*, and this would have been instantly detected, and inspectors could find the test locations. It did not happen.

During his seven years in UNSCOM, Ritter spent a lot of time on "concealment" (the key issue in Bush Administration diatribes on Iraq's conduct in the inspections), and he "assembled lists of hundreds of Iraqi intelligence front companies" that were set up to procure supplies. Nothing the Iraqis did could be kept secret from the constant surveillance by the United States, Israel, UN agencies, and other countries, he says. He admits that there was much evidence that Iraq evaded the sanctions regime, and used its intelligence fronts to acquire military production equipment which "has nothing to do with weapons of mass destruction." This type of activity is *not* the basis for pre-emptive war, or regime change, or mass invasion; Iraq is not proscribed from having an army. "We never found concrete evidence of . . . acquiring proscribed items" for such weapons.

There is hardly an accusation about Iraq that has surfaced in the last two years, that Ritter does not mention—and refute: from alleged 9/11 hijacker Mohammed Atta's alleged ties to Iraqi intelligence; to Dick Cheney's aluminum tubes; to an alleged terrorist training ground using Boeing 747 airplanes (it doesn't, says Ritter, and it trained Iraq's own airline security, when it had an airline.)

As Administration warhawks now demand interviews of Iraqi scientists in order to get a new defector, Ritter gives the impression that the *last* thing that the world needs is another self-promoter like Khidir Hamza, or Ahmed Chalabi; these Iraqi defectors have dished out heaps of disinformation that is virtually sacrosanct to the Iraq war lobby in think-tank centers like the American Enterprise Institute.

## War Avoidance

The subtitle to *War on Iraq*, "What Team Bush Doesn't Want You to Know," is appropriate. Pitt and Ritter deliver, naming the names of the neo-conservatives and the Iraq war lobby. Ritter, a Republican who voted for George W. Bush in 2000, identifies Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and "Prince of Darkness" Richard Perle, the Chairman of the Defense Policy Board, as the "fringe" thinkers, obsessed with Iraq,

who would have remained as "fringe," had it not been for the attack on Sept. 11, 2001. Today, they unfortunately are "in control" and pushing a war policy based only on their obsession.

For the last year, Ritter has come directly up against this war lobby, as he has taken a leading role in telling the truth about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, and how it would be possible to end the danger of WMDs *without war*. Ritter told the Iraq government in early September, in no uncertain terms, to open up and allow the weapons inspectors in. To the chagrin of the U.S.-based neo-conservatives, Saddam Hussein did exactly that—opened up Iraq for inspections, even after the Iraqi Parliament voted against such a decision. And after six weeks of inspections, on Jan. 9 in a special session demanded by the United States, Dr. Hans Blix and Dr. Mohammed Al-Baradei, who run the inspections teams, told the UN Security Council that there had not been any interference by the Iraqi government in their tasks. The inspectors went anywhere they chose, and even, by the second week in January, were given Russian- and U.S.-made helicopters to arrive hours early to any target they decided on. On Dec. 31, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan told Israeli radio that "Iraq is cooperating and the inspectors have been able to do their work in an unimpeded manner, and I don't see an argument for military action now."

But this is not enough to satisfy the warhawks, who believed, first of all, that "Saddam" would never allowed unfettered access to any site that inspectors from UNMOVIC and IAEA chose, and they were therefore certain they could have a war before the November elections. They were wrong. Then, a series of provocations and psywar was launched, to attempt to provoke Saddam Hussein into confronting the inspectors, or impeding the operations. That also has not happened—yet. These provocations, from the escalated killing of civilians by "allied" British and U.S. air strikes in the "no-fly zones"; to the training of an Iraqi anti-Saddam Hussein "army," in Hungary, a NATO country, by U.S. forces; to a buildup of more than 100,000 U.S. military in striking distance of Iraq, are deliberately designed by the Iraq war lobby to trigger an incident that ends the inspections and leads to a "showdown." Again, the insights of Ritter, on how the actions by Butler and UNSCOM did provoke the Iraqi reaction, make the tactics of the secret psychological and special operations war, abundantly clear.

War can be avoided, and an Iraq that is free of weapons of mass destruction is possible—without invading or killing Saddam Hussein. But to get to peace, one must first honor the truth. This book is a good first step.

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