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Why Bombing Iraq as Punishment is Contraindicated

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Title: Why Bombing Iraq as Punishment is Contraindicated

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Abstract. This article describes psychological contraindications for bombing Iraq in response to continually impeding the work of the United Nations (U.N.) Special Commission (UNSCOM).

News reports suggest that the United States (US) is closer to unilaterally, bilaterally, or multilaterally engaging in bombing strikes on Iraq for impeding the work of UNSCOM. However, IBPP maintains that bombing is contraindicated. (1) Bombing Iraq merely because it is in violation of UN policies, directives, and procedures would be a case of selective enforcement. Many countries have violated or are violating the UN's will--including the US, which still has not paid over \$1 billion owed to the UN. Selective enforcement, in turn, often attenuates respect and compliance for legal and policy prescriptions and proscriptions. (2) Bombing Iraq because its violations are more serious than those of other UN members would probably not have a salutary consequence. Its alleged chemical, biological, and other warfare assets that are apparently being hidden, moved, developed, obtained, and maintained in direct violation of the UN proscriptions would, in all likelihood, not even be significantly destroyed in the bombing. In effect, significant assets would remain after the bombing. Then what? Would the bombing have increased the probability that the Iraqi government would cease any cooperation with the UN? Would these assets more likely be employed? Would the bombing lead to further and further bombing with little political effect on the Iraqi government--in essence, a rolling thunder of futility? (3) Bombing Iraq to induce terror in Saddam Hussein, or to otherwise engage in terrorism intended to effect an Iraqi change of policy to comply with the UN, will likely be ineffective. The Iraqi Government has ridden out severe bombing during the Gulf War and survived without effective de facto changes in policy. Moreover, the US threat of targeting more lucrative or politically vulnerable targets has been communicated without enough time for counterplanning on the part of the Iraqi Government. This counterplanning could well include seizing UN inspectors and support personnel and other foreign nationals as hostages. (4) Bombing to intentionally assassinate Saddam Hussein and his true believers is probably illegal and in any event seems so far removed from the *raison d'etre* of the UN that the US would allegedly be supporting. Moreover, would the new leaders of Iraq be any more malleable? And what about the geostrategic consequences that may have deterred attempts to destroy the Iraqi Government near the end of the Gulf War? And these same issues also apply to bombing as a catalyst to induce a change in the Iraqi Government through Saddam's "inadvertent" death or through a coup. (6) Punishment often has paradoxical or unexpected consequences regarding its targets, those who implement it, and those who observe punishment and its consequences. Bombing as punishment can increase the will to resist, as well as destroy morale. Bombing also can increase political support for the target that merely needs to survive, while decreasing it from the attacker that needs to conquer and often does not. Also, bombing can induce unappetizing changes in its implementors until the latter have significantly violated their own cherished values and beliefs that form part of the strategic-moral calculus of their security. One related issue here would be the almost definite "collateral damage" of bombing involving the deaths of Iraqi civilians.

So why bomb? It may satisfy the sense of justice of those who believe that those who do wrong should be punished--regardless of the punishment's consequence or oblivious to punishment's complexities. It may satisfy those who believe that one must do something--not recognizing that sometimes nothing is

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something that may work better than something that is not nothing. It may take away pressure to "go after"--politically and economically--UN member governments or entities within their territories that are supporting Iraqi proscribed behaviors. (Advocates of the so-called "Wag the Dog" motive are discounting the reactance of the many sophisticated observers already aware of such a ploy.)

In the case of Iraq, the best set of options may be the unsatisfying long-term combinations of (1) selective sanctions and law enforcement initiatives against those--commercial, governmental, criminal sources within the territories of UN members--who surreptitiously supply Iraq with assets for its war machine; (2) selective employment of covert action if counterintelligence issues can be satisfactorily resolved; and (3) bombing not as punishment but as a vehicle to destroy portions of proscribed assets dependent on a cost-benefit analysis. (See Corr, P.J., Pickering, A.D., & Gray, J.A. (1997). Personality, punishment, and procedural learning: A test of J.A. Gray's anxiety theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73, 337-344; Erlanger, S. (January 26, 1998.) Countdown on Iraq: U.S. weighs February attack. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Gomez, R., & McLaren, S. (1997). The effects of reward and punishment on response disinhibition, moods, heart rate and skin conductance level during instrumental learning. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 23, 305-316; Paternoster, R., & Piquero, A. (1995). Reconceptualizing deterrence: An empirical test of personal and vicarious experiences. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 32, 251-286; Weiner, T. (January 25, 1998). U.S. lists options on use of force in Iraq standoff. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Weiner, T. (January 22, 1998). Time running out for diplomacy in standoff with Iraq, Clinton, says. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>.) (Keywords: Deterrence, Punishment..)