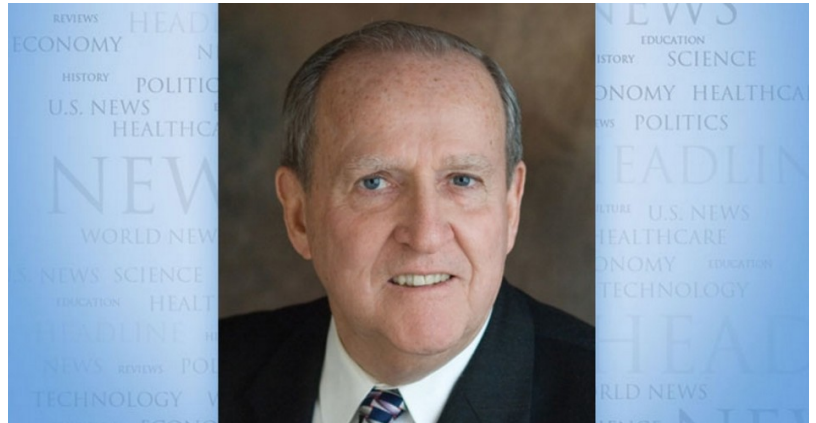




War Possibilities

Let's go back to 2002 and look at what one highly credentialed person was saying as our country was preparing to wage war against Iraq. We do so because some high officials of the U.S. government seem determined to launch another conflict, this time with Iran.

On July 20, 2002, Scott Ritter authored an op-ed for the *Boston Globe* in which he disagreed with obvious plans to send U.S. forces into Iraq. He countered the prevailing government-inspired notion claiming Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, had "weapons of mass destruction," even some of the nuclear variety, and was preparing to use them. Ritter didn't believe the Iraqi leader had such weaponry and, further, he didn't think there was any need to re-invade Saddam Hussein's country. (U.S. forces had stormed into Iraq in 1991's Desert Storm invasion.)



But who was Scott Ritter, and why should he be listened to when President George W. Bush, numerous members of Congress, an assortment of media pundits, and others were insisting that nuclear weapons from Iraq would soon incinerate a portion of the world? Why should Ritter's reluctance be relied upon? The general public didn't know him. True, but U.S. government officials knew that Ritter, after spending more than a dozen years as a U.S. Marine Corps intelligence specialist, had spent seven more years as the chief weapons inspector for the United Nations in Iraq. His years of investigation showed him that Iraq posed no weapons of mass destruction, not only of the nuclear variety but also those deemed chemical and biological weapons.

In Washington, war drums got louder as the George W. Bush administration settled in. While at a podium in the nation's capital, President Bush discussed the "W.M.D." problem, admitted that none had "yet" been found, and mockingly executed a 360-degree turn away from his microphone after claiming that he was still looking for forbidden weapons. Colin Powell then appeared on television to show photographs of Iraqi structures and claim that they housed the dreaded WMDs. Whoever set the retired general up for that performance accomplished destroying the former U.S. secretary of state's credibility. It did nothing to prove that Saddam was planning to nuke mankind.

But the plan to again invade Iraq gathered momentum. U.S. Ambassador to the UN John Negroponte successfully sought a UN Security Council resolution demanding that Iraq comply with UN mandates to get rid of its alleged WMDs, and the United States launched a war that Scott Ritter and many others said wasn't needed in order to force Iraq to comply with this resolution. Side note: One seeks authorization from a superior, not an inferior. Negroponte's action clearly showed that U.S. military served at the pleasure of the world body.

As anyone paying attention knows, U.S. forces reinvaded Iraq in 2003. Approximately 4,500 American



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military personnel have perished in a struggle that continues to be costly in lives, finances and credibility. Claims that this dubious military adventure spurred the rise of ISIS and all of its horrors may actually be verifiable. And the million and a half strong Christian population in the beleaguered country has shrunk to 200,000.

Here we are in 2019 and Scott Ritter is now telling U.S. officials that war against Iran isn't necessary. Nor should a war against North Korea be launched. He greatly applauds the gesture recently taken by President Trump when our nation's leader went to North Korea and actually set foot in the Communist-led portion of the Korean peninsula. Calling the president's brief walk into the North "20 steps in the right direction," Trump's gesture signaled to the North Korean leader that the United States has no intention of starting a war in that part of the world.

Neoconservatives in the Trump administration aren't as happy. But Scott Ritter, this writer, and hundreds of millions in the United States and Korea are delighted to see the newer rush to war slowed down. Still, war-happy U.S. officials continue working behind the scenes to involve our nation in more conflicts. They know that taking the nation to war presents an opportunity to build the power of government.

Chief among those who favor war — almost any war — is National Security adviser John Bolton. About his continued presence serving in such an important post, even leftist David Alexrod finds it curious. Having served for years as a top aide to former president Barack Obama, he had some advice for President Trump. He still believes that Obama was a great leader but he saw fit to wonder about the Trump administration: "If part of your brand is that you're not going to get the U.S. into unnecessary wars, why in the world would you hire John Bolton?"

Good question. President Trump ought to retire John Bolton. Perhaps Scott Ritter would be a better choice to fill that important post.

John F. McManus is president emeritus of [The John Birch Society](#).



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