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**HON. BERNARD SANDERS**  
OF VERMONT  
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
October 9, 2002

Mr. Speaker, I don't think any member of this body disagrees that Saddam Hussein is a tyrant, a murderer and a man who has started two wars that have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. He is clearly a man who can not be trusted or believed.

The question, Mr. Speaker, is not whether we like Saddam Hussein or not. The question is whether he represents an imminent threat to the American people, and whether a unilateral American invasion of Iraq will do more harm than good.

Mr. Speaker, if you read the front page of the Washington Post today what you would have seen is that all relevant U.S. intelligence agencies say, despite what we have heard from the White House, is that "Saddam Hussein is unlikely to initiate a chemical or biological attack against the United States." Even more importantly, our intelligence agencies say that should Saddam conclude that a U.S.-led attack could no longer be deterred, he might launch a chemical or biological counterattack. In other words, there is more danger of an attack on the United States if we launch a precipitous invasion.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the President feels, despite what our intelligence agencies are saying, that it is so important to pass a resolution of this magnitude this week, and why it is necessary to go forward without the support of the United Nations and our major allies – including those who are fighting side-by-side with us in the war on terrorism. But I do fear that as a part of this process the President is ignoring some of the most pressing economic issues affecting the well being of ordinary Americans.

There has been virtually no public discussion about the stock market's loss of trillions of dollars over the last few years, and that millions of Americans have seen the retirement benefits for which they have worked their entire lives disappear. When are we going to address that issue?

This country today has a \$340 billion trade deficit, and we have lost 10% of our manufacturing jobs in the last four years-- that's two million decent paying jobs gone. The average American worker today is working longer hours for lower wages than 25 years ago. When are we going to address that issue?

In Vermont and throughout this country the cost of health insurance is spiraling out of control and more and more working people are unable to afford it. The pharmaceutical industry continues to charge Americans by far the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs. When are we going to resolve the health care crisis?

Mr. Speaker, poverty in the United States is increasing and median family income is declining. Throughout this country family farmers are being driven off the land because of low commodity prices. And veterans, the people who have put their lives on the line to defend this country, are unable to get the health care and other benefits they were promised because of government underfunding. When are we going to tackle these issues of such deep concern to Americans?

Mr. Speaker, in the brief time I have, let me give you five reasons why I am opposed to giving the President a blank check to launch a unilateral invasion and occupation of Iraq, and why I will vote against this resolution.

1. I have not heard any estimates of how many young American men and women might die in such a war or how many tens of thousands of women and children in Iraq might also be killed. As a caring nation, we should do everything we can to prevent the horrible suffering that a war will cause. War must be the last recourse in international relations, not the first.
2. I am deeply concerned about the precedent that a unilateral invasion of Iraq could establish in terms of international law and the role of the United Nations. If President Bush believes that the United States can go to war at any time against any nation, what moral or legal objection could our government raise if another country chose to do the same thing? In an extremely tense and uncertain world, with eight countries possessing nuclear weapons, a unilateral U.S. attack on Iraq could create even more global instability.
3. The United States is now involved in a very difficult war against international terrorism, as we learned tragically on September 11<sup>th</sup>. We are opposed by Osama bin Laden and religious fanatics who are prepared to engage in a kind of warfare that we have never experienced before. I agree with Brent Scowcroft, Republican former National Security Advisor for President George Bush, Sr. who stated, "An attack on Iraq at this time would seriously jeopardize, if not destroy, the global counter-terrorist campaign we have undertaken."
4. At a time when this country has a six trillion-dollar national debt and a growing deficit, we should be clear that a war and a long-term American occupation of Iraq could be an extremely expensive proposition. Unlike the cost of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, which was shared among the international community, the U.S. will have to pick up the entire cost, which could run into hundreds of billions of dollars.
5. I am concerned about the problem of so-called "unintended consequences." Who will govern Iraq when Saddam Hussein is removed, and what role will the U.S. play in a ensuing civil war that could develop in that country? Will moderate governments in the region who have large Islamic fundamentalist populations be overthrown and replaced by extremists? Will the bloody conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Authority be exacerbated? And these are just a few of the questions that remain unanswered.

If a unilateral American invasion of Iraq is not the best approach, what should we do? In my view, the U.S. must work with the United Nations to make certain, within clearly defined time-lines, that the U.N. inspectors are allowed to do their jobs. These inspectors should undertake an unfettered search for Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and destroy them when found, pursuant to past U.N. resolutions. If Iraq resists inspection and elimination of stockpiled weapons, we should stand ready to assist the United Nations in forcing compliance.