

New documents lay bare Bush, U.N. lies

by Joseph Brewda

Saddam Hussein was ready to negotiate a withdrawal from Kuwait in order to avoid war, documents released in the Feb. 8 edition of the Jordanian daily Ad Dastour reveal. The documents are a transcript of the Jan. 13 Baghdad meeting between U.N. Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and the Iraqi President. In the meeting, Saddam Hussein said that Iraq was ready to negotiate a "package deal" and asked Pérez de Cuéllar to use his offices to aid this negotiation. While Iraq considered Kuwait to be its 19th province, the Iraqi people were "ready to sacrifice for the cause of peace" if others did the same, the Iraqi President stated.

A formerly secret statement by Pérez de Cuéllar to the U.N. Security Council on Jan. 14, reporting on his Baghdad meeting, was released for the first time by the London Guardian on Feb. 12. It also confirms aspects of the Baghdad transcripts. Neither the U.N. nor Pérez de Cuéllar personally contest the accuracy of either document.

Both documents sharply contrast with Pérez de Cuéllar's public statements to the international media upon his return from Baghdad. At a press conference held in New York on Jan. 14, the U.N. secretary general asserted that there had been no "worthwhile discussion" with the Iraqi President. Pérez's public claims that the talks were a "failure" were then cited by George Bush as reasons to go to war immediately following the expiration of the Jan. 15 deadline. While Bush claimed that the possibility of a diplomatic solution was at an end, he knew directly—through personally meeting with Pérez de Cuéllar—as well as through Pérez de Cuéllar's statement to the U.N. Security Council, that a diplomatic solution was still possible.

What follows are excerpts from Pérez de Cuéllar's report to the Security Council (the Baghdad meeting transcript has not yet been fully translated from Arabic).

Pérez de Cuéllar's report

The President [Saddam Hussein] dealt at length on Iraq's claim to Kuwait and underlined that in the period prior to Aug. 2, 1990, I had become a "base of conspiracy" against Iraq. He pointed out that although Iraq had never accepted Resolution 660 [which demanded that Iraq unilaterally with-

draw from Kuwait], it had agreed in the early days of the crisis, to attend a mini-summit in Jeddah [Saudi Arabia] and had begun to withdraw its troops from Kuwait. But these efforts, which he stated were aimed at achieving "an Arab solution" were undermined by the introduction of foreign forces into the region, which heightened the threat posed to Iraq.

Criticizing what he called "precipitous" actions by the Security Council, he stated that Iraq had been tried *in absentia* and his foreign minister had been denied the facilities he needed to be able to present his case. Further, he stated that on earlier occasions when the Council called for the withdrawal of troops, this had been accompanied by a call for negotiations between the parties; withdrawal had not been set as precondition for such negotiations.

Moreover, he cited examples of Israeli occupation and annexation, noting that Israel had never been subjected to sanctions or outside military intervention as a means of ensuring compliance with Security Council resolutions. This, he stated, was indicative of a double standard that persisted until the present. It was unfortunate, he said, that his initiatives of Aug. 12 and 19, which had advocated the application of a single standard and set of principles in addressing comprehensively the issues of the region, had never been seriously considered.

On the question of withdrawal, the President stated that the Iraqi people today regarded Kuwait as Iraq's "19th Province," and "would not even whisper the word withdrawal," as war was looming and such an utterance would give a psychological advantage to Iraq's adversaries. At the same time, Iraq was prepared for an in-depth dialogue.

In my meeting with the foreign minister, Mr. Tariq Aziz repeatedly stressed Iraq's desire for dialogue with the United States, the European Community and the Arab states.

The President stated that his government was prepared to discuss a "package deal" because, in such an arrangement, each party knew exactly what it would have to give and what it would receive. The Iraqi people were, he said, "ready to sacrifice for the cause of peace" if others would do the same (emphasis added).

On two separate occasions during our meeting, the President called on me to use my good offices, saying that if the other parties were to permit me to play a role in the search of a solution, Iraq would facilitate my task and cooperate with me. In response to my comment that this idea would be a non-starter if the position of Iraq was irreversible on the subject of withdrawal of Kuwait, the President reacted by saying that that was not what he meant. He reiterated that I should try to engage the views of the parties, including Iraq, in order to make proposals that could lead to a solution. I explained to the President that, while I would reflect this suggestion in my report to the Security Council, I felt that any effort of mine would naturally need to be in furtherance of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.