

National Security Strategy of the United States

by Paul Wolf, 11 October 2002

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From: Paul Wolf <paulwolf@icdc.com>
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National Security Strategy of the United States

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.pdf>

High Crimes and Misdemeanors:

Why People Must Stop Bush's "Preemptive" War of Aggression

By Carl Messineo and Mara Verheyden-Hilliard

[The authors, attorneys and co-founders of the Partnership for Civil Justice (LDEF), are members of the national steering committee of the A.N.S.W.E.R. (Act Now to Stop War & End Racism) Coalition.]

George W. Bush has declared his intention to wage a 'preemptive' war against Iraq and is now seeking to strong-arm the international community, the U.N., and the Congress into support and submission. As members of Congress rush to show their obedience and member states of the U.N. line up to receive the anticipated spoils of war, the administration is now waging a campaign to convince the people of the United States to fall into step and finance with money and blood this war brought for conquest on behalf of the corporate and oil interests that make up Bush's true constituency.

Bush's preemptive war is a war of aggression. The U.S. policy supporting the war is not the

rule of law, but the rule of force.

But no U.N. resolution and no Congressional resolution can legalize an illegal war. With pen to paper and votes of support, they can only commit to wilful ratification, complicity and responsibility for illegal acts by endorsing a criminal enterprise.

A war of aggression violates the United States Constitution, the United Nations Charter, and the principles of the Nuremberg Tribunal. It violates the collective law of humanity that recognizes the immeasurable harm and unconscionable human suffering when a country engages in wars of aggression to advance its government's perceived national interests.

The National Security Strategy: Blueprint for Global Empire

On September 20, 2002, the Bush Administration issued its blueprint for global domination and ceaseless military interventions, in its comprehensive policy statement entitled "The National Security Strategy of the United States."

The National Security Strategy sets forth the U.S. military-industrial complex's ambition for the U.S. to remain the world's superpower with global political, economic and military dominance. The stated policy of the U.S. is "dissuading military competition" (See source I) and preventing any other world entity or union of states "from pursuing a military build-up in hopes of surpassing, or equaling, the power of the United States." (See source II)

The strategic plan elevates free trade and free markets to be "a moral principle . . . real freedom" (See source III) and endorses a comprehensive global conquest strategy utilizing the World Trade Organization, the Free Trade Act of the Americas, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, among other mechanisms.

The *Washington Post* reports that the National Security Strategy gives the United States "a nearly messianic role" in its quest for global dominance. (See source IV)

The National Security Strategy confirms and elaborates what was reflected in the January 2002 Nuclear Posture Review, that the Bush Administration maintains a policy of preemptive warfare contemplating the use of non-conventional weapons of mass destruction as a first strike measure. (See source V)

Turning Logic On Its Head

Bush's preemptive war policy is a war without just cause. Under international law and centuries of common legal usage, a preemptive war may be justified as an act of self defense only where there exists a genuine and imminent threat of physical attack.

Bush's preemptive war against Iraq doesn't even purport to preempt a physical attack. It purports to preempt a threat that is neither issued nor posed. Iraq is not issuing threats of attack against the United States. It is only the United States which threatens war.

It is not a war for disarmament. It is the U.S. which has stockpiled nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. It is the U.S. which is directly threatening to use these weapons against

another country. It is the U.S. which has bombed Iraq relentlessly for more than ten years, killing scores of innocent civilians.

The Bush Administration turns logic on its head, twisting reality in order to create the pretext for its war of aggression. The Administration claims that the necessary prerequisite of an imminent threat of attack can be found in the fact that there is no evidence of an imminent threat, and therefore the threat is even more sinister as a hidden threat. The lack of a threat becomes the threat, which becomes cause for war.

By the U.S. Government's own claims, it destroyed 80% of Iraq's weapons capability in the earlier Gulf War, and subsequently destroyed 90% of the remaining capacity through the weapons inspections process. There has been no evidence that Iraq is capable of an attack on the U.S., let alone possessing the intention of carrying out such an attack.

Bush's Proposed War and Current Threats Violate the U.S. Constitution, the U.N. Charter and International Law

Bush's preemptive war policy and proposed attack on Iraq cannot be justified under any form of established law.

The preemptive war policy and Bush's threatened new military assault on Iraq violates U.S. domestic law and international law. The warmongering, preparations for war, and threats of violence coming from Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice and other White House and Pentagon hawks, are in and of themselves violations of international law and constitute crimes against peace.

Article VI of the U.S. Constitution establishes that ratified treaties, such as the U.N. Charter, are the "supreme law of the land."

The Article 1 of the U.N. Charter establishes

"The purposes of the United Nations are . . . To maintain international peace and sovereignty, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removals of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace. . . ."

Article 2 states that all member states "shall act in accordance with the following Principles"

". . . All members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.

"All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations . . ."

Under this framework, acts of aggression, such as Bush's threatened attack, are to be suppressed and force is used only as a last and unavoidable resort.

The U.N. Charter was enacted in 1945 in the aftermath of the devastation and suffering of

World War II. The Charter was enacted to bring an end to acts of aggression, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind."

Disputes which might lead to a breach of the peace are required to be resolved *by peaceful means*.

Chapter VI of the U.N. Charter, "Pacific Settlement of Disputes," requires countries to "first of all, seek a resolution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice."

No Resolution by the U.N. Security Council can Legalize a Preemptive War or First Strike Plan

Bush has asked the U.N. Security Council to support execution of Bush's policy of a potentially nuclear "preemptive" war, as if that Council could endorse a war of aggression. The Security Council lacks the legal authority to grant such permission. The Security Council, by affirmative vote or by acquiescence to U.S. policy, cannot abrogate its own mandate. No collective action by the fifteen permanent and temporary members of the Security Council can lawfully violate the Charter which is the sole source of their collective authority.

This is made clear in the U.N. Charter itself, which provides in Article 24, that "In discharging these duties the Security Council *shall act in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations*."

While there are, of course, procedures by which collective use of force may be authorized by the Security Council to maintain or restore international peace and security (Articles 41 and 42) those procedures may not be used to endorse aggression in violation of the primary purposes of the U.N. Charter. Article 51 of the U.N. Charter acknowledges the right to self-defense "if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security." None of the provisions allow for authorization for Bush's war plans and first strike strategies. Any resolution authorizing a preemptive war of aggression is *ultra vires*, or null and void as beyond the authority of the Council to enact.

The very issuance of the Bush doctrine of preemptive warfare and also the threat to wage war against Iraq are, each, a violation of international law as a crime against peace, which is defined in the Nuremberg Charter as the "Planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances."

Responsibility for War Crimes

Neither Congress nor the President has the right to engage the U.S. in a war of aggression and any vote of endorsement, far from legalizing or legitimizing global war plans, serves only as ratification of war crimes. Under the principles of universal accountability established at Nuremberg, "The fact that a person who committed an act which constitutes a

crime under international law acted as Head of State or responsible Government official does not relieve him from responsibility under international law." (See source VI)

The execution of economic sanctions by the Bush I, Bush II and Clinton Administrations, which has caused the deaths of over one million people, primarily children and their grandparents, is likewise sanctionable as a crime against humanity under the Nuremberg Charter and under the International Criminal Court Statute as "the intentional infliction of conditions of life, . . . the deprivation of access of food to medicine, calculated to bring about the destruction of a part of a population. (See source VII)

The Bush Administration has rejected the International Criminal Court treaty signed by over 130 countries. This rejection is an admission of the administration's consciousness of guilt and of criminal intentions. The Bush administration acts with a conscious disregard of humanitarian laws and a stated intention to avoid accountability for their crimes under international law prohibiting crimes against the peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The National Security Strategy promulgated by the Bush administration states that the United States "will take the actions necessary to ensure that our efforts to meet our global security commitments and protect Americans are not impaired by the potential for investigations, inquiry or prosecution by the International Criminal Court (ICC), whose jurisdiction does not extend to Americans and which we do not accept." (See source VIII)

Endless War, Aggression and Terror

Once this policy of preemptive wars of aggression is invoked by the Bush Administration to justify unprovoked attacks against the centers of population in Iraq, the doctrine will be used by the hawks in the administration time and time again, and will also be adopted by nations and individuals internationally as a justification for the preemptive use of catastrophic violence against centers of population worldwide. The legitimization of preemptive wars of aggression will be used to justify attacks against U.S. centers of population, and will bring greater violent retribution upon the cities and people of the United States for actions that the government is taking in their names, without their informed consent.

The risk of suffering harm because of this doctrine is, of course, not distributed equally among all residents of the United States. Those who will lose their lives fighting in wars of aggression will be the young, disproportionately persons of color, and those who must enlist in the U.S. military because of bleak economic opportunity. Those who derive their wealth and security from the transactions of war, from increased oil profits caused by global instability or conquest of oil rich regions, and from the constant re-building and re-arming necessary to conduct endless wars against countless peoples premised on imperceptible threats -- they will have the means to acquire seclusion, protection and greater safety.

Preemptive war will not stop with Iraq. Constant military interventions worldwide are necessary to enforce Bush's stated policy of global economic, political and military domination. Just four days after the September 11th attacks, the CIA presented its "Worldwide Attack Matrix" identifying scores of countries that the CIA wanted permission to attack. Bush approved the CIA wish list, and authorized immediate covert and lethal CIA operations in over sixty nations. (See source IX)

Taking to the Streets

As the U.S. moves at breakneck pace in execution of its stated policy of global domination and overt military interventions, the need for the people to take action is urgent.

Congress will not stop this policy of aggressive warfare and global domination. Many in Congress are well served with the tithing of the war profiteers and their corporate sponsors who see U.S. military domination as a way to enforce their interests, to exploit human labor at starvation wages overseas and to drive down wages domestically, to mine vast sources of environmental resources globally, and to impose and expand the reach of their "free" markets.

The U.S. Constitutional framework provides that, regardless of who temporarily holds office, all power remains in the hands of the people. It is time now for the people to take the reins of power back from those who have stated their intention to act in violation of all laws that humankind has struggled to create to end global conflagration and prohibit wars of aggression.

When law will not restrain the government, the people must. We must take to the streets in mass numbers in organized and spontaneous acts of resistance. The message must be clearly conveyed that if the Bush administration refuses to be accountable to U.S. domestic law, to the U.N. Charter, to international law, to all known standards of just conduct, then the people of conscience within the United States will rise up to demand accountability. And the message must be sent that the people of the U.S. will not allow the Bush administration to spend the blood of the people of the United States and the people of Iraq who are not our enemies, in a needless war for oil.

SEPTEMBER, 2002

The authors, Carl Messineo and Mara Verheyden-Hilliard, constitutional law and human rights lawyers, are the co-founders of the Partnership for Civil Justice Legal Defense and Education Fund, a public interest legal organization in Washington, D.C., and authors of the forthcoming book *Empire at Home: George W. Bush and John Ashcroft v. the Bill of Rights*.

For more information, contact:
Partnership for Civil Justice LDEF
1901 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Suite 607
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 530-5630
<http://www.civil-rights.net/>

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Ramsey Clark Open Letter To UN Security Council International Action Center

www.iacenter.org

September 20, 2002

Secretary General Kofi Annan
United Nations New York, NY

Dear Secretary General Annan,

George Bush will invade Iraq unless restrained by the United Nations. Other international organizations -- including the European Union, the African Union, the OAS, the Arab League, stalwart nations courageous enough to speak out against superpower aggression, international peace movements, political leadership, and public opinion within the United States -- must do their part for peace. If the United Nations, above all, fails to oppose a U.S. invasion of Iraq, it will forfeit its honor, integrity and *raison d'être*. A military attack on Iraq is obviously criminal; completely inconsistent with urgent needs of the Peoples of the United Nations; unjustifiable on any legal or moral ground; irrational in light of the known facts; out of proportion to other existing threats of war and violence; and a dangerous adventure risking continuing conflict throughout the region and far beyond for years to come. The most careful analysis must be made as to why the world is subjected to such threats of violence by its only superpower, which could so safely and importantly lead us on the road to peace, and how the UN can avoid the human tragedy of yet another major assault on Iraq and the powerful stimulus for retaliatory terrorism it would create.

1. President George Bush Came to Office Determined to Attack Iraq and Change its Government.

George Bush is moving apace to make his war unstoppable and soon. Having stated last Friday that he did not believe Iraq would accept UN inspectors, he responded to Iraq's prompt, unconditional acceptance by calling any reliance on it a "false hope" and promising to attack Iraq alone if the UN does not act. He is obsessed with the desire to wage war against Iraq and install his surrogates to govern Iraq by force. Days after the most bellicose address ever made before the United Nations -- an unprecedented assault on the Charter of the United Nations, the rule of law and the quest for peace -- the U.S. announced it was changing its stated targets in Iraq over the past eleven years, from retaliation for threats and attacks on U.S. aircraft which were illegally invading Iraq's airspace on a daily basis. How serious could those threats and attacks have been if no U.S. aircraft was ever hit? Yet hundreds of people were killed in Iraq by U.S. rockets and bombs, and not just in the so called "no fly zone," but in Baghdad itself. Now the U.S. proclaims its intentions to destroy major military facilities in Iraq in preparation for its invasion, a clear promise of aggression now. Every day there are threats and more propaganda is unleashed to overcome resistance to George Bush's rush to war. The acceleration will continue until the tanks roll, unless nonviolent persuasion prevails.

2. George Bush Is Leading the United States and Taking the UN and All Nations Toward a Lawless World of Endless Wars.

George Bush in his "War on Terrorism" has asserted his right to attack any country, organization, or people first, without warning in his sole discretion. He and members of his administration have proclaimed the old restraints that law sought to impose on aggression by governments and repression of their people, no longer consistent with national security. Terrorism is such a danger, they say, that necessity compels the U.S. to strike first to destroy the potential for terrorist acts from abroad and to make arbitrary arrests, detentions, interrogations, controls and treatment of people abroad and within the U.S. Law has become the enemy of public safety. "Necessity is the argument of tyrants." "Necessity never makes a good bargain." Heinrich Himmler, who instructed the Nazi Gestapo "Shoot first, ask questions later, and I will protect you," is vindicated by George Bush. Like the Germany described by Jorge Luis Borges in *Deutsches Requiem*, George Bush has now "proffered (to the world) violence and faith in the sword," as Nazi Germany did. And as Borges wrote, it did not matter to faith in the sword that Germany was defeated. "What matters is that violence ... now rules." Two generations of Germans have rejected that faith. Their perseverance in the pursuit of peace will earn the respect of succeeding generations everywhere.

The Peoples of the United Nations are threatened with the end of international law and protection for human rights by George Bush's war on terrorism and determination to invade Iraq. Since George Bush proclaimed his "war on terrorism," other countries have claimed the right to strike first. India and Pakistan brought the Earth and their own people closer to nuclear conflict than at any time since October 1962 as a direct consequence of claims by the U.S. of the unrestricted right to pursue and kill terrorists, or attack nations protecting them, based on a unilateral decision without consulting the

United Nations, a trial, or revealing any clear factual basis for claiming its targets are terrorists and confined to them. There is already a near epidemic of nations proclaiming the right to attack other nations or intensify violations of human rights of their own people on the basis of George Bush's assertions of power in the war against terrorism.

Mary Robinson, in her quietly courageous statements as her term as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ended, has spoken of the "ripple effect" U.S. claims of right to strike first and suspend fundamental human rights protection is having.

On September 11, 2002, Colombia, whose new administration is strongly supported by the U.S., "claimed new authority to arrest suspects without warrants and declare zones under military control," including "New powers, which also make it easier to wiretap phones and limit foreigners' access to conflict zones... allow security agents to enter your house or office without a warrant at any time of day because they think you're suspicious." These additional threats to human rights follow Post-September 11 emergency" plans to set up a network of a million informants in a nation of forty million. See, *New York Times*, September 12, 2002, p. A7.

3. The United States, Not Iraq, Is the Greatest Single Threat to the Independence and Purpose of the United Nations.

President Bush's claim that Iraq is a threat justifying war is false. Eighty percent of Iraq's military capacity was destroyed in 1991 according to the Pentagon. Ninety percent of materials and equipment required to manufacture weapons of mass destruction was destroyed by UN inspectors during more than eight years of inspections. Iraq was powerful, compared to most of its neighbors, in 1990. Today it is weak. One infant out of four born live in Iraq weighs less than 2 kilos, promising short lives, illness and impaired development. In 1989, fewer than one in twenty infants born live weighed less than two kilos. Any threat to peace Iraq might become is remote, far less than that of many other nations and groups and cannot justify a violent assault. An attack on Iraq will make attacks in retaliation against the U.S. and governments which support its actions far more probable for years to come. George Bush proclaims Iraq a threat to the authority of the United Nations while U.S.- coerced UN sanctions continue to cause the death rate of the Iraqi people to increase. Deaths caused by sanctions have been at genocidal levels for twelve years. Iraq can only plead helplessly for an end to this crime against its people. The UN role in the sanctions against Iraq compromise and stain the UN's integrity and honor. This makes it all the more important for the UN now to resist this war. Inspections were used as an excuse to continue sanctions for eight years while thousands of Iraqi children and elderly died each month. Iraq is the victim of criminal sanctions that should have been lifted in 1991. For every person killed by terrorist acts in the U.S. on 9/11, five hundred people have died in Iraq from sanctions.

It is the U.S. that threatens not merely the authority of the United Nations, but its independence, integrity and hope for effectiveness. The U.S. pays UN dues if, when and in the amount it chooses. It coerces votes of members. It coerces choices of personnel on the Secretariat. It rejoined UNESCO to gain temporary favor after 18

years of opposition to its very purposes. It places spies in UN inspection teams.

The U.S. has renounced treaties controlling nuclear weapons and their proliferation, voted against the protocol enabling enforcement of the Biological Weapons Convention, rejected the treaty banning land mines, endeavored to prevent its creation and since to cripple the International Criminal Court, and frustrated the Convention on the Child and the prohibition against using children in war. The U.S. has opposed virtually every other international effort to control and limit war, protect the environment, reduce poverty and protect health.

George Bush cites two invasions of other countries by Iraq during the last 22 years. He ignores the many scores of U.S. invasions and assaults on other countries in Africa, Asia, and the Americas during the last 220 years, and the permanent seizure of lands from Native Americans and other nations -- lands like Florida, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, California, and Puerto Rico, among others, seized by force and threat. In the same last 22 years the U.S. has invaded, or assaulted Grenada, Nicaragua, Libya, Panama, Haiti, Somalia, Sudan, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and others directly, while supporting assaults and invasions elsewhere in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

It is healthy to remember that the U.S. invaded and occupied little Grenada in 1983 after a year of threats, killing hundreds of civilians and destroying its small mental hospital, where many patients died. In a surprise attack on the sleeping and defenseless cities of Tripoli and Benghazi in April 1986, the U.S. killed hundreds of civilians and damaged four foreign embassies. It launched 21 Tomahawk cruise missiles against the Khartoum in August 1998, destroying the source of half the medicines available to the people of Sudan. For years it has armed forces in Uganda and southern Sudan fighting the government of Sudan. The U.S. has bombed Iraq on hundreds of occasions since the Gulf War, including this week, killing hundreds of people without a casualty or damage to an attacking plane.

4. Why Has George Bush Decided The U.S. Must Attack Iraq Now?

There is no rational basis to believe Iraq is a threat to the United States, or any other country. The reason to attack Iraq must be found elsewhere. As governor of Texas, George Bush presided over scores of executions, more than any governor in the United States since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976 (after a hiatus from 1967). He revealed the same zeal he has shown for "regime change" for Iraq when he oversaw the executions of minors, women, retarded persons and aliens whose rights under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of notification of their arrest to a foreign mission of their nationality were violated. The Supreme Court of the U.S. held that executions of a mentally retarded person constitute cruel and unusual punishment in violation of the U.S. Constitution. George Bush addresses the United Nations with these same values and willfulness.

His motives may include to save a failing Presidency which has converted a healthy economy and treasury surplus into multi-trillion dollar losses; to fulfill the dream, which will become a nightmare, of a new world order to serve special interests in the

U.S.; to settle a family grudge against Iraq; to weaken the Arab nation, one people at a time; to strike a Muslim nation to weaken Islam; to protect Israel, or make its position more dominant in the region; to secure control of Iraq's oil to enrich U.S. Interests, further dominate oil in the region and control oil prices. Aggression against Iraq for any of these purposes is criminal and a violation of a great many international conventions and laws including the General Assembly Resolution on the Definition of Aggression of December 14, 1974.

Prior regime changes by the U.S. brought to power among a long list of tyrants, such leaders as the Shah of Iran, Mobutu in the Congo, Pinochet in Chile, all replacing democratically elected heads of government.

5. A Rational Policy Intended to Reduce the Threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction in The Middle East Must Include Israel.

A UN or U.S. policy of selecting enemies of the U.S. for attack is criminal and can only heighten hatred, division, terrorism and lead to war. The U.S. gives Israel far more aid per capita than the total per capita income of sub Sahara Africans from all sources. U.S.-coerced sanctions have reduced per capita income for the people of Iraq by 75% since 1989. Per capita income in Israel over the past decade has been approximately 12 times the per capita income of Palestinians. Israel increased its decades- long attacks on the Palestinian people, using George Bush's proclamation of war on terrorism as an excuse, to indiscriminately destroy cities and towns in the West Bank and Gaza and seize more land in violation of international law and repeated Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Israel has a stockpile of hundreds of nuclear warheads derived from the United States, sophisticated rockets capable of accurate delivery at distances of several thousand kilometers, and contracts with the U.S. for joint development of more sophisticated rocketry and other arms with the U.S. Possession of weapons of mass destruction by a single nation in a region with a history of hostility promotes a race for proliferation and war. The UN must act to reduce and eliminate all weapons of mass destruction, not submit to demands to punish areas of evil and enemies of the superpower that possesses the majority of all such weapons and capacity for their delivery. Israel has violated and ignored more UN Resolutions for forty years than any other nation. It has done so with impunity.

The violation of Security Council resolutions cannot be the basis for a UN-approved assault on any nation, or people, in a time of peace, or the absence of a threat of imminent attack, but comparable efforts to enforce Security Council resolutions must be made against all nations who violate them.

6. The Choice Is War Or Peace.

The UN and the U.S. must seek peace, not war. An attack on Iraq may open a Pandora's box that will condemn the world to decades of spreading violence. Peace is not only possible; it is essential, considering the heights to which science and technology have raised the human art of planetary and self-destruction. If George Bush is permitted to attack Iraq with or without the approval of the UN, he will become Public Enemy Number One -- and the UN itself worse than useless, an accomplice in

the wars it was created to end. The Peoples of the World then will have to find some way to begin again if they hope to end the scourge of war. This is a defining moment for the United Nations. Will it stand strong, independent and true to its Charter, international law and the reasons for its being, or will it submit to the coercion of a superpower leading us toward a lawless world and condone war against the cradle of civilization?

Do not let this happen.

Sincerely,
Ramsey Clark

The View From the Other Side:

Two washingtonpost.com Reporters Describe Their Time in Police Custody

By Michael Bruno and Christina Pino-Marina, *Washington Post*, 27 September 2002

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A13430-2002Sep27?language=printer>

Plastic handcuffs are an interesting topic of discussion and good fodder for jokes when you're killing time while being detained by the police.

Oh yeah, they also hurt.

We were in Pershing Square on Friday morning, where several hundred protesters had gathered without a permit to demonstrate against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Police on foot, horseback, and motorcycles had completely surrounded the park by 9:30 a.m. By 10:15 a.m, the demonstrators were tiring out. Some reporters were leaving and protesters were singing, dancing and, in some cases, napping.

A Metrobus appeared at the southwest end of the park at the corner of 15th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue.

Then it happened.

Without an announcement or command of any sort, the police, who had seemed far away just moments before, suddenly advanced toward the protesters and reporters and began to corral everyone toward the bus. Some people were pushed to the ground, dragged down a sidewalk, handcuffed with hands behind their backs, and escorted onto the bus.

So, what's it like to be rounded up during a protest? Confusing and intimidating, to say the least.

Despite having identified ourselves as news reporters several times, we were grabbed forcefully by police officers in riot gear, handcuffed and led to Metrobus No. 8771 with 34 protesters and an indignant United Press International reporter.

Aboard the bus, no charges were ever announced, and we watched as other journalists being allowed to leave.

Plastic handcuffs look flimsy, but they hurt. When cinched tightly around our wrists, they dug into our skin and our hands turned a reddish-purple color as numbness in our fingers set in.

Inside the bus, the mood was subdued and contemplative. Stunned protesters as young as 17 sat with activists decades older. Few talked at first, but the painful handcuffs proved to be the icebreaker.

One of the police officers started it off.

"OK, whoever wants the air conditioning on, raise your hand."

A protester then introduced himself with a smile.

"I'd shake your hand, but..."

Once the bus was moving, another protester, wearing a Redskins cap, stood up with his back to an open window and stuck his handcuffed hands outside. "I don't want people to think we're just commuters in here."

The jovial police officer was suddenly not amused. The man rushed over and pulled the protester over to a seat near the front of the bus, where he would stay under the officer's watchful eye for the remainder of the bus trip. The driver took us through downtown Washington, onto 395 and 295, and finally to the police academy at 4665 Blue Plains Ave. in Southwest Washington.

Oddly, the 15-minute ride was long enough for the police officer and the young man in the Redskins cap to strike up a friendly conversation about the relative merit of the Redskins and the Baltimore Ravens.

Once we arrived at the police academy, protesters in the now parked bus started asking to have their handcuffs loosened. Police officer J.R. King helped out by swapping the tight handcuffs for thinner, more forgiving ones.

Protesters' questions about what charges they faced remained unanswered. Several turned to their seatmates to strike up cell- phone partnerships. With everyone in handcuffs, one person would retrieve the other person's phone, dial a number, and stand up to hold it next to the other person's ear. It worked for us, too. Some callers were telling friends where they were; others were seeking legal advice.

One young protester reclined with his cell phone wedged in place between the bus seat and his ear.

"Should we give them our names?" he asked the person on the other end of the line.

By noon, 11 buses had arrived at the police academy, forming a line so long that some had to park outside of the grounds. Our wait would be much shorter than the others who were being detained. Our staff worked with police officials to clear up the matter and we were released without any charges at 1 p.m.

Just before exiting the bus, we had a conversation with Chris Downes, a peace activist from Fairfax. He recalled his experience at Pershing Square.

"Somebody walked up behind me and grabbed me by my knees, and basically threw me face first into the ground, handcuffed me and directed me on the bus," he said. "I had the intention of not getting arrested."

So did we.

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I couldn't resist reposting this article about the last war in Iraq.
- Paul

Annals Of War - Overwhelming Force

by Seymour Hersh, *The New Yorker Magazine*, 22 May 2000

<http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v00/n000/a151.html>

"While other American soldiers and their commanders stopped and cheered the ceasefire, McCaffrey quietly continued to move his combat forces. On the morning of the ceasefire, February 28th, they were approximately twenty-five miles west of the Lake Hammar causeway; by the eve of the Battle of Rumaila, two days later, he had expanded his area of operations. The 24th Division was now within striking distance of a seventeen-mile access road connecting the highway to the causeway, one of the few known pathways out of the marshes and desert in southern Iraq."

...

"Shortly after dawn on March 2nd, a unit reported to McCaffrey's command post that it was being fired upon by the retreating Iraqis and that it had returned fire in self-defense. These were the opening shots of the Battle of Rumaila."

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