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Scott Ritter

Saddam's Arms-Control Foe to Speak at IWU, April 6

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Former U.N. Arms Hunter in Iraq Quit Job Amidst Controversy

"As a chief weapons inspector for the United Nations Special Commission in Iraq, Scott Ritter was labeled a hero by some, a maverick by others, and a spy by the Iraqi government. In charge of searching out weapons of mass destruction hidden by the world's most ruthless dictatorship, Ritter was on the front lines of the ongoing battle against arms proliferation."

--From a biography of Scott Ritter

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--He's a tough-talking ex-Marine.

He got Saddam Hussein so mad, the Iraqi strongman tried to get him booted off the United Nations' inspection team hunting for Baghdad's secret weapons.

He got so mad, he took his job and shoved it, charging the United States was in the shadows blocking crucial Iraqi arms inspections, while publicly calling for complete and open weapons checks.

Now, Scott Ritter, a 36-year-old former intelligence officer who led U.N. arms inspectors in Baghdad, will bring his eyewitness insights into Iraq, Saddam Hussein, weapons of mass destruction, and Clinton administration foreign policy to Illinois Wesleyan University.

His April 6 (Tuesday) speech is titled, "Inside the Terror: The Truth about Iraq." Ritter will speak at 7:30 p.m. at the Shirk Center, 302 E. Emerson, Bloomington. His speech is open to the public, free-of-charge.

Recent Controversy

Ritter has been in a continuing squabble with the Pentagon over a forthcoming book in which he is expected to accuse the Clinton administration of establishing roadblocks in the search for evidence of Iraqi chemical and biological weapons. According to published reports, Ritter's book also will detail some of his work for the United Nations.

In February, the Defense Department wrote Ritter's lawyer, saying the former arms inspector was required to turn over the book for a security review prior to publication. Such a move would be likely to delay publication, scheduled for this month.

Ritter has balked at the Pentagon's demand, charging the government's action is an effort to silence him. Court action is possible.

Ritter's Criticisms Continue

In the aftermath of last December's Anglo-American bombing of Iraq, Ritter accused the United States of maneuvering U.N. arms inspectors in Iraq into providing a pretext or provocation for the attacks.

Noting the predictability of Iraq's response, Ritter told the BBC, according to CNN, that: "That response would be used as a justification for military action."

Ritter, who served in the 1991 Gulf War under now retired U.S. Army Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, has been described by Fox News as "an unusually colorful figure in the scientific-military community."

Role as U.N. Arms Inspector

Ritter joined the United Nations' arms inspection effort in Iraq in 1991.

Subsequently, his presence on U.N. inspection teams became a flash point with the Iraqi government. In January, 1998, Baghdad barred Ritter and his inspection squad from visiting so-called presidential sites throughout Iraq, charging he was a spy and that the inspectors were dominated by Americans and Britons.

The U.N. inspectors' mission was to certify that Iraq was free of weapons of mass destruction before economic sanctions, residue of the Gulf War, could be lifted.

Iraq's Secret Weapons

According to newspaper accounts, Ritter believes:

- Iraq has implosion-type nuclear devices, which could become atomic bombs if fissionable material is obtained.
- Iraq over-declared the number of chemical-warfare bombs and tonnage it used in the 1980s Iran-Iraq War.

Consequently, chemical agents officially listed as expended, may still be in Iraq's arsenal.

- Evidence exists showing Iraq tested biological weapons on people four years ago.
- Despite claims to the contrary, Iraq does have a missile force.

Diplomatic Bickering

Ritter departed Iraq on Jan. 16, 1998, as part of the tussle over inspecting alleged presidential palaces. The U.S. threatened to attack Iraq, if inspectors were not given access to the controversial sites. Iraq argued such inspections violated its sovereignty.

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan brokered a deal in February, where Iraq promised to let the inspectors do their job.

The agreement was okayed by the U.N. Security Council, which warned Baghdad of "severest consequences" for failure to comply.

Ritter and his team of 50 inspectors returned to Baghdad early in March. The official Iraqi news agency said the team will "carry out inspections, including surprise inspections, to some of the sensitive sites."

By the fall of 1998, Ritter had quit his job.

"Ritter was so effective at weeding out Saddam's weapons," CBN News online reported last September, "that the Iraqis launched a huge campaign to get him booted off the inspections teams. The Iraqis couldn't get rid of him, but now the U.S. has.

"He has resigned in protest," the news service added, "accusing the Clinton administration of publicly demanding full, unfettered inspections, but blocking them behind the scenes."

Ritter was quoted as saying: "The U.S. has intervened at least six times to stop inspections."

New York Times' Columnist Responds

In the aftermath of Ritter's resignation, New York Times' columnist A.M. Rosenthal wrote: "I trust the people at the U.N. and in Washington who tell me that Mr. Ritter was telling the truth. Bolstering them is the evidence of American journalists, who even before the Ritter resignation were documenting U.S. diplomacy against surprise inspections that might upset Saddam and our allies who want his business back."

Rosenthal, a former New York Times editor and Pulitzer Prize-winning foreign correspondent, added: "I hope someday his [Ritter's] twin 5-year-old girls read this job assessment of their father:

"Brave in service against state terrorism, even braver in resigning to speak truths, and admirable in the faith that his countrymen will recognize awaiting dangers, if told by those who know.

"If all that is the mark of an innocent, send in more."

Takes Case to U.S. Senate

Ritter took his case to the U.S. Senate on Sept. 3, 1998, charging the U.S. was balking at conducting the inspections, fearing another scuffle with Saddam, and saying the United States was having trouble rallying support for a fight at home and overseas.

In a news interview following his Senate testimony, Ritter charged: "There has been direct intervention by this administration to prevent us from carrying out disarmament inspections, and

that's wrong. That's giving Iraq another victory, making them stronger and making world consensus more fractured and weaker."

Ritter argued that if Saddam goes unchallenged, he'd be positioned to use weapons of mass destruction.

Iraq's Codes Broken, Ritter Claims

The Israeli newspaper, Ha'aretz, reported on Sept. 29, 1998: "Former U.N. arms inspector Scott Ritter tells Ha'aretz that the U.N. inspectors had broken Iraq's code for hiding missiles, just before the inspections were stopped.

"Over an extended period," the newspaper added, "Ritter and other inspectors worked to break the code Saddam was using to issue instructions involving the movement of weapons Iraq wanted to keep hidden from inspectors . . .

"What few know," the newspaper revealed, "is that the U.N. inspectors, with Israeli help, eventually broke the Iraqi code and were on the verge of a major breakthrough in uncovering concealed weaponry. Then, this summer, the inspections were halted. That's when Ritter quit his job, out of pure frustration, he says."

Ritter explained: "We cracked the code, not Israel. Israel was not in the lead on this, but I can say that UNSCOM [U.N.Special Commission] could not have solved this problem without the help of Israel. It's absolutely essential."

Saddam's Strategy

Ritter charged in the newspaper interview that Saddam Hussein had issued a presidential directive ordering Iraq to lie to the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency in a ploy to secure Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. He also said that special presidential security forces, the Special Security Organization and Special Republican Guard, were assigned responsibility for safekeeping Iraq's secret weapons.

Abed Hamid Mahmoud, Saddam's secretary, bodyguard, and confidant, was fingered by Ritter in the Ha'aretz interview as the shadowy figure behind Iraq's efforts to hide its secret weapons.

Israeli Links Detailed

Ritter also revealed that he teamed up with Israel in 1994 to help put an end to Saddam's weapon's shell game.

"One reason why I went to Israel and started working with the Israelis," Ritter told the newspaper, "is because I believe that the methodology that Israel uses to hunt down terrorists is the same methodology we needed to use to go after the weapons of mass destruction. So I asked Israel to help the [U.N.] commission formulate analytical models, analytical techniques, and to advise on operational issues."

Ritter added: "I can honestly say that if it weren't for Israel, the Special Commission would not have been able to carry out the anti-concealment effort."

According to Ritter, former U.N. Special Commission Chairman Rolf Ekeus gave the green light to Ritter's Israeli gambit.

As a result of working as an UNSCOM-Israel go-between, Ritter was targeted by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as a possible espionage agent, resulting in a FBI probe.

"I think they were concerned that I was providing Israel with classified U.S. information," Ritter told the Israeli newspaper, referring to the FBI investigation. He denied the charge.

About Iraq

Iraq is a Middle Eastern nation about twice the size of Idaho, with a population of about 21.7 million, bordering the Persian Gulf between Iran and Kuwait.

Saddam Hussein has been president of Iraq since 1979. The country's president and vice president are elected by a two-thirds majority of the Revolutionary Command Council. The last election was held in 1995; the next election is slated for 2002.

There is a unicameral National Assembly or Majlis with 250 seats?30 members are appointed by Saddam Hussein to represent three northern provinces, while 220 members are elected by popular vote. Members serve four-year terms.

Activities of political parties are severely restricted. Opponents of the regime can be found among disaffected elements of the ruling Ba'th party, Army officers, tribes, and Shi'a religious, and ethnic Kurdish dissidents.

The Ba'thist regime engages in extensive central economic planning and management of industrial production and foreign trade, leaving some small-scale industry, services, and most agriculture to private enterprise. The oil sector dominates the Iraqi economy, which had a 0 percent growth rate, according to 1997 estimates.

Financial problems, spurred by massive expenditures to support an eight-year war with Iran in the 1980s and damage to oil export facilities, have triggered austerity measures, including taking on national debt and rescheduling of foreign debt payments. Iraq suffered economic losses estimated at \$100 billion as a result of the war with Iran.

Economic woes also have resulted from the government's policy of earmarking many resources to the military and internal security forces, as well as the plunging price of oil. At current prices, oil exports are about one-third of their prewar level because of the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 986--the U.N's oil-for-goods program, in December 1996. Under this measure, Iraq is allowed to export \$2 billion worth of oil in exchange for badly needed food and medicine.

Ritter's Background

Ritter is a ballistic missile technology expert, who worked in military intelligence during a dozen-year career in the U.S. armed forces. He had assignments in the former Soviet Union and the Middle East.

A former major in the U.S. Marine Corps, Ritter also spent several months of the Gulf War, serving with Marine Central Command headquarters in Saudi Arabia.

In 1991, Ritter joined the U.N. weapons inspection team--or UNSCOM. He took part in more than 30 inspection missions, 14 of them as chief.

His team in 1995 discovered missile guidance equipment that Iraq had purchased from Russia through a Palestinian agent.

Ritter led the UN weapons inspection team into Iraq in January 1998 only to be blocked from weapons sites by Iraqi officials. Accusing him of spying, Iraq refused Ritter and his team an escort to inspection sites, thereby barring them from doing their job.

As global politics heated up, Ritter and his team left Iraq. They returned in early March 1998 with a promise of full cooperation from Iraqi officials. However, in August, Iraq again balked at cooperating with U.N. inspectors.

Returning to the United States, Ritter resigned from the inspection team, protesting the inability of the U.S. and U.N. to come to an agreement with Iraq.

Ritter was born in Florida and raised all over the world in a career military family. He is a graduate of Franklin and Marshall College in Pennsylvania, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Soviet history.

About IWU

Ritter's IWU appearance is sponsored by the Student Senate.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, and a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts.