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# Alternative Options

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# Alternative Options

guest column by | OMAR TESDELL

January saw the explosion of the anti-war movement. Hundreds of thousands of Americans joined many more around the world to oppose an attack on Iraq in demonstrations centered in San Francisco and Washington, D.C. Almost immediately, the Bush administration, damaged by France and Germany's refusal to support the war, found itself having to dream up excuses for the militarism.

This is not a movement reserved for 30-year veterans of the great anti-war struggle. I saw it with my own eyes. The national demonstration in Washington, D.C. was made up of union members, suburban dads and moms, veterans of wars and brothers dressed right out of Reaction Kenneth Cole ads.

But as the movement mounts, some people ask difficult questions. "If not war, then what?" is one of the most common.

There are no simple answers. But scholars and activists have some ideas.

The following come from longtime lobby groups such as the Friends Committee on National Legislation, United for Peace and Global Exchange.

So, in the list-making convention of this issue, I offer two reasons to

oppose an attack and three alternatives to such a war.

First, Iraq does not pose a clear and imminent threat. During the 1990s, United Nations weapons inspectors dismantled all of Iraq's major chemical, biological and nuclear weapons facilities and destroyed nearly all of Iraq's weapons and long-range missiles. Given Hussein's brutal but not suicidal history, and a natural desire for self-preservation, it is highly unlikely he would launch any attack that would result in his destruction, unless he was provoked.

Second, an attack on Iraq will likely make us *less* safe. Attacking Iraq without provocation will ignite anti-American sentiment around the world. Any violent action would also further destabilize a region already inflamed by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As for alternatives, first, allow the U.N. weapons inspectors the time and resources to complete their task. These inspections are the safest, most effective and least expensive way to be sure Iraq does not possess weapons of mass destruction.

Second, expand and enhance programs to secure and destroy weapons of mass destruction in the former Soviet Union

and elsewhere. The Nunn-Lugar threat reduction program called for an eight- to ten- year, \$30 billion strategic plan to safeguard or destroy all nuclear weapons — usable materials in Russia must be given top priority. Why spend a few million on prevention when we can line the pockets of Lockheed-Martin execs with billions in war money?

Third, reduce U.S. oil dependency. SUV owners beware. The United State's over-dependency on oil gives inordinate power to Saddam Hussein. If we were to reduce our consumption of fossil fuels, increase energy efficiency and develop low-cost renewable energy sources, diplomatic leverage to reduce conflicts peacefully in the region would be greatly increased.

While the benefits of invading Iraq are muddy, the costs are all too apparent. Let us stop the war madness and focus on repairing international relations, perhaps getting into the business of preventing rather than inflaming conflict.

