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Iraq: Ten Years, a Million Lives, and Trillions of Dollars Later

By Rep. Dennis Kucinich

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Ten years ago the debate over the Iraq War came to Congress in the form of a resolution promoted by the Bush administration. The war in Iraq will cost the United States as much as \$5 trillion. It played a role in spurring the global financial crisis. Four thousand four hundred eighty-eight Americans were killed. More than 33,000 were injured.

As many as 1 million innocent Iraqi civilians were killed. The monetary cost of the war to Iraq is incalculable. A sectarian civil war has ravaged Iraq for nearly a decade. Iraq has become home to al-Qaeda.

The war in Iraq was sold to Congress and the American people with easily disproved lies. We must learn from this dark period in American history to ensure that we do not repeat the same mistakes. And we must hold accountable those who misled the American public.

On Oct. 2, 2002, the day the legislation to authorize war in Iraq was introduced, I sent and personally distributed a memo to my colleagues in Congress refuting point-by-point every reason given by the Bush administration to go to war.

On Oct. 3, 2002, I held a press conference with 25 members of Congress and then presented an hourlong explanation to Congress on the House floor, refuting the lies upon which the cause of war was predicated.

It was clear from information publicly available at the time that Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), that Iraq had no connection to 9/11, and that Iraq was not a threat to the United States. Anyone who wanted to look could have seen the same information that I did.

Yet some of America's top political leaders bought into the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld drumbeat of war. Two leading Democrats were among those taken in by the White House hype and the WMD argument:

"I believe the facts that have brought us to this fateful vote are not in doubt. Saddam Hussein is a tyrant who has tortured and killed his own people.... [I]ntelligence reports show that Saddam Hussein has worked to rebuild his chemical and biological weapons stock, his missile-delivery capability, and his nuclear program. He has also given aid, comfort, and sanctuary to terrorists, including al-Qaeda members." - Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), Oct. 10, 2002

"Sept. 11 was the ultimate wake-up call. We must now do everything in our power to prevent further terrorist attacks and ensure that an attack with a weapon of mass destruction cannot happen.... The first candidate we must worry about is Iraq.... [Saddam Hussein] continues to develop weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear devices." - Leader of the Democratic Caucus in the House, Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.), Oct. 10, 2002

Even the most trusted newspapers around the country blindly repeated as fact grossly incorrect assertions by leaders of both parties:

"No further debate is needed to establish that Saddam Hussein is an evil dictator whose continued effort to build unconventional weapons in defiance of clear United Nations prohibitions threatens the Middle East and beyond." - *The New York Times* Editorial Board, Oct. 3, 2002

Notwithstanding the blizzard of disinformation, 133 members of Congress voted against the resolution that authorized the use of military force in Iraq, including nearly two-thirds of the Democratic Caucus in the House. Seven Republicans, including Ron Paul (R-Texas), also voted against the resolution. In the Senate, the vote was 77 to 23 in favor of a war of choice.

Ten years ago Congress voted to wage war on a nation that did not attack us. That decision undermined our fiscal and national security. To this day we are suffering from the blowback. While most of the troops are home, the United States maintains a significant presence in Iraq through the State Department and its thousands of private security contractors.

The war against Iraq was based on lies. Thousands of Americans and perhaps a million Iraqis were sacrificed for those lies. The war in Afghanistan continues. New wars have been propagated in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia pursuant to the never-ending "War on Terror." This mindset puts us at the edge of war against Iran. Ten years and trillions of dollars later, the American people by and large still do not know the truth. It is time to usher in a new period of truth and reconciliation.