

PREVENTIVE WAR

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JUST PREVENTION

In their own way, McNamara and Pautz encapsulate the ongoing Catholic debate in anticipation of war with Iraq. On the one side, many Catholic leaders and groups, including Pope John Paul II, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishop Matthew H. Clark and the Priests' Council of the Diocese of Rochester, have called on the United States to refrain from attacking Iraq. Some such leaders have added that the concept of "preventive war," as it has been termed, does not appear in church teaching and does not square with traditional just-war theory. With no evidence that Iraq plans an attack against the United States, they say the war cannot be justified. The USCCB has posted several statements on the Iraqi crisis at www.usccb.org.

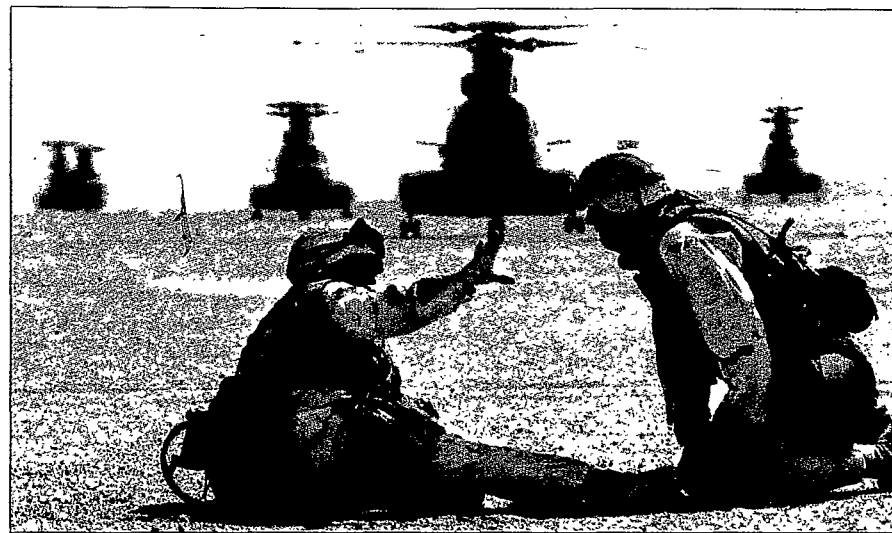
In general, church leaders have asked for weapons inspections to continue in Iraq and for economic sanctions to be lifted, since they affect only the Iraqi people and not the country's brutal dictatorship. Catholic leaders have also questioned the war's potential cost in both civilian and military lives. Indeed, McNamara echoed many Catholic leaders when she said the United States is in danger of becoming much like its enemy in its plans to launch a war.

"We're almost taking the same camp they are in being the aggressors, almost inviting them to bring on more terror," she said.

On the other side, Catholics such as theologian Michael Novak support U.S. officials in their claim that a war would be just because a new, terrifying era has arrived in history, compelling the United States to attack seats of terrorism such as Iraq before they manage to attack America through terrorist allies.

"We know from captured files and film in Afghanistan how eagerly al Qaeda has been seeking chemical and biological weapons that would wreak maximal destruction on civilian populations," Novak wrote in an opinion piece published in *National Review Online* Feb. 18. "Even before one has any knowledge of actual cooperation between Saddam and Osama bin Laden (or other terrorist groups), one can form a realistic judgment of probabilities."

Those who think like Novak wish to prevent future catastrophes similar to the events of Sept. 11, 2001, by replacing Iraq's anti-American regime with one committed to human rights and friendly relations with the United States. Pautz — who stressed that he hopes for peace, not



Reuters/CNS

U.S. Marine field commanders from the 15th Expeditionary Unit run a drill in the Kuwaiti desert near the border with Iraq Feb. 23.

war — neatly summed up in laymen's terms the position of those who support preventive war.

"Why wait until you get punched in the eye, if you know that bully down the street has historically punched people in the eye, if there's something you can do to prevent that?" he asked rhetorically.

Before Pautz's question can be answered, however, one must examine the just-war criteria outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, section 2309. Those criteria are as follows:

- Damage inflicted by an aggressor (such as Iraq) on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave and certain.
- All other means of putting an end to an aggressor's actions must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective.
- There must be serious prospects of success.
- The use of arms must not produce evils or disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.

During a U.S. State Department-arranged trip to the Vatican in February, Novak made a case that war against Iraq squares with the above criteria. He argued that Saddam Hussein had disrupted international order by refusing to disarm and that Iraqi weapons were at risk of falling into the hands of terrorists eager to strike anywhere without warning.

"A limited and carefully conducted war to bring about a regime change in Iraq is, as a last resort, morally obligatory," Novak said during a symposium organized by the State Department. "For public authorities to fail to conduct such a war would be to put their trust imprudently in the sanity and good will of Saddam Hussein."

On the one side, Iraq maintains weapons of mass destruction, Novak

said, and on the other side, international terrorists are seeking to procure them.

"All that is lacking between these two incendiary elements is a spark of contact," Novak said. "At any time, they could combine, in secret, to murder tens of thousands of innocent and unsuspecting citizens."

Novak, who eschews the term "preventive war," asserts that a war against Iraq would be a war of self-defense and one that fits the just-war mold.

"The war's already here," he said during a radio interview in Rome. "We can't prevent it."

PEACE CAMP

Many church thinkers severely criticized Novak for his stance, viewing it as an attempt to subvert church teaching. According to a Feb. 7 article in the *National Catholic Reporter*, 62 Catholic lay and religious leaders also criticized the State Department for bringing Novak to Rome, sending a signed letter of protest to the U.S. embassy in Rome. Among those who signed the letter were the president of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men; the coordinator of Pax Christi USA; and

the executive director of the U.S. Catholic Mission Association.

In part, these leaders were concerned that Novak's presentations would be seen as a "Catholic analysis" of the war, when, in fact, Novak is at odds with church leadership on the war.

"We are very concerned that you have selected one theologian to represent the U.S. Catholic community's position on the morality of this war without any consultation with recognized Catholic leaders in the U.S. who have helped many of us craft our clear and consistent message against (the Bush) administration's actions," the letter read. The U.S. ambassador responded by saying that Novak represented neither the church nor the U.S. government, but was a private citizen invited to comment on the issue.

As for preventive war itself, launching an attack on Iraq without proper justification could set a bad precedent, according to Gerard F. Powers, director of the U.S. bishop's Office of International Justice and Peace.

"Where would this doctrine lead?" Powers wrote in the article "An Ethical Analysis of War Against Iraq," which appears on the USCCB Web site. "What criteria would permit Pakistan, Israel and India to have nuclear weapons, but not Iraq, Iran or North Korea?" As for Iraq's alleged ties to al Qaeda, Powers added that the terrorist organization is estimated to have operated in some 60 countries, and that more substantial ties between Iraq and al Qaeda should be established.

"Based on available information, however," Powers wrote, "there is no new evidence, no new precipitating event, no new threatening actions by the Iraqi government, no new reason to go to war that did not exist one, two, four, or even six years ago. It is entirely legitimate to ask, therefore: Why now?"

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