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Bill Schlotter

FORMER DIPLOMAT TO GIVE VIEWS ON POSSIBLE WAR WITH IRAQ AT UCSB

A career American diplomat, Joseph C. Wilson IV served as deputy chief of mission in Iraq from 1988 to 1991. As such, he dealt with Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and was the last American official to meet with Saddam in the days preceding initiation of the Operation Desert Storm war with Iraq in 1991.

Such experience gives Wilson -- a 1972 graduate of the University of California, Santa Barbara -- a uniquely personal perspective on Iraq, its leader, and the potential consequences of trying to depose Saddam with military force. Wilson will share his thoughts on a possible U.S.-led war with Iraq in "Iraq: Disarmament or Conquest?," a free public lecture at 4 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 22 in UCSB's Campbell Hall. His appearance is part of the Global Forces in the Post Cold-War World lecture series sponsored by the UC Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, UCSB Arts and Lectures, the Global and International Studies Program, the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, the UCSB Office of Research, and others.

In a recent opinion piece published in the San Jose Mercury News, Wilson expressed his belief that while we cannot afford to ignore Saddam, a war to remove him would be both costly and bloody.

War with Iraq "ensures a bloody American invasion and long occupation of Iraq," he said.

To protect his power, "Saddam will use every weapon in his arsenal. You need look no further for evidence than his use of chemical weapons to repel Iranian invaders during the Iran-Iraq war. When cornered, Saddam is very likely to fight dirty."

Negotiation alone is not likely to work either, Wilson said. "Saddam has, after all, repeatedly flouted UN resolutions."

Based on his experiences of a decade ago, Wilson said Saddam's "malignant narcissism" makes him vulnerable when directly confronted or embarrassed.

"Our message to Saddam can be simple," he said. "You are going to lose your weapons-of-mass-destruction capability either through inspections or through a sustained cruise-missile assault."

If you rebuild them, we will attack again. And if you use weapons of mass destruction or attack another country, we will destroy you and your regime. The decision to live or die then becomes his to make."

"The ultimate lesson of the gulf war may be that when offered the choice, Saddam will sacrifice almost everything before sacrificing his own life or grip on power," Wilson said.

Wilson joined the U.S. Diplomatic Service in 1976 and retired in 1998. He spent much of his career in Africa, including stints as the U.S. ambassador to the Gabonese Republic and to the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe. He was a special assistant to President Bill Clinton and senior director for African Affairs at the National Security Council from June 1997 until July 1998. He is currently CEO of JC Wilson International Ventures Corp., an international business development and management company.

About UC Santa Barbara

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All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.