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Debate on Iraq Must Focus on UN Involvement

The expected debate on Australian involvement in an action against Iraq must resolve to act only in support of a United Nations operation and not in unilateral action by the USA, according to Peter Andren, Member for Calare.

“There is far too much at stake for our country to commit its defence forces, without qualification, to a unilateral decision by the United States to invade Iraq,” Mr Andren said.

“The Parliament should also vote only to support UN-sanctioned action.

“In addition to the potential loss of life and destruction, the volatility of Middle East politics could well have repercussions beyond the ousting of Saddam Hussein if the United Nations does not sanction the action.

“There must be concrete evidence of Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction and there must be UN approval.

“There is no denying that Saddam Hussein has a track record of waging war and crimes against his own people but we need to remember that it’s the people of Iraq who have suffered under his regime and from over ten years of economic sanctions.

“The war on terrorism should not be justification for the US to clean up past errors in judgement in its international politicking. We must remember the US propped up Saddam when Iran was the perceived threat.

“It’s imperative that Australian lives are not risked in a unilateral power play in the Middle East that has the potential to destabilise the entire region and bring about more widespread conflict, rather than achieving peace.

“A unilateral US invasion of Iraq and the establishment of a pro-western regime will serve only to fuel the fire of anti-American feeling in the region and unify those groups that promote it.

“Australia should be able to join New Zealand, Sweden and Denmark in trying to broker a Middle East peace rather than rushing in to support any unilateral action in Iraq.

“The United Nations too must stand up to Saddam and any other countries suspected of developing weapons of mass destruction.

“But we must also remember that weapons of mass or devastating destruction are also in the hands of the US itself, as well as Russia, China, India and Pakistan,” Mr Andren added.