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13th January 2003

AUSTRALIA SCORNING UNITED NATIONS –ANDREN

The Australian Government is treating the United Nations with contempt by committing forces to a strike against Iraq before the UN weapons inspectors have even provided their first report, according to Independent Member for Calare Peter Andren.

“Only the United Nations Security Council is empowered to determine whether military action is justified, and yet we now have the Australian Government detailing the air and naval forces we will be sending to the Gulf on top of the 60,000 US forces already deployed.

“The Prime Minister is saying on the one hand that he supports a peaceful solution to the Iraq issue while at the same time approving the placing of our elite special forces and naval and air forces on war alert.

“The United Nations chief weapons inspector Hans Blix says a thorough weapons inspection in Iraq could take twelve months. To date the inspectors have found no weapons of mass destruction, which begs the question why the urgency of the US-led military preparations and especially Australia’s early involvement without a UN mandate.

“Neither the US, Great Britain or Australia has established a clear case for any attack on Iraq.

“If the PM is listening to public opinion he should know a substantial majority of Australians oppose any action against Iraq without UN sanction.

“Despite this consistent public opposition to any unjustified invasion, when I moved in Parliament that we should only become involved with UN sanction, both Government and Opposition voted it down.

“Both the Government and Labor are hedging their bets on this issue, with one eye on the polls and the other on maintaining their sycophantic deputy sheriff role to the US.

“Iraq is the terrorism target you have when you don’t have a target and you can’t find Osama bin Ladin. This obsession with Saddam has more to do with securing oil reserves than with terrorism, and I’d suggest the current confrontation between the US and North Korea has far more dangers for world peace than does Saddam.

“Former Labor foreign affairs spokesman Laurie Brereton is right in saying that Iraq is not our problem and we should be ensuring our own local security, especially as our completely uncritical pro-US stance has made us a target for terrorism when we could have had a role in defusing regional tensions” Mr Andren said.

Mr Andren has asked people within his electorate to contact his office to record their opinion on Iraq, or to forward comments on the Your Say section of his website at www.peterandren.com

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: 6332 6229 OR 0419 612 891.

LOCAL EDS: Last paragraph might be useful as local lead.