

Military background

Ritter was born into a military family in 1961. He graduated from Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, with a Bachelor of Arts in the history of the Soviet Union and departmental honors. He was first in the U.S. Army serving as a Private in 1980. He was commissioned as an intelligence officer in the United States Marine Corps in May 1984. He served in this capacity for twelve years. He initially served as the lead analyst for the Marine Corps Rapid Deployment Force concerning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iran-Iraq War. During Desert Storm, he served as a ballistic missile advisor to General Norman Schwarzkopf. Ritter later worked as a security and military consultant for the Fox News network.

Weapons inspector

Ritter served from 1991 to 1998 as a United Nations weapons inspector in Iraq in the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), which was charged with finding and destroying all weapons of mass destruction and WMD-related manufacturing capabilities in Iraq. He was chief inspector in fourteen of the more than thirty inspection missions in which he participated.

In January of 1998, his inspection team into Iraq was blocked from some weapons sites by Iraqi officials, who believed that information obtained from these sites would be used for future planning of attacks. UN Inspectors were then ordered out of Iraq by the United States Government, shortly before Operation Desert Fox attacks began in December 1998, using information which had been gathered for the purpose of disarmament to identify targets which would reduce Iraq's ability to wage both conventional and possibly unconventional warfare. This action undermined the position of the UN Weapons Inspectors, who were thereafter denied access to Iraq. Shortly thereafter, he spoke on the Public Broadcasting Service show, *The NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer:

I think the danger right now is that without effective inspections, without effective monitoring, Iraq can in a very short period of time measured in months, reconstitute chemical and biological weapons, long-range ballistic missiles to deliver these weapons, and even certain aspects of their nuclear weaponization program.

When the United States and the UN Security Council failed to take action against Iraq for their ongoing failure to cooperate fully with inspectors (a breach of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1154), Ritter resigned from the United Nations Special Commission on August 26, 1998.

In his letter of resignation, Ritter said the Security Council's reaction to Iraq's decision earlier that month to suspend co-operation with the inspection team made a mockery of the disarmament work. Ritter later said, in an interview, that he resigned from his role as a United Nations weapons inspector over inconsistencies between United Nations Security Council Resolution 1154 and how it was implemented.

The investigations had come to a standstill, were making no effective progress, and in order to make effective progress, we really needed the Security Council to step in a meaningful fashion and seek to enforce its resolutions that we're not complying with.

On September 3, 1998, several days after his resignation, Ritter testified before the United States Senate Committee on Armed Services and the United States Senate Committee on Foreign

Relations and said that he resigned his position "out of frustration that the United Nations Security Council, and the United States as its most significant supporter, was failing to enforce the post-Gulf War resolutions designed to disarm Iraq."

During Ritter's Senate testimony about the inspection process, Senator Joseph Biden stated "The decision of whether or not the country should go to war is slightly *above your pay grade*." Senator John McCain later rebutted by stating that he "wished that the administration had consulted with somebody of Ritter's *pay grade* during the Vietnam War."

Opinions on US policy in the Mideast

Following his resignation from UNSCOM, Ritter continued to be an outspoken commentator on US policy toward Iraq, particularly with respect to the WMD issue.

Commentary in the post-inspection period

In 1999, Ritter wrote *Endgame: Solving the Iraq Problem - Once and For All* in which he reiterated his claim that Iraq had obstructed the work of inspectors and attempted to hide and preserve essential elements for restarting WMD programs at a later date. However, he also expressed frustration at alleged attempts by the CIA to infiltrate UNSCOM and use the inspectors as a means of gathering intelligence with which to pursue regime change in Iraq – a violation of the terms under which UNSCOM operated, and the very rationale the Iraqi government had given in restricting the inspector's activities in 1998.

In the book's conclusion, Ritter criticized the current US policy of containment in the absence of inspections as inadequate to prevent Iraq's re-acquisition of WMD's in the long term. He also rejected the notion of removing Saddam Hussein's regime by force. Instead, he advocated a policy of diplomatic engagement, leading to gradual normalization of international relations with Iraq in return for inspection-verified abandonment of their WMD programs and other objectionable policies.

Ritter again promoted a conciliatory approach toward Iraq in the 2000 documentary *In Shifting Sands: The Truth About UNSCOM and the Disarming of Iraq*, which he wrote and directed. The film tells the history of the UNSCOM investigations through interviews and video footage of inspection missions. In the film, Ritter argues that Iraq is a "defanged tiger" and that the inspections were successful in eliminating significant Iraqi WMD capabilities. (For more see below under "Documentary".)

Commentary on Iraq's lack of WMDs

Despite identifying himself as a Republican and having voted for George W. Bush in 2000, by 2002 Ritter had become an outspoken critic of the Bush administration's claims that Iraq possessed significant WMD stocks or manufacturing capabilities, the primary rationale given for the US invasion of Iraq in March of 2003. His views at that time are well summarized in *War on Iraq: What Team Bush Doesn't Want You To Know*, a 2002 publication which consists largely of an interview between Ritter and anti-war activist William Rivers Pitt, the book's author. In the interview, Ritter responds to the question of whether he believes Iraq has weapons of mass destruction:

There's no doubt Iraq hasn't fully complied with its disarmament obligations as set forth by the Security Council in its resolution. But on the other hand, since 1998 Iraq has been fundamentally disarmed: 90-95% of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction capacity has been verifiably eliminated... We have to remember that this missing 5-10% doesn't necessarily constitute a threat... It constitutes bits and pieces of a weapons program which in its totality doesn't amount to much, but which is still prohibited... We can't give Iraq a clean bill of health, therefore we can't close the book on their weapons of mass destruction. But simultaneously, we can't reasonably talk about Iraqi non-compliance as representing a de-facto retention of a prohibited capacity worthy of war.

We eliminated the nuclear program, and for Iraq to have reconstituted it would require undertaking activities that would have been eminently detectable by intelligence services.

If Iraq were producing [chemical] weapons today, we'd have proof, pure and simple. (page 37)

[A]s of December 1998 we had no evidence Iraq had retained biological weapons, nor that they were working on any. In fact, we had a lot of evidence to suggest Iraq was in compliance. (page 46)

In the Pitt interview, Ritter also remarked on several examples of members of the Bush or Clinton administration making statements he knew to be misleading or false with regard to Iraqi WMD's

In 2003, shortly after the fall of Baghdad, Ritter was on the Sean Hannity show as a guest debating with Hannity on the validity of the invasion and his involvement in the Weapons Inspection program. Hannity outright claimed Ritter was biased and paid off by the Iraqi government to endorse the idea of WMD no longer existing in Iraq, the conversation finally turned to the future of the occupation where Sean believed the occupation would be very short and successful, Ritter said we'd be there years from now and in the same state as the occupation of South Vietnam.^[citation needed]

Statements on US-Iran policy

On February 18, 2005 Scott Ritter told an audience in Olympia, Washington that George Bush had signed-off on preparations to bomb Iranian nuclear facilities, and that these preparations would be completed by June of 2005. On the same occasion, he also made reference to the Iraqi elections, saying that the United States had manipulated the 2005 parliamentary election, changing the percentage of United Iraqi Alliance votes from 56% to 48%.

Ritter reiterated and clarified his statements about Iran in a March 30 article published by Al Jazeera.

In a June 20, 2005, article published by Al Jazeera, after noting that the Iraq war, which supposedly began in March 2003, in fact began with military operations authorized by the president in late August 2002 and executed in September 2002, Ritter wrote: "The reality is that the US war with Iran has already begun."

On October 21, 2005, Ritter was interviewed by Amy Goodman of the radio and TV show "Democracy Now!" and commented on his earlier statements about U.S.A. policy toward Iran, as they had been reported by some sources.

I was very clear, based upon the information given to me, and it's 100% accurate, that in October 2004, the President of the United States ordered the Pentagon to be prepared to launch military strikes against Iran as

of June 2005. That means, have all the resources in place so that if the President orders it, the bombing can begin. It doesn't mean that the bombing is going to begin in June. And a lot of people went, "Ah, you said they were going to attack in June." Absolutely not.

Although there were no air strikes against Iran by the United States in June of 2005, there were bomb blasts in the southern west Iranian city of Ahwaz on June 12, 2005. Some believe the attacks were carried out by the Mujahideen al-Khalq (MEK) organization. Scott Ritter as well as other sources have claimed that the United States, after the invasion of Iraq, have been working with Mojahedin-e-Khalq to continue covert operations in Iran.

Ritter has also made the following two statements regarding military intervention in Iran [1].

The real purpose of the EU-3 intervention - to prevent the United States from using Iran's nuclear ambition as an excuse for military intervention - is never discussed in public.

The EU-3 would rather continue to participate in fraudulent diplomacy rather than confront the hard truth - that it is the United States, and not Iran, that is operating outside international law when it comes to the issue of Iran's nuclear programme.

On February 6, 2006, in the James A. Little Theater in Santa Fe, Ritter stated about a U.S. war with Iran: *"We just don't know when, but it's going to happen,"* and said that after the U.N. security Council will have found no evidence of WMD, Bolton *"will deliver a speech that has already been written. It says America cannot allow Iran to threaten the United States and we must unilaterally defend ourselves."* and continued *"How do I know this? I've talked to Bolton's speechwriter,"*

In an interview with Amy Goodman broadcast on Democracy Now! on October 16, 2006, Ritter again reaffirmed the U.S.'s state of undeclared war vis-à-vis Iran. ^[citation needed]

Ritter published *"Target Iran: The Truth About the White House's Plans for Regime Change"* in 2006. One editorial review stated: "This book offers Ritter's "national intelligence assessment" of the Iranian imbroglio. He examines the Bush administration's regime-change policy and the potential of Iran to threaten U.S. national security interests."

In his book Ritter claims that Israel is pushing the Bush administration into war with Iran. He also accuses the U.S. pro-Israel lobby of dual loyalty and outright espionage.

Documentary

Ritter received \$400,000 from Iraqi American businessman Shaker Al-Khaffaji for the financing of his 2000 documentary *In Shifting Sands: The Truth About UNSCOM and the Disarming of Iraq*. According to a Washington Times article, Al-Khaffaji obtained the money from the U.N. Oil-for-Food program for goods imported into the country in violation of U.N. sanctions. Ritter denies any quid pro quo with Al-Khaffaji and according to a Financial Times article, when Ritter was asked "how he would characterise anyone suggesting that Mr Khafaji was offering allocations in his name, Mr Ritter replied: "I'd say that person's a fucking liar. Quote unquote. And tell him to come over here so I can kick his ass."

In a Time article on September 14, 2002, he declined to provide details regarding the conditions of the children's prison at the Iraqi General Security Services headquarters he inspected in January 1998. Ritter refused to provide details on the prison, containing "toddlers up to pre-adolescents," for fear that the information "...can be used by those who would want to promote war with Iraq."

Legal problems

In 2001, Ritter was arrested near Albany, NY. News reports state that Ritter had brushes with police on two occasions, both involving allegations of intent to meet underage girls after chatting on the Internet. Per an agreement with District Attorney Cynthia Preiser, the charges were suspended for six months, and were dropped after no further allegations arose. All court records from this matter were sealed.