

# Editorial

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As we are going to press the world is debating the possibility of war in Iraq. We should take time to contemplate the role of engineers and engineering education in bringing about this political situation.

The actions of politicians and military leaders are the only ones we hear about in the news. We know, that the role of engineers in the current crisis is quite fundamental. Engineers and scientists are being interviewed by UN inspectors, and engineers are responsible in creating and producing Weapons of Mass Destruction. Such activities are keeping many thousands of engineers in employment on all sides of the conflict. The rationale engineers are given and are using is that all they do, is working for the defense of their country. The word defense as applied here-is and must be-a euphemism. If all nations are defending themselves there cannot-by definition-be any aggressors. But-opinions are divided-citizens and politicians do not pursue consistent positions and arguments on what is defense and what is aggression. Can engineers contribute to the control and restraint of politicians? Are engineers just instruments in the hands of politicians and the military? If so, there are arguments not to take up the profession, or at least avoid employment in the weapons industries. Many engineers avoid thinking about the consequences of their work, and many who work in weapons industries would say they are contributing to their country's and their own freedom and defense. There is little what one can do effectively in the education of engineers which could relate politics to the profession. Surely, there are basic ethical considerations-but they are not solely related to the engineering profession. The degree of involvement of engineers in weapons industries is a matter of personal decision, often overruled by job opportunities. It seems that we are stuck- and forever will be-by engineers who will design and produce the instruments of war.

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