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# Austria's Haider says Bush is a war criminal

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VIENNA (Reuters) - Austrian right-wing populist Joerg Haider called President Bush a war criminal on Saturday, days before Austria's government hosts Bush and European leaders in Vienna.

Haider, whose group is part of Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel's government coalition, said Bush's meeting with his European peers on Wednesday was pointless as he did not expect the U.S. president to pay attention to what Europe had to tell him.

"He is a war criminal. He brought about the war against Iraq deliberately, with lies and falsehoods," Haider said in an interview with Austrian daily newspaper Die Presse.

"The Iraqi population is suffering terribly. Bush took the risk of an enormous number of victims," said Haider.

Maverick Haider is a personal friend of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and visited Iraq's former President Saddam Hussein shortly before the U.S.-led invasion started in 2003.

Austria's attitude toward the United States has worsened over the last three years, Die Presse reported separately, citing a Eurobarometer poll.

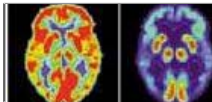
The poll showed 62 percent thought the United States played a negative role for world peace, up from 56 percent in the same poll in 2003, Die Presse said, and 49 percent found the U.S. role in fighting terrorism negative.

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