

OPINION

YOUR VIEW

It's time to move the United Nations —bring it to Chicago

Mark Twain wrote, "There is no distinctly American criminal class except Congress." We're now testing the narrowness of that quip. Political corruption abounds well beyond Washington.

At City Hall, procurement programs like hired-truck are milked for vacations, cash and political contributions.

At the august United Nations, humanitarian aid programs, like the food-for-oil program, are perverted to fill foreign diplomats' Swiss bank accounts.

The question any self-respecting Chicagoan asks is, of course, "Hey, how do I get me some of dat?"



Terrence Barnich is president of Chicago research firm *New Paradigm Resources Group Inc.*

Many Chicagoans accept, with a mix of envy and pride, the culture of the fix and the greased palm. Mike Royko re-tagged the city's Latin motto, "Urbs in horto" (City in the Garden), to "Ubi est mea?" (Where's mine?).

Let us accept the inevitable and make corruption work for us all. In Chicago, we adhere to Daniel Burnham's directive to "make no small plans."

Thus, a proposal: Move the U.N. from New York to Chicago.

The U.N. has to decamp anyway while its decrepit building is renovated. The rehab will be a boondoggle, of course. Donald Trump recently told Congress he could halve the projected cost. I say, none of that. In Chicago, we could drive the cost *up* double, with the promise that this hog is so big there'll be pork chops for everybody.

By moving the U.N. here permanently, this international wandering band would be spending money in Chicago's restaurants, boutiques, hotels and bars, not Manhattan's. And talk about a boon to the local economy: This addition could single-handedly keep the city's condo market bubble afloat for years.

After a few years in the Windy City, U.N.ers would seek permanent residence. I even expect some of the rougher specimens from various tin pot dictatorships to feel so much at home they'd apply for citizenship and run for alderman.

An advantage for a Chicago-based U.N. is that it would be out of sight, out of mind of the national news media. Let's face it: Unless the city burns to the ground or the Outfit fixes the World Series, New York and Washington media mavens don't really pay attention to us. If the oil-for-food scandal had been carried out from Chicago, the *Wall Street Journal* never would have gotten onto the story.

Kofi Annan should know, too, that in Chicago, we would actually appreciate it if he said, "The U.N. ain't ready for reform."