

Opinion

U.S. flags on Kuwaiti ships not a solution in Persian Gulf

In high school, I wrote a humorous short story in which the Russians announce a massive program for the training of trash haulers and we, naturally, respond with one of our own. We did not know the reason for the Soviet program, indeed we could not fathom it, but we were so accustomed to competing with the Russians in everything that we decided to match them in this as well.



Richard Cohen

Something like that has happened in the Persian Gulf. Only now, of course, it is not trash haulers we are talking about. It is warships. The Soviets made the first move. They announced they would shield Kuwaiti tankers from Iranian attack by re-flagging them with the hammer and sickle. Almost immediately, we responded in kind. The administration announced the United States would run the Stars and Stripes up 11 Kuwaiti ships and use the Navy's Persian Gulf fleet to ride shotgun.

As is often the case, Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger explained it all. First, he noted that the U.S. Navy has maintained a presence in the Persian Gulf since 1947. Next, he uttered the usual bromides about freedom of the seas (although no American ships have been attacked by Iran) and then he played his trump: The United States could not allow the Soviets to gain a foothold in the Middle East.

Having said that on two weekend interview programs, Weinberger's questioners were struck dumb. To Americans, the specter of the Soviet threat is the contemporary equivalent of a cross to a vampire: Before it, only retreat is possible.

It could be that Weinberger was uttering such an astounding truth that nothing more need be said. But the administration has played this hand before — sometimes disingenuously but almost always without critical debate. The Iranian arms deal, you will recall, was initially explained as an attempt to woo moderate elements in Iran, not to gain the release of American hostages in Lebanon. The United States had to ensure that a post-Khomeini Iran did not fall into Soviet hands.

The argument was preposterous. Ever since the Czars, Russia has been Iran's traditional enemy. Russia — and not the United States — is the atheist power on its northern border,

the one with age-old territorial designs on Iran, the one that, under Stalin, attempted to seize parts of the country. In fact, it is routine for zealous Iranians to denounce the Soviet Union in the same breath as the United States.

Now as justification for a U.S. military buildup in the Persian Gulf, we hear an echo of the old Russians-are-coming argument. That hardly makes it specious, but neither does it make it self-explanatory. What will be the consequences of the Soviets putting their flag on Kuwaiti ships? (Kuwait and the Soviet Union already have a warm relationship.) Does it follow that Russia will be able to control the Persian Gulf? Is there a real threat to the oil-based economies of Japan and Western Europe and, if so, how come they don't perceive it? (NATO has been cool to Weinberger's suggestion that it join the United States in the Gulf.)

It seems the sight of the Russian flag has driven the administration bonkers. It has all but enlisted on the side of Iraq in this most futile of wars. It has abandoned any chance of acting, maybe in concert with the Russians, as a neutral in arranging a truce. And maybe worse, it has made the United States a player in the regional war. The Iranians, who have been meticulous in avoiding American ships, now have good reason to consider them hostile.

So what's going on? The answer is that there is no answer. Maybe the administration is acting prudently and wisely, but if so it has not let either Congress or the American people in on the secret. It seems, instead, to have reacted — or overreacted — to the Soviet offer, triggering a chain of events over which we could easily lose control. A plan to hoist the American flag on Kuwaiti tankers has now progressed to talk of basing rights for American fighter aircraft in nearby Middle East states. The Gulf of Persia is looking perilously like the Gulf of Tonkin.

The Soviet threat is occasionally real and so, always, is the need for oil. But the real problem in the region remains the Iran-Iraq war, which is not a Soviet concoction. The administration has stumbled on a military policy for the region, but not a diplomatic one. It has instead inserted the United States into the one theater of the war where fighting is escalating — at sea — with the hope that no Iranian, like the Iraqi pilot who fired on the USS Stark, will have an itchy trigger finger.

Once again, the Soviets have been countered. We have them just where they want us.

Copyright 1987, Washington Post Writers Group

After all, tomorrow is another day

Why put off until tomorrow what you can do today?

Leslie Farguson
Guest Columnist

The answer to that question is simple. You put it off until tomorrow because yesterday you put it off until today and now there's no time left.

I guess I've been putting things off all my life. Actually, even before.

I was born two weeks late. I came onto the world behind schedule and have stayed that way ever since.

Everytime I sit down at my desk to start my homework I come to the horrible realization that the plants haven't been watered since the last time I sat down to do homework.

The greeting card companies say you should send your friends and loved ones a card to make them think of you. I say send them homework. Homework makes me think of old friends like no Hallmark card ever has. With the telephone at arm's length I realize that it's been since the last time I watered plants that I've talked to my 28 best friends.

Talking to all my old high school chums makes me realize that it's been weeks since I browsed through my high school yearbook.

Isn't it amazing that on the night

before the biggest project of the semester is due the time suddenly seems so perfect to clean out the hall closet? A chore that has been put off for months.

There are certain requirements that must be met before I can start my homework. There's no record of where these rules came from or who made them up.

Rule number one states that I can't start homework unless Mickey's big hand is exactly on the twelve. If I start to think about doing homework at 9:58 and think about it too long I have to wait another hour to think about it again.

Another rule states that homework is never ever ever ever to be done before eight o'clock at night. I'm not sure why, but I think it's a tradition. And everyone knows good A's always adhere to tradition.

Another rule is that homework cannot be done when the apartment is a mess. And no apartment can be considered completely clean with dirty clothes in the hamper. So, I do my wash.

Now that the plants are watered, I've reminisced with old friends, took a trip down memory lane with my yearbook, cleaned out the hall closet, cleaned the apartment and did the laundry it's almost time to start. All that is left to do is go to the grocery store and then to the music store and it will be time to study.

After all the little household tasks done it's amazingly clear that this is perfect time — the perfect time to do my new edition of ELLE.

By this time it has become obvious that I am procrastinating.

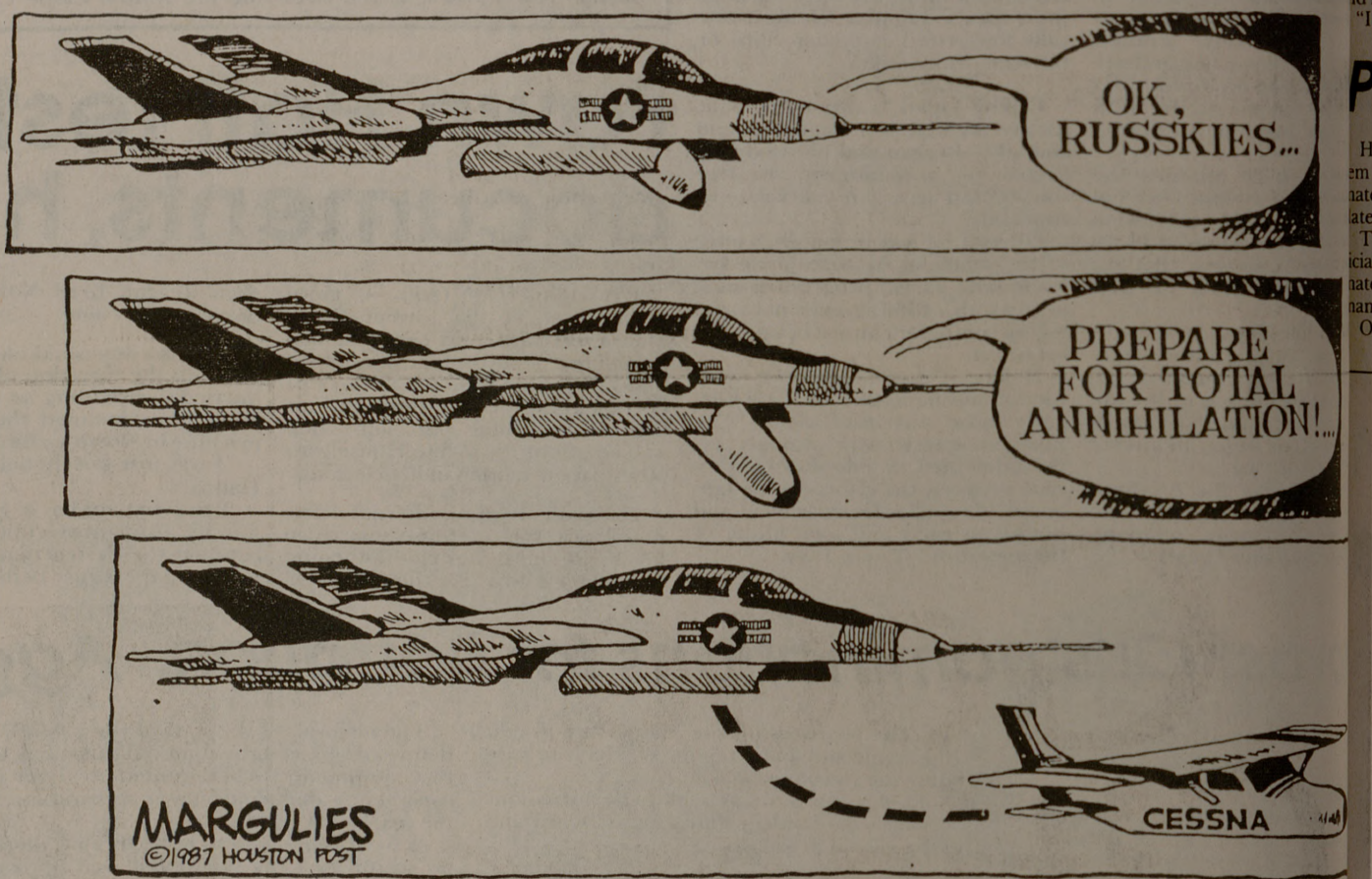
The best thing I can figure to stop procrastinating is to call a friend and how she goes about getting her homework done.

"Hi, yea this is me. I've been putting off that big project I have due tomorrow and thought I'd call and see what you're doing. Oh, cleaning out your hall-

Hanging up the phone, I realize I haven't picked out any clothes for tomorrow. After choosing the next ensemble I decide to iron it. Not only I iron that outfit but every other outfit in the closet. This includes all my roommate's clothes. Before I know it the socks and undies in the place have been ironed.

Finally content, I check the clock to see how long before Mickey's big hand is on the 12. His hand points straight to its 2 o'clock. It's time to start studying. Sitting down at my desk, I find myself too tired for homework. I'll do it tomorrow.

Lying in bed I realize that I have stopped procrastinating. I'm going to do it tomorrow.



Being a freshman not the worst thing in the world — maybe

A big grin spreads across my face everytime I tell someone that I'm graduating in August.

Anne Dejoie
Guest Columnist

I started school here in 1982 as a petroleum engineering major with plans to become a technical writer. After changing to marketing and then journalism, (25 credit hours before finishing) I began to doubt if I'd graduate from Texas A&M in less than 10 years.

Now I can finally see the end just two and a half months away.

I've been here for almost 25 percent of my life and have tried three different majors, and I can still remember crying five years ago when I left my house; in fact, I was still sniffing 73 miles later when I got to my dorm room.

I was anxious about starting college at A&M, but suddenly all I wanted to do was go back home where I was secure and could be with my close friends.

Being a freshman at A&M is no easy

task; but then again, being a senior is no piece of cake.

Sometimes when I'm working on my resume and portfolio, or finishing up a major project at 5 o'clock in the morning, or researching marketing firms and advertising agencies that I'd like to work for, I wish I was a freshman again — even though it seemed so traumatic five years ago.

Looking back, that first year wasn't as bad as I'd thought. Now I realize that I wasn't alone in my struggle to cope with being a freshman.

So, for all you brand-new freshmen out there:

Don't worry about wandering around lost on the first day of classes despite the map you're carrying. As the years go by, you'll learn to walk around and find the buildings on Sunday night or to conceal the maps inside your notebook — conveniently stepping into a nearby restroom on occasion to make sure you're headed in the right direction. Believe it or not, I'm a graduating

senior, and I walked into the wrong class Monday morning.

Also, don't worry about not knowing as many people as the person down the hall. No one expects you to know everyone. If you can make just one lasting friendship while you're here — not those here-today-gone-tomorrow acquaintances — then it's a step in the right direction.

Eventually, you'll be late to class like the juniors and seniors who stop to talk to all their buddies along the way. And by being here this summer, you'll know more people in the fall than the other freshmen who start school in September.

As for cafeteria food... well, you'll never really like it, but you'll get used to it; just like you'll get used to sleeping with the light on, waking up 20 minutes before class and still getting there on time and never having enough space to put all the stuff you'll acquire despite the shelves and filing cabinets you buy.

Change, too, becomes a problem. Not change of pace or change of atmosphere, but monetary change.

Everybody runs out of quarters and dimes at the same time — on Friday, when it's laundry time.

And no matter how many quarter rolls you get from the bank every week, washers, dryers and vending machines always cost just a few cents more than what you have in your pocket.

If you have a car here at A&M and don't own a bulletin board, you'll need one to hang your tickets. You've probably already noticed that all the good spots are designated for staff and faculty; so be prepared for a few tickets.

All those parking tickets lying around on your desk can become a real eyesore. By the time you're a senior, you'll have enough to paper a wall. Don't believe me? Stop by sometime; I'll show you my collection.

Though it takes a lot of time and dedication, college can be fun. But what's important is that you learn to balance your work and play.

I'll be the first to tell you that the social life at A&M is great. But the party ends real quick when you fail classes and go on probation, or when the university kicks you out.

Several thousand dollars each semester is a high price to pay for a good party.

On the other hand, if you spend all your time studying, you'll burn out — unless you're some sort of hermit with an allergy to people.

It's not just the quantity of studying that's important but also the quality.

Sitting at your desk for 12 hours won't make you read your textbook if all you can think about is that excellent movie showing at the grove.

Allow some time for fun. You have to make some time for yourself or you'll be miserable.

Go see the movie. If nothing else, you might feel guilty enough afterwards to go home and study.

When you fall behind in classes, don't be afraid to ask for help from tutors, teachers or even other classmates.

Hopefully you've chosen a course of study that you like and not just one that pays well. I started in engineering rather than journalism and figured I

could back into a high paying writing job with a technical degree.

I might have saved myself 18 months of school if I had realized then that the money in the world wouldn't make me wake up at 5 a.m. to go to a job I didn't like. Besides, even journalists get paid more than full-time students.

If you miss mom and dad and call them everyday, it's okay. I'm lucky enough to live in Houston and sometimes drive home in the middle of the week for a hug.

I know that one day when I'm on my own with a real job, I may not be able to see them every week, so I take advantage of it while I still can.

Make every day count. Try to accomplish something each day, no matter how small it may seem.

Aim for the top, but be realistic. Remember that A&M has the cream of the crop. You might have been at the top in high school, but so have several other A&M students.

Don't become discouraged if you're in high school becomes a B or even a C at A&M. As long as you're doing the best that you possibly can, it's okay.

And whatever you do, don't forget to say howdy once in awhile. It's amazing how much a smile and a simple greeting can brighten someone's day.

Eventually, you'll acquire enough credits to get your senior ring. And, me, you'll wear it with pride.

The time goes by fast, so don't waste it. Five years ago, I didn't think I'd be this close to graduating; now, I'm sure if I'm ready. I guess I'll find out in two and a half months.

The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of Texas Press Association Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board

Sondra Pickard, Editor
Marybeth Rohsner, Opinion Page Editor
Rodney Rather, City Editor
Robbyn L. Lister, News Editor
Homer Jacobs, Sports Editor
Robert W. Rizzo, Photo Editor

Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.