

**EDITORIALS**

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**We hope, pray for peace**

**G**ive us one good reason why we should sacrifice any more young American lives for Kuwait. Or oil. Or world order. Or to stop "naked aggression" against Kuwait. Or any of the other reasons our well-meaning President has given us for why a war with Iraq is necessary.

Our nation's national security is not at stake. American lives are not even being threatened now that the hostages are no longer "human shields." Instead, our nation is poised to fight a war — and possibly lose thousands of its young people — over oil.

The Kuwaiti people have suffered a great tragedy from the Iraqis, and we should feel genuine sympathy and compassion for them, but we cannot support the further loss of American lives to save them from a tragedy they already have endured. Would you sacrifice your brother or sister if a friend lost his?

Our nation cannot step in during every time of conflict. George Washington warned our young republic to let other countries solve their own problems. Furthermore, the United States has not intervened during other acts of aggression such as Israel's invasion of Lebanon, India's invasion of Pakistan, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and most recently, Lithuania. However, Lebanon, Pakistan, Afghanistan or Lithuania don't possess vast reserves of oil.

The President has tossed other reasons at us about why we need conflict with Iraq — to establish world order, keep Saddam from building nuclear weapons and protect "our way of life" — but none of these justify the deaths of countless young men and women.

We cannot support a war with Iraq when the consequences are so deadly and the justification so poor. We hope and pray for peace.

The Battalion Editorial Board



**Pentagon rules limit free press**

**A**s the possibility of war in the Middle East looms closer, the Bush Administration will no doubt continue reminding Americans why their sons, daughters, mothers and fathers have been sent to face death in a dry, dusty country thousands of miles from home.

They have been sent to Saudi Arabia to protect the world from a madman called Saddam Hussein. They are there to show the world that unwarranted aggression will not be tolerated by America. They are there to restore the peaceful nation of Kuwait to its rightful citizens. But most of all, they have been sent to the Persian Gulf to protect that most sacred of American principles: freedom.

These arguments for our military presence in Saudi Arabia are quite plausible. Through his barbaric actions, Hussein has proven himself a threat to freedom who sooner or later must be reckoned with.

Ironically, however, the biggest threat to the liberty of Americans comes not from Iraq or Saddam Hussein; it comes from the United States government. Our rights to free speech and a free press are being trampled by the Bush Administration.

We hope war does not break out, but if it does, the government has done its best to see American people are kept uninformed about the true costs of such a war. The Pentagon's recently proposed "rules" for news coverage of a Gulf war actively interfere with journalists' rights to obtain information and relay it to the American people.

They originally established that, among other things:

- ★ Journalists covering the war would be confined to "pools" of reporters, and all pools would be constantly accompanied by military escorts. (During the Vietnam War, reporters often traveled freely in combat zones with no military escorts at all.)

- ★ All interviews with servicemen and women must be on the record. In other words, no anonymous military sources would be allowed.

- ★ Pictures or videotape showing soldiers in extreme anguish would be

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another no-no. This presumably would protect their rights to privacy. (Conveniently, it also would prevent American citizens back home from seeing pictures that might turn them against the war.)

★ Finally, and most blatantly, news reports would be subject to a "security review" by U.S. military officers before being broadcast or published.

After meetings with news media representatives, Pentagon officials softened these rules a little, but not enough. Any interference with the free press is too much. It is illegal, and it is wrong.

The reason for these restrictions seems obvious enough. If the American people don't see pictures of their loved ones being killed and maimed, if they don't hear that 6,000 U.S. troops were massacred yesterday, if they don't read that U.S. forces accidentally killed dozens of innocent civilians (as happened in Vietnam and was covered up by our government until exposed by journalist Seymour Hersh), then they won't object to the war.

As a student journalist who soon will be a "real" journalist, (and more importantly a U.S. citizen), I am appalled by the Pentagon's restrictions.

Except for vital national security matters, we have the right to be fully informed of our government's actions, especially when those actions might directly result in the deaths of our friends or loved ones.

What the Bush Administration has done is tragic. It has moved us one step away from democracy and one step closer to the dictatorships we profess to abhor.

These news media regulations are perhaps more grotesque than Ronald Reagan's failed efforts to force all government employees — and former employees — to obtain government approval of any speeches, articles, books or other writings before they could be made public.

If I end up covering a war in the Middle East (or a city council meeting in Bryan, for that matter), I've already decided what to say if someone tries to tell me who I can talk to or what I can or can't write: "F--- off."

I hope journalists covering a war in the Persian Gulf will respond in a like manner.

But this is not just a matter between journalists and the government. Ultimately, it is a battle we all must fight. As thousands of our citizens prepare to face possible death in the sands of the Middle East, we are tempted to view Iraq as the one great enemy of freedom.

Freedom, however, has many adversaries right here in our own country. Not all Americans believe in free speech and free press. They all say they do, of course.

But there are powerful people who wish to hide their actions from us, and they resent journalists making their deeds known.

These people are in our government, our corporations and our schools. The only way we can discover their misdeeds is through an active, uncensored press.

By holding such people up to public scrutiny, journalists make their actions known to the American public.

Usually journalists fail — or do not even try — to expose wrongdoing. Occasionally, however, they succeed. The Washington Post's coverage of the Watergate affair is a prime example of such a success.

Admittedly, the existence of a free press in the United States has not solved all our problems. But the alternative — a government that censors and stifles free expression — is a truly frightening thought.

So as our country debates the wisdom of entering into conflict with Iraq, we must remember there are other causes worth fighting for.

Certainly, Saddam Hussein is a menace, but we must bear in mind that not all our enemies reside in Baghdad. Some are alive and well right here in the USA.

Dean Sueltenfuss is a senior journalism major.

**U.S. soldiers face war**

**F**or five months now we've sat in the sands of anxiety and watched American soldiers defending the sands of a foreign monarchy which won't let them have a beer, go to church or celebrate Christmas.

But now our fears have joined reality; war has been given the green light. Since the beginning of the Persian Gulf Crisis, U.S. diplomatic policy has been: "Give up Kuwait, or we'll bomb Iraq back to the Stone Age!" But our military objectives are turning from a defense of Saudi Arabia to an offense to eliminate Iraq's military power. We replace Operation Desert Shield with Operation Desert Sword. As we rush into bloodshed, let's pause to see what has happened, and what might be.

Weeks ago, the Bush Administration reluctantly admitted the basic motivation for its war stance is economics — to protect our high-energy lifestyle. But even as we make battle ready, there is a growing belief within the United States that war is too high a price to pay for a buck less at the pump, or for any conceivable prize to be gained from this mess.

We're told every effort for peace was made. But we find the "extra mile for peace" has been no more than stating our demands on Iraq an extra time or two. We really haven't moved an extra inch for peace. But what option other than war is there? If we went to war with Iraq, we would eventually "win." But do you consider the unavoidable casualties which will come with a door-to-door removal of Iraqi soldiers entrenched in the cities? That the war would be over in weeks is too optimistic. None of our Arab "allies" has committed to any offensive action, only defensive. When the United States attacks, our Arabs will not be on the front line. When we attack Iraq and Iraq attacks Israel and Israel attacks Iraq, we can expect the rest of the Middle East also to become a fire bed. What will "naked aggression" mean then?

What else can be done? The world simply could accept that Iraq controls Kuwait for the short-term, and use what military force is necessary to truly

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enforce worldwide economic sanctions. Iraq is not self-sufficient. There are increasing shortages of food and morale in Iraq. Gasoline riots and soldier defections tell us economic sanctions are effective. Sanctions rob Hussein of any victory in Kuwait; war will reduce Kuwait to rubble.

We could continue to demand that Israel address Palestinian grievances as we have done in the past. This cannot be seen as a concession to Hussein since — until the gulf crisis — this was U.S. policy anyway. President Bush is determined to enforce U.N. resolutions.

But what happened to U.N. Resolution 242, demanding a solution to the Palestinian problem? Reminding the world of our support of 242 would keep the issue from being called a concession. It would allow Hussein to think he has an excuse to back out of Kuwait! Regardless, broad-range Middle East affairs must be addressed, or else we'll be facing this rotten situation again and again.

Most important, a rigorous campaign in the United States to promote energy independence is vital — vital not only with respect to the present gulf crisis, but to our future as a productive nation. We are enslaved to our master (oil-addiction), and his mistresses (nations which control foreign oil supplies).

We pay the price environmentally, as petro-fuel combustion destroys the air we breathe, and technologically, as the abundance of cheap oil smothers efforts to develop alternate and renewable energy resources. Worse, we're about to pay the price with the lives of our kids in Saudi Arabia so that we may continue to pay! Isn't it insane?

But for the moment, we are couched at war's doorstep. Did we have no alternatives? You decide.

Bud Cox is a senior mechanical engineering major.

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