

EDITORIALS

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Support troops, peace

The Battalion Editorial Board supports all United States troops serving in the gulf, especially those from Texas A&M, and wishes them a safe trip home as soon as possible.

We still do not, however, support the decision to attack Iraq in order to "liberate Kuwait."

We might not believe in or support the decision of the President, but we believe in the lives of our young men and women.

Now that our hopes for peace have been dashed, we have another hope — one for the restoration of peace.

The Battalion Editorial Board



MARGULIES
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NEW JERSEY

Gulf crisis lacks moral claim

Talking to a group of young writers, Gertrude Stein once referred to that dreadful war at the beginning of our century as a "nice war." The truth is that in that fateful year of 1917, the carnival of death took place in Europe and ended one of the most hopeful periods in Western history with corpses which exceeded those in the Black Plague.

Verdun, the bloodiest battle of all, started with the mere hope, as general Von Falkenhayen later confessed, that the French would "bleed to death." The battle lasted six months without remission. There was no exact account of the losses, but the estimate was that about one million men lost their lives on both sides. That battle was several times renewed; both sides ended almost exactly where they began, except for the presence of the dead.

Margaret Thatcher, when uttering her belligerent remarks in regard to the Persian Gulf, seems to forget the year 1917 completely. That summer, the British attack on the Somme lost 60,000 men in one day (July 1) without gaining any ground.

The lieutenants from Cambridge and Oxford and other great public schools, who in tailored uniforms and stoic fatalism led their platoons to the top, had the highest death rate. The fighting

Hao Zhang
Reader's Opinion

continued past November. By then the British casualties had passed 400,000 "including," as a recent author says, "the men who in the normal way would have been leaders in politics, the arts, the sciences, commerce and industry."

Big words from shrewd politicians could not disguise the cruel fact that young men morally and physically attested as flowers of the nation were being drafted, stripped naked, weighted, stamped and sent off to be slaughtered like cattle. It was the systematic extinction of fittest. For no particular purpose.

Perhaps ironically, when hundreds of thousands of troops are pouring into the Arabian desert ready for blood, our century is ending with decisively humanistic triumphs in Eastern Europe, Soviet Union, China and much of the world. In a time of unprecedented hope, one cannot think of a single legitimate reason for young men and women to lose their lives in that remote desert whose historic

grievances, national claims and social mores are totally alien to the West.

To restore the dictatorial regime in Kuwait? To defend a kingdom that treats half of its population no better than animals? To exchange lives for oil? Or are the politicians' sado-masochistic needs for destruction and self-destruction so enormous that they are totally incapable of peace? Or perhaps they feel peace has been around for too long and the world has incurred debts to the gods; now the world must pay its debts by sacrificing its cherished young in a ritual at one of the Muslim's holiest sites.

The heart of the matter is that there is no metaphysical difference between the line in the sand and that line in Verdun, both equally lacking in moral claim. While the weapons on both sides have become a little fancier and infinitely more deadly, life remains just as fragile and precarious.

The Persian Gulf Crisis has progressed to a stage where the potential loss of life would make Verdun look like a picnic.

If young men and women are to sacrifice their lives, they must do so for moral reasons. To do otherwise is murderous and disastrous. I have no doubt. Simply no doubt.

Hao Zhang is a graduate student in economics.

Mail Call

Don't blame oil

EDITOR:

How can anybody state that the Persian Gulf area does not involve us? I really question people who scream out "No blood for oil," as they drive off by themselves in their cars and trucks.

Or those who argue about why we must fight for oil, as they sit with their engines running at the end of the parking aisles. Then there are those who say there is no relation to the oil fields in the Persian Gulf and our national defense, and then ride the elevator to the second floor of the building.

Don't you get it? If you eat, drive or ride a car, truck, bus, plane or train, wear anything with synthetic material or do anything that uses energy needlessly, this conflict is for you.

Don't give me any of your hysterical cries that this is all for Big Oil. I know it is, but Big Oil became Big through our selfish indulgences.

Trying to blame anyone but ourselves is nothing but the deepest form of hypocrisy. Don't try and say you don't want the government to fight to defend your lifestyle. You (we) aren't ready and would be unable to accept a cold turkey life change. Think about it.

The most anybody can do at this time is to pray for a rapid resolution to the crisis, and to take a good, long hard look at ourselves. It takes a lot more courage to look at ourselves for change than to sit in our cars and criticize someone else.

David Wilkins
graduate student

Have an opinion? Express it!

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. There is no guarantee that letters submitted will be printed. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer. All letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald, or sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111.

Supreme Court upholds law banning gun sales

After years of debate and legal challenges, the U.S. Supreme Court has put to rest the question of private citizens buying machine guns.

By refusing to hear a challenge to the 1986 Firearms Owners Protection Act brought about by a machine-gun manufacturer, the Supreme Court affirmed the constitutionality of the law which banned the sale of new, fully automatic weapons.

As one might guess, this was a major setback for the National Rifle Association — an interest group more concerned with the right to own a machine gun than a rifle. The rifle association had made the reversal of this law a top priority.

The Court's ruling is indicative that the NRA's political power is at long last on the wane. This should come as good news to police officers and drug-enforcement agents who supported the 1986 law. In the past, the NRA lobbied

Patrick Nolan
Columnist

intensely against the ban of so-called "cop killer" bullets which are Teflon tipped and designed specifically to penetrate bullet-proof vests.

Using the illogical argument that a government ban of specific weapons violates the constitutional rights of individuals, the NRA has been opposed to any and all limitations of gun ownership imposed by governments at every level.

So the Supreme Court's action Monday was welcome news to those lawmakers interested in bringing sensibility to the possession of weapons designed specifically to kill many individuals with one squeeze of the trigger.

The 1986 Firearms Owners Protection Act was designed to curtail the growing number of fully automatic weapons that are better suited for the deserts of Saudi Arabia than the hill country of South Texas.

Yet there are those misguided individuals who insist the Second Amendment gives everyone the right to possess whatever type of firearm they desire — machine guns included.

The purpose of the 1986 law was not an attempt to remove guns from the hands of law-abiding Americans; the idea of citizens owning a gun is older than this nation itself and undoubtedly will continue.

The stereotypical view of gun control — as projected by pro-gun interest groups — which advocates lobbying for laws banning gun possession outright, is nonsense.

There are few advocates of gun control who call for the total ban of guns in the hands of private citizens. Yet there definitely is a need for the

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government to control the sale and possession of certain weapons that have no purpose besides injuring or killing numerous people in one burst of gunfire.

There has never been, and most likely never will be, a convincing argument for a private individual to possess a firearm that can discharge several rounds per second.

The reasoning for the sale,

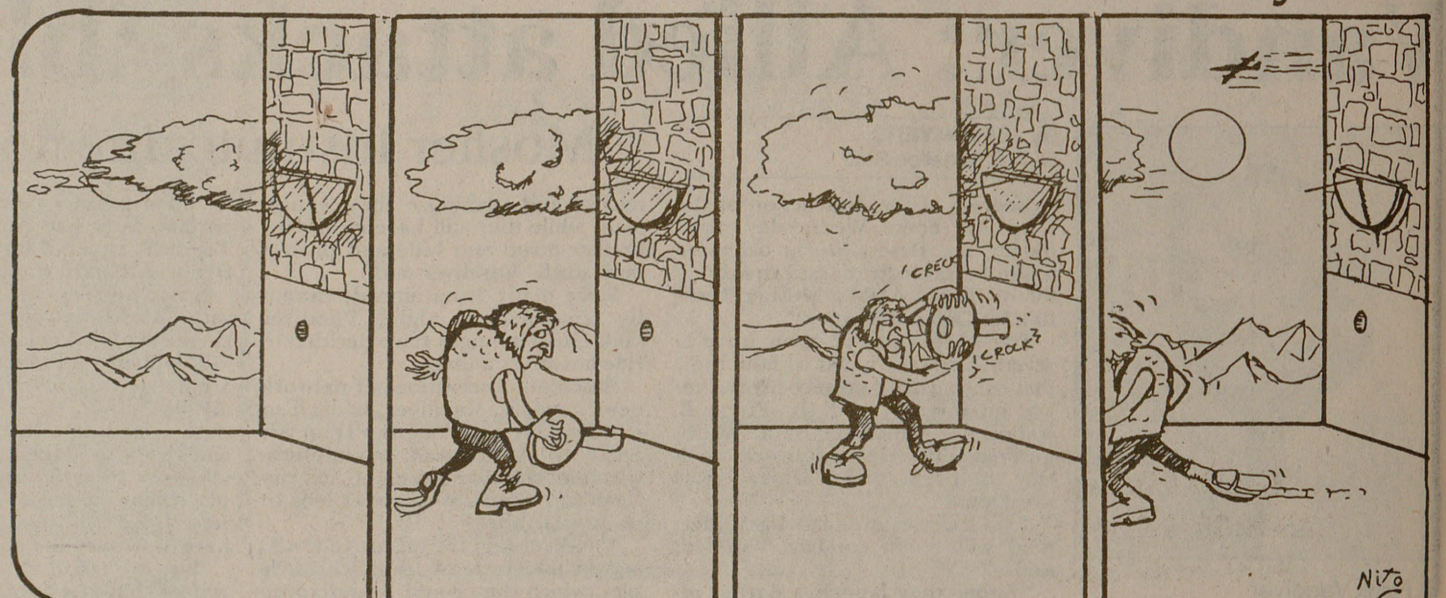
possession and use of shotguns, pistols and semi-automatic rifles is, however, sensible. There is the hunter who needs to assert his or her dominance over animals, homeowners who want to protect their family from life-threatening intruders and the sportsman who enjoys skeet or trap shooting. All are considered by the majority of Americans as a legitimate use of firearms.

What would an individual need or want from a fully automatic weapon that isn't provided by weapons currently available?

It's a moot point now that the nation's highest court has come down on the side of public safety and ignored the absurd pleas of the NRA and machine-gun enthusiasts who must now learn to be content in their passions for guns within the limits of the law.

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The Battalion

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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 is published daily, except Saturday, Sunday, holidays, exam periods, and when school is not in session during fall and spring semesters; publication is Tuesday through Friday during the summer session. Newsroom: 845-3313.

Mail subscriptions are \$20 per semester, \$40 per school year and \$50 per full year: 845-2611. Advertising rates furnished on request: 845-2696.

Our address: The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111.

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.