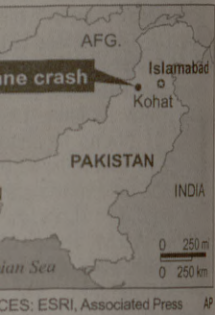


kills 17

Plane crashes in Pakistan

Pakistani air force plane crashed Thursday in western Pakistan, killing at least 17 people on board.



A Pakistani fighter pilot who took part in Pakistan's 1971 war against India, Mir took command of the air force in November 2001. He had two sons and a daughter.

He was an excellent commander, and a hard core professional," Air Commodore Tahir said of 57-year-old Mir. "He was very considerate. As far as he would be very informative in wanting to know about the problems of his men."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sean Astin attends film festival

Sean Astin, costar of "The Lord of the Rings," will attend the film festival Saturday at the Theater.

Astin will be appearing Saturday at noon during the festival's "Sean Astin Tribute."

The 27-year-old Astin gained fame in 1985 after his role in "Goonies" and then later as a "Dame" football legend in "The Sandlot."

The tribute will include clips from Astin's movies, a speech by a viewing of his directorial debut short film, "The Long and Short of It" and a question and answer session.

Tickets will cost \$6 and are available at the Sean Astin Tribute, limited to 750 people, and are still available at the Ticket Box Office.

Gas prices soar across the U.S.

The middle of winter more like the heart of summer as gas stations nationwide as prices surge past \$2 a gallon in many places and motorists complain about being gouged. Political instability in Venezuela and the prospect of war in Iraq are triggering price hikes that motorists don't kick in until the peak season. And experts warn that prices could shoot up even more in political situations and the winter heat up.

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OPINION

THE BATTALION

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Clarifying the myth of oil

Conspiracies that promote the idea that war with Iraq is about oil are wrong

There are many conspiracy theories these days, and those involving the United States' need for oil and the conflict with Iraq seem to be extremely popular.

It is easy to dismiss these claims based solely on the context in which they are usually presented, and there is likely little truth behind them.

Data from the Department of Energy suggests that there is a lack of potential motivation for war based on oil interests. One could look at the issue of Iraqi oil as involving three main factors: At what rate will Iraq produce oil, who will be the recipient of the oil that is produced and who will handle the task of getting the oil out of the ground?

Trying to influence any of these three factors is likely not reason enough for U.S. oil companies to pres-



TIM SCHMIEDWIND

sure their government for a regime change in Iraq.

According to the Department of Energy, Iraq has the second largest oil reserve in the world. Iraq exports roughly 2.5 million barrels of oil per day.

Oil conspiracy theorists would suggest that U.S. oil companies are always trying to increase the supply and demand for oil. Would a war with Iraq increase the supply of oil on the market? The last war with Iraq did the opposite.

Iraqi production is down from highs of more than four million barrels per day since the Gulf War, mostly because of damage sustained during the war. Any kind of war in Iraq could disrupt Iraqi oil production, and it could take years to rebuild production capacity back to its current level.

Would a more U.S.-friendly regime in Iraq increase the supply of oil? Right now, the United Nations regulates the amount of oil that Iraq can produce. According to the Department of Energy, the current regime in Iraq has made many efforts to expand its

oil production levels. In fact, agreements have been signed to increase oil production by four million barrels per day. Looking at it from the perspectives of the amount of oil available to the U.S., this does not sound like a regime that the U.S. would want to change.

The United States is not fighting a war with Iraq to ensure that it gets its share of Iraq's oil. Though a war for oil seems to be a popular idea, it does not have a firm basis in reality.

According to the Department of Energy, around 20 to 25 percent of Iraqi oil ends up in the hands of U.S. oil companies, so America is already getting its fair share in terms of consumption. Oil is a heavily traded global commodity, so no matter where Iraqi oil goes, the increased supply will make it easier for U.S. companies to obtain their oil.

Then comes the third factor: who receives the job of drilling and processing Iraqi oil. Oil conspiracy theorists don't focus on this as much, mostly because getting the job of per-

forming one stage in a production process does not seem to be such a potential sinister motivation as getting more oil for SUVs. But if there is a reason for U.S. companies to push their government for a regime change in Iraq, this is probably it.

According to the Department of Energy, all of the contracts Iraq has granted to carry the expansion of its oil production capacity have been given to non-U.S. companies from across the globe, including places such as China and Indonesia.

The majority of the contracts have been given to companies that have supported Iraq in the United Nations. One Russian company is quoted by the Department of Energy as saying that Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, guaranteed that "no matter what happens," its contract will be upheld.

This is undeniable evidence that politics is playing into who gets the contracts to do the exploration and development.

However, right now the majority

of the contracts are not being fulfilled by the companies due to pressure from the United Nations.

Iraq has expressed displeasure and is looking for other companies from nations such as the United States that could come in and get the job done more quickly.

Iraq is quoted by the Department of Energy Web site as "being willing to work with U.S. companies."

If the United States really only cared about getting its companies development contracts, it could likely accomplish this through negotiations with the United Nations and the Iraqi government.

Whatever motivations the oil issue is creating, it is certainly far-fetched to imagine that they are powerful enough to influence policy that would dictate risking American lives, spending \$50 billion and the president running the risk of ruining his

Tim Schmiedwind is a graduate environmental engineering major. Graphic by Becky Maiden.

Blacks and Hispanics need to work together

A cultural earthquake hit recently when the Census Bureau estimated that Hispanics are now the nation's largest minority group. Hispanics now comprise 13 percent of the American population, with 37 million people, according to CNN. Blacks make up 12.7 percent of the nation's population with 36.1 million people claiming to be black in the 2000 census.

But tensions exist between these two minority communities. Blacks and Hispanics must set aside any differences they have and look for common ground on issues that affect both communities.

The media sensationalized the shift in the population. Some newspapers used outrageous headlines when spreading the story. Examples include: "Hispanic population surpasses African-Americans" by The Commercial Appeal of Memphis Tenn., or "Hispanics now No. 1 minority in the U.S." in The Washington Times. These headlines improperly give the impression of a race between Hispanics and blacks to become America's most favored minority.

Some prominent blacks have expressed concern with the rising Hispanic population. Henry Louis Gates Jr., chairman of the Afro-American

Studies department at Harvard University, told The New York Times, "Our (African-Americans') privileged status is about to be disrupted in profound ways." Other blacks have been more forthright in their trepidation. Los Angeles radio show host Terry Anderson describes the way he views Mexican immigrants in his community in a column appearing in the Houston Chronicle, "What I see in ... South Central Los Angeles ... is thousands of Mexicans who care nothing about our traditions and culture, and only want to impose their ways on us. That's not immigration, that's invasion."

Anderson's vitriol toward Hispanics is disappointing, but indicative of some of the opinions of the black community. It fears that Hispanic immigrants, usually willing to work for less money, will compete unfairly for jobs. Some blacks also fear the predominance of the Spanish language and the loss of their hard-earned political influence—which took more than a century to create.

But these fears are irrational. As Tatcho Mendiola Jr. points out in a rebuttal to Anderson in the Houston Chronicle, the jobs that immigrant and some blacks compete for "... are lower-paying jobs with little advancement opportunity." Mendiola also correctly states that American English isn't going anywhere and will always remain the prominent language of this land. Currently, the United States does not have

an official language. Indeed, pressure is constantly applied to Hispanic immigrants to learn the commonly used language of this country.

As for the fear of a decrease in political influence, nothing can erase America's shameful legacy of slavery and Jim Crow laws. It was blacks and the civil rights movement that reminded the United States that this country is founded on equality. And for this, Americans of every generation should be eternally grateful.

Now black America must extend the goodwill and graciousness on display during the early civil rights struggle to its Hispanic neighbors. Many of the immigrants responsible for the Hispanic population upswing come to America asking only for the chance to become successful in their own right. True, the vast majority of blacks' ancestors weren't given that choice when they arrived in America. They arrived in bondage, instead, and were forcibly kept here from the early 1600s to 1863 when slavery legally ended with the Emancipation Proclamation. But showing kindness and opportunity to another group will help alleviate much of the pain that slavery and Jim Crow laws caused.

There are many places in culture where blacks and Hispanics can find a common ground. "La Cucaracha" is a politically charged comic strip that stars Hispanics and whose satire

is as sharp as "The Boondocks," another popular comic that features a black cast. The creator of "La Cucaracha," Lalo Alcaraz, told the Washington Post that he was encouraged by the success of "Boondocks" creator Aaron McGruder.

Blacks and Hispanics can also focus on issues that affect them equally. For example, the National Council of La Raza describes itself as an organization established "to reduce poverty and discrimination." Likewise, the Texas Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People states that its purpose is to remove "all barriers of racial discrimination."

These two groups are also concerned with the state of health care and the quality of education minority children receive. This type of cooperation is even on display at Texas A&M. The National Society of Black Engineers and The Mexican American Engineers and Scientists organizations routinely work together to show the opportunities in the engineering discipline to minority high school students. Examples such as these show that the only race that matters is the human race.

Collins Ezeanyim is a senior computer engineering major.

What's the rush?

The Persian Gulf and the world simmer as the decision of war is debated in the great democracies of the world.

According to CNN, France, Germany and Russia are determined to find a peaceful solution to the threat of Saddam Hussein. Meanwhile, President George W. Bush continues to press for a U.N. resolution allowing force to be used against Saddam and Iraq.

However, Bush has yet to answer the questions raised by U.S. allies and United States citizens. According to a CBS News poll, 63 percent of Americans want to wait for support from allies.

Bush responds that Great Britain backs the United States. The backing for a war with Iraq is not as strong in Great Britain as Prime Minister Tony Blair might make it appear. According to the Washington Post, lawmakers from Blair's Labour Party are going to march in an antiwar protest in London on Saturday. The protest organizers are projecting a crowd of 400,000 people.

A public split within the majority party does nothing to instill confidence in Great Britain's conviction for this war. In fact, a BBC Poll showed 45 percent of the British population did not favor war "in any circumstance." Only 40 percent of the British approved of war, but only with a new U.N. resolution. This pressure has forced Bush to pursue a new U.N. resolution expressly allowing war with Iraq.

Bush has missed the point of all the protests of allies and citizens across the world. America's allies are urging caution, and they want to give U.N. inspectors time to thoroughly search Iraq.

Bush sees the new U.N. resolution as another obstacle that must be surmounted to allow an attack on Iraq. The international community sees the resolution as international law and cooperation winning out over a unilateralist.

It is important to note that almost no ally has said that it believes Saddam is not dangerous. The issue of when Saddam will have the ability to strike will determine when the United States should attack.

The United States must prove that it has exhausted all peaceful means to ending this crisis before launching a costly attack against Iraq. Saddam should be given due process of law like the Nazi leaders at the Nuremberg Trial, and Slobadan Milosovic's current trial. In this case, it amounts to due process of international law and diplomacy.

When the public compares between Adolf Hitler and Saddam, who both murdered their own citizens, and the appeasement offers made to Hitler in hopes of diverting a war, these comparisons do not hold up to scrutiny. In this case, no incentive is being given to Saddam to stop a war.

The United Nations is giving Saddam Hussein every chance to end this crisis peacefully. War with Iraq in the next few weeks is not worth the cost to international law and the loss of support from key allies.

Jonny Havens is a senior history major.

MAIL CALL

Conflicting views on murder

In response to John David Blakely's Feb. 20 column:

Blakely's column yesterday was hypocrisy at its finest. Quoted from his Jan. 27 opinion article "Right to Privacy Under Attack," Blakely said, "we must hold on dearly to and fight for the woman's right to choose." So, I guess it's the woman's right to choose whether the unborn child comes into the world. But he said yesterday "when the life of a human being is cut short, not by disease, old age, or accident, but done so deliberately and otherwise the life would continue, it is murder." So, is he saying they should have the right to choose, but in doing so, they are committing murder? You'll find the columnist is one of the many liberals in this country who carry the disease called hypocrisy.

Brandon Lackey
Class of 2005

Servers deserve more for the job

In response to Melissa Fried's Feb. 20 column:

Have you ever been a server? I think not because if you had, you would know that as servers, who may also be students working to pay off tuition, we work very hard on a daily basis serving customers knowing that there is a chance they will leave us nothing. Now, I'm glad that you agree that servers should get paid more than \$2.13 an hour, but as far as the American restaurant association lobbying goes, the average individual server has no influence on that.

Gratuity fees are put in place to protect the server, usually in the cases of large parties, and even then are subject to the server's decision on whether to implement the gratuity. This specific case in Baltimore, Md. may be questionable, but gratuity fees as a whole

should not be condemned. You stated that "a tip should be something earned" and that "many people leave the obligatory 15 percent tip" and that is nothing more than generalizations. Most people leave under the 15 percent on average. That is not to say that customers should not decide for themselves what the server deserves. They should. Waiting tables is a job like any other and yes, there are some servers with a poor work ethic, but those people exist in every job and community in America. Personally, I think you should give waiting tables a try and see how appreciated you feel on some customer's "gratitude" for your service.

Leisha Nickerson
Class of 2005

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