

Pinpointing Saddam's location

Intelligence agencies have no excuse for not locating Saddam when Rather can



DAVID SHOEMAKER

Just last week, CBS News anchorman Dan Rather scored a journalistic coup. He managed to penetrate the web of secrecy surrounding Saddam Hussein and secure a televised interview with the dictator. Beside the fact that Rather's interview was primarily used by Saddam to spout propaganda, it also meant the Iraqi dictator had to be in one place for a period of several hours. His location could possibly be pinpointed by those with an interest in such things, such as U.S. intelligence services. The fact that these services claim that they could not do so is either a dereliction of duty or a major discrepancy in technological capabilities. Maybe learning Saddam's location is not as important a priority as it should be.

As the leader of a potential enemy of the United States, knowledge of Saddam's whereabouts is a necessity. In fact, the need for such information has been apparent since 1991, during the Gulf War. But in the past 12 years, such information has proved impossible to find.

In a 1998 Washington Post article, then-CIA Director Robert M. Gates (now the Texas A&M president) said officials in the first Bush administration would light a candle every night during the Gulf War hoping Saddam might be killed by chance. He also said that on the eve of Operation Desert Fox seven years after the Gulf War, the odds were about the same for Saddam's demise. It is unacceptable that the CIA and other intelligence agencies had no better idea about Saddam's whereabouts than they did in 1991.

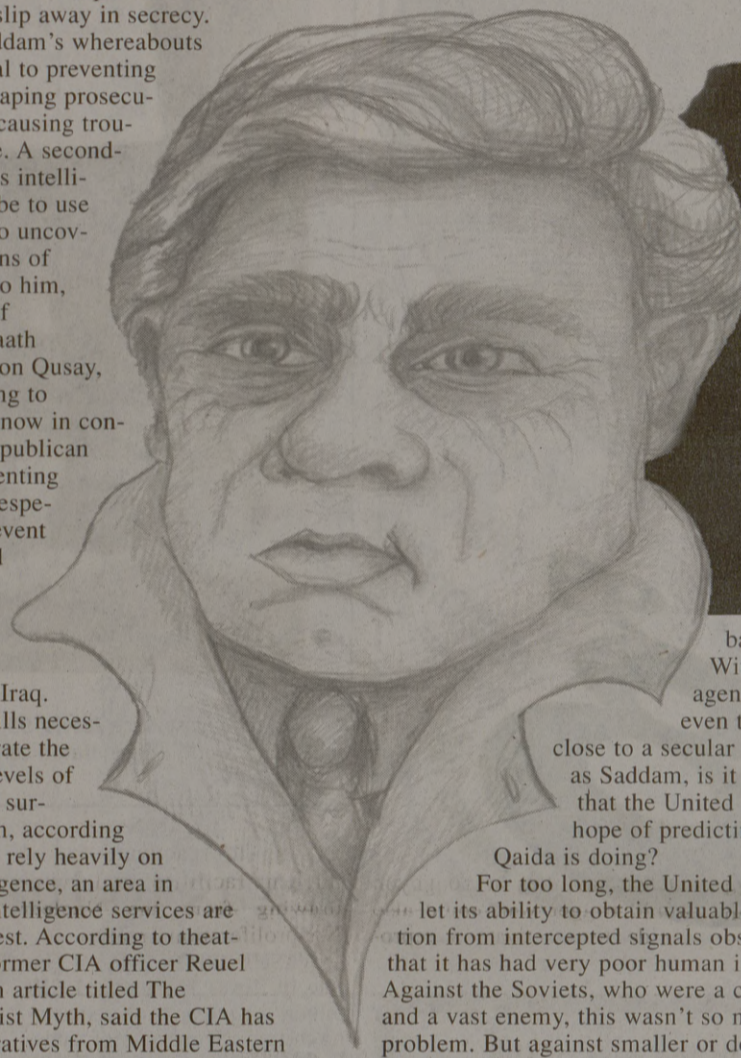
Even today, these agencies still seem to have only a vague idea of his location. At worst, he might be in Europe and they don't know it. But there are others who seem to know, or at least know how to find out — people such as Dan Rather. According to an article on BBC.com, Rather used former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark as a liaison with Saddam. Clark met with the Iraqi leader the Sunday before the interview. So it appears that at least some people with connections to the U.S. government know how to find Saddam.

But there are other reasons for the United States to know Saddam's location beyond trying to bomb his bunker. The United States has

legitimate security and policy reasons for knowing Saddam's location and should use or develop the means to find such information. Developing the ability to gather such information can also aid in the war against al-Qaida. The primary use of information regarding Saddam's location would be for military purposes; in the event of a war to eliminate his command facilities, if not bomb his exact location.

Even if the United States does not go to war, such information serves a purpose. If Saddam were to be deposed or exiled, he might try to slip away in secrecy. Knowing Saddam's whereabouts would be vital to preventing him from escaping prosecution or from causing trouble elsewhere. A secondary use of this intelligence might be to use his location to uncover the positions of others close to him, like leaders of Saddam's B'aath Party or his son Qusay, who, according to BBC.com, is now in control of the Republican Guards. Preventing their escape, especially in the event of war, would also be important to securing the future of a post-Saddam Iraq.

But the skills necessary to penetrate the "concentric levels of security" that surround Saddam, according to Janes.com, rely heavily on human intelligence, an area in which U.S. intelligence services are at their weakest. According to theatlantic.com, former CIA officer Reuel Gerecht, in an article titled The Counterterrorist Myth, said the CIA has very few operatives from Middle Eastern



backgrounds. Without any agents who can even try to get

close to a secular dictator such as Saddam, is it any wonder that the United States has no hope of predicting what al-Qaida is doing?

For too long, the United States has let its ability to obtain valuable information from intercepted signals obscure the fact that it has had very poor human intelligence. Against the Soviets, who were a centralized and a vast enemy, this wasn't so much of a problem. But against smaller or decentralized

enemies, such as Iraq and al-Qaida, the lack of people on the ground becomes painfully apparent.

President George W. Bush and Congress are both responsible for this state of affairs, especially after Sept. 11. The United States doesn't need any more foreign policy surprises like having Saddam pop up in Syria. The time has come for the U.S. intelligence community to realize its shortcomings and correct them.

David Shoemaker is a junior management major. Graphic by Angelique Ford

MAIL CALL

Tanks running through campus a sign of security

In response to a March 4 mail call:

It's 3:10 p.m. Tuesday afternoon, and I am working in one of the many labs I administer. Before proceeding to the next task of the day, several of my student technicians catch my eye. They waved a copy of Tuesday's Battalion mail call section before me. Knowing me as a straight shooting, ex-military, conservative old Ag, they knew I need to see Mr. Taqvi's letter.

I agree there is no profound or poetic way to respond to tanks and artillery pieces being transported down the College Station tracks. There are several practical ways to respond. Perhaps the first that comes to mind is that they came from Ft. Hood headed to the Port Ric and an assistant vice president of Houston via the most economical and straightforward method.

Curiously though, it makes sense. You must have been sleeping off the day instead of attending class, since you missed all the previous shipments of military vehicles during the day. When I see tanks being transported I feel pride, honor and I sleep a lot better knowing that we have the big stick.

We can stand up to tyranny and oppression. We can stomp a mudhole in some tinhorn terrorist state and the psychopathic dictator that runs it. And we can feed the poor, heal the sick and aid the impoverished, because we have the big stick. Too bad they didn't have "I fight so you may keep your precious rights" scrawled on their sides.

Millions and millions before me have said much more eloquently and diplomatically what I wish to express, but if reading a letter like Mr. Taqvi's isn't enough to piss you off, I am not sure what is. I am not a cynic, a left wing satirical socialist or a bed wetting, tree hugging peace activist.

I too fear the tanks, but not for me and you; I fear for the screaming Iraqi soldiers running from them. Let's hope they all have large white flags ready to be unfurled.

Your letter, Mr. Taqvi, has affected me, it has fired me up. I will no longer stand idle and allow feeble attempts at cynicism to go unchallenged. Remember Sept 11? How about World War II? Kosovo? Bosnia? Instead of Black Arm Bands how about good old red, white and blue!!!

Jim Wilson
Class of 1994

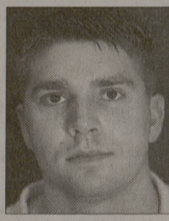
Estrada highly qualified

Who is Miguel Estrada? Born in Honduras, he

immigrated to the United States with his family at age 15, and at 17 he was accepted into Columbia College where he graduated magna cum laude. He later graduated magna cum laude from Harvard Law School. He has clerked for Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, and as a constitutional lawyer, he has argued 15 cases before the High Court. Before joining the Washington, D.C. firm of Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher, where he is currently a partner, he served as assistant to the solicitor general under the Clinton administration. Yet Miguel Estrada, the man who undoubtedly possesses the quintessential immigrant story, is now considered unqualified to judge appellate cases by New York Sen. Charles Schumer and the more than 40 Democrats who are presently filibustering his nomination to the Senate. This is an unprecedented, over-politicized debate that Democrats are senselessly spearheading.

The Fox News Web site reported that Democrats are filibustering because Estrada has not provided enough information on his views or his judicial record to give them an accurate estimate as to what his performance would be if approved for the federal bench. Clearly, a nominee such as Estrada must provide sufficient information regarding his background so that senators may feel confident in their vote.

However, Estrada has done just that — regardless of what Schumer may believe. Schumer's comments on This Week with George Stephanopoulos concerning the Estrada situation reflect the general anti-Estrada argument, and were countered in a letter from Alberto Gonzales, counselor to President George W. Bush. He blasted Schumer's criticisms one by one. Schumer is seeking various memorandums written by Estrada while



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working in the Clinton administration. As Estrada pointed out in his hearings and Gonzales in his letter, these memorandums are protected under attorney-client privileges. Disclosure of such documents could easily lead to Estrada's disbarment.

Also, according to Schumer, Estrada failed to answer specific questions posed to him by the Senate Judiciary Committee, and thus should not be confirmed. According to Gonzales' letter, three of President Clinton's judicial nominees answered no more than 20 questions and one answered only three, yet each was confirmed to the bench. To date, Estrada has answered more than 100 questions orally and 25 as written follow-ups. The questions he refused to answer related to personal views on ideologically-driven judgments such as Roe v. Wade. Each time he responded that he had not delved into the specific case as a judge would, but guaranteed the senators that he would uphold the law and that his personal views were immaterial.

Other outspoken senators such as Ted Kennedy have suggested that Estrada has a "serious temperament problem," according to the Fox News site. One must wonder, with such a stereotypical comment coming from Kennedy, that if Estrada were Irish Catholic, would he also have a serious drinking problem? A Fox News Web article cited a GOP source who claimed that Democrats are "trying to make (Estrada) into Ricky Ricardo." Estrada's legal background is solid; when one cannot argue facts, one is left to attack credibility.

Schumer and his colleagues are playing a dangerous game. They have before them an Hispanic judicial nominee, an immigrant, a graduate of Columbia and Harvard and successful constitutional lawyer, yet to them, he is "unqualified." What would make him qualified? If he had

said that he was personally against abortion, he would have been laughed out of the committee hearing as an extremist, regardless of the fact that Estrada once argued before the Supreme Court on behalf of National Organization for Women and a small group of abortion clinics in the mid 1990s.

One can have personal views that inevitably will conflict with legal precedent. As long as the case warrants it, one must be willing to subvert one's personal views in the face of federal law. To suggest otherwise is to argue that all judges be selected based on their political views rather than their knowledge of the law. Estrada has guaranteed senators of his fairness and has proven his willingness to subjugate his personal beliefs.

Why Democrats are choosing this fight is puzzling. Perhaps it stems from the fact that Estrada would be a likely choice to succeed a retiring Supreme Court judge. However, it is senseless for Democrats to fight Estrada now. They will gain nothing and potentially lose the support of a large percentage of the Hispanic community. A Fox News article reported that Republicans have bought airtime on various Hispanic stations such as Telemundo to reveal the injustice that is occurring on the Senate floor.

Unfortunately, time is waning for Estrada; he may never be confirmed. Republicans have the 51 votes needed to confirm, but lack the 60 votes needed to break the Democratic filibuster. Republicans and Democrats have a long history of trying to stall certain judicial appointments for political reasons; however, this is not the fight for Democrats. Estrada is one of the most well-qualified nominees to come before the Senate, and the fact that he is a conservative should be irrelevant.

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PHILIPPINES
Explosion injured two people
MINDANAO
Tagum
Davao
Explosion at airport killed 19 people and injured more than 100
LIPPINES
Philippine Sea
Manila
MINDANAO
Tagum
Davao