

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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FINDING SADDAM

The capture of Saddam Hussein would bring closure to Iraqis, silence dissidents

Since the opening of the war with Iraq, when a United States B-1 bomber dropped 8,000 pounds of bombs on the suspected location of Saddam Hussein, Saddam has been one of the most hunted men in the world. Despite being at the top of America's list of most wanted people and one of the world's most ruthless dictators, Saddam remains cut off from the reach of everyone searching for him. The fact that Saddam's whereabouts and existence had not yet been determined could, if it does not already, pose a serious problem for the United States and Iraq. Consider that since major fighting ended on May 1, 2003 coalition soldiers have died at the hands of enemy combatants — whether Baath party loyalists or criminals freely walking the streets. Finding Saddam is a necessary step to bringing closure to the latest war in Iraq and helping the nation rebuild.

U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld recently said there "are many unfinished missions to complete, such as capturing or accounting for Saddam." Statements such as this by high-ranking officials in the Bush administration make it abundantly clear that finding Saddam is, as it should be, a top priority. Capturing Saddam or verifying his death will go a long way toward ending the war in Iraq symbolically and physically.

This is not the only occurrence that must happen to end the war, but it would stand as a symbol in the minds of many people that his rule is finished. Saddam's old regime may be tattered and torn apart, but as long as Saddam is on the loose and unaccounted for, this war will not be over in the minds of many Iraqis. Members of Saddam's Baath party, as well as criminals released before the start of the war, pose a significant threat to the coalition forces trying to bring an elected government to Iraq, not to mention restore water and electricity. As tensions rise, it becomes more important to find the deposed Iraqi dictator and get a stable government established and coalition troops out of the country.

The United States has done a wonderful job thus far in capturing high-ranking officials of the old Iraqi regime such as Muzahim Sa'b



TIMOTHY GILBERT

Hassan al Tikriti, No. 10 on the U.S. list of most wanted Iraqis; Muhammad Hamza al-Zubaydi, No. 18; and Zuhayr Al Nqib, No. 21. This is not even the tip of the iceberg, though, as the list of captured officials goes on.

And while it is great that many top officials have been captured, how many people in America actually know who these people are? Probably not many. People in America know who Saddam is and that is about it. The capture of Saddam would be a much more recognizable accomplishment to the American people than any other capture could be.

Other less superficial reasons for capturing Saddam should also be taken into consideration. Most importantly, it would ease the minds of the Iraqi citizens who live everyday not knowing what has happened to the brutal dictator who once ruled their country. Imagine living under the rule of an inflexible leader who would routinely use torture and executions against any supposed dissenters as a means of staying in power. The knowledge that this man is not on the loose anymore would help those who have suffered under his tyranny to sleep easier at night.

Without fear of Saddam's violent regime taking back power after Iraq is turned back over to the Iraqi people, citizens would be able to come out of the woodwork and begin to build a new political system. As long as the threat of Saddam is a real thought in Iraqi citizens' minds, the rebuilding process will not be able to make significant steps forward.

Paul Bremmer, the appointed civil leader of Iraq, has more physical concerns about not capturing Saddam. He states that Saddam's capture would "prevent hostile elements from undermining reconstruction in the country." This means that as long as Saddam is out there, his Baath party loyalists will keep fighting coalition forces in Iraq, as is evident by the 203 deaths since May 1. This fighting will continue,



because the belief is still there that one day, it might be possible to reinstate Saddam as a leader once occupying forces have left. Also, those Iraqi soldiers who have been forced to fight by Saddam and have seen his brutal handling of opposition might not be sure enough that they are free of Saddam until they see him captured.

All in all, Saddam has lost much of his direct power in Iraq, but it is doubtful that the

fear he has instilled in many of the Iraqi citizens has subsided. This fear will not begin to go away until the fate of Saddam is known. His capture is necessary to help the people of Iraq rebuild and put Americans' minds at ease.

Timothy Gilbert is a junior sociology major. Graphic by Seth Freeman.

MAIL CALL

Affirmative action dispels age-old racism and bigotry

In response to a July 1 mail call:

I would like to thank Mr. Sain for his solution to the problem of racism: Just ignore it. Are conservatives so naïve as to think that ignoring racism will make it go away?

Affirmative action provides universities such as Texas A&M an avenue to create a campus with diversity while taking steps to dispel racism and bigotry. I applaud A&M President Dr. Robert M. Gates for his efforts to improve our fine school by recruiting high quality minority students. We should be willing to step on the toes of a few borderline white males in order to improve the quality of "the other education" that we take so much pride in.

It is the right thing to do for Aggies to receive a well-rounded education. Unfortunately, as Mr. Sain put it, he and many other conservatives don't care.

Brian Prehn
Class of 2003

Courses can provide A&M with needed diversity

It pleased me to read in Monday's Battalion about the College of Liberal Arts offering a minor program in Africana studies.

If we wish to achieve true cultural understanding and diversity, we must focus on offering courses that will attract people of various ethnic and racial backgrounds rather than admissions policies that consider race. Forced diversity is not true diversity at all.

Cody Sain
Class of 2006

More money is not the answer to school problem

In response to Jenelle Wilson's June 30 column:

Ms. Wilson points out the obvious shortcomings of this nation's public school system: more than half of public school students cannot read on their own grade level, and they perform poorly on basic aptitude tests.

As a solution, Ms. Wilson suggests that the government pour even more money into the floundering system. But the trend is already clear: we are spending more every year, and getting less to show for it.

We have instituted new requirements for teacher certification, and invested in better technology.

The implication is obvious. Additional spending cannot solve the education crisis in our nation, but increased federal intrusion will certainly make it worse. Refusing to admit this is only an attempt to avoid the fact that the sole responsibility for education rests with the individual student.

Any student who wants an education in this nation can achieve one. But for a student who refuses to learn, no number of federal dollars, taken from those who rightfully earned them, will be able to force an education down his unwilling throat.

If we wish to solve the education crisis facing our nation today, we must be willing to return all of the accountability for learning to the only person who has control over it: the student.

Cindy McReynolds
Class of 2005

Dealing with aging drivers

More measures needed to ensure others' safety

It's common knowledge that America's highways are aging and in need of repair. It's less well known that America's driving population is also aging and may be in need of corrective action. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported that in 2000, there were 18.9 million licensed drivers age 70 and older in the United States. This age group accounted for 13 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2001, but only 10 percent of the driving population. In fact, drivers 75 and older have higher rates of traffic fatalities per mile driven than any age group other than teenagers, according to the U.S. government.

The problem is only getting worse. As the baby boomer generation ages and the size of the 75-year-old-plus population segment increases, more elderly people, many with questionable driving abilities, will fill the roadways. HoustonChronicle.com reports that by the year 2030, a staggering one in four drivers will be over the age of 65, and the number of elderly driver motor vehicle fatalities may triple, according to NHTSA.

Can anything be done? The American Medical Association is expected to issue a set of guidelines soon that would help doctors identify warning signs of driving incompetence, and the government has allocated \$1.6 million to fund a National Older Drivers Research Center, according to HoustonChronicle.com.

The fact that this problem exists is not controversial, but the proposed solutions are. States vary widely in the number and form of provisions for issuing licenses to elderly drivers, and Texas falls on the lax end of the spectrum with no special requirements for its senior

citizens. To its credit, Texas has safeguards in place for drivers of all ages, including vision testing and mandated testing after a specified number of accidents.

Texas also requires that driver's licenses be renewed every six years, and in-person renewals are required every other six-year period. But Texas has no regulations in place that apply specifically to older drivers. Like any other driver, elderly Texans wishing to renew their licenses can go for as long as 12 years without having their vision tested.

Older drivers aren't the only high-risk driving group — they're surpassed by teenagers in this dubious distinction. But Texas' lawmakers have acknowledged the risk posed by teenagers and created a system to monitor their driving. From the ages of 16 to 18, drivers in Texas must renew their licenses at the Department of Motor Vehicles in person every year. While this program is inconvenient, it is justifiable.

Many states require more frequent license renewals past a certain age, typically around 65. Other common screening procedures include compulsory vision, knowledge, medical and/or road tests, as well as requiring doctors to report certain conditions which may impair one's driving ability, such as dementia.

A national survey conducted by the Insurance Research Council in 1999 found a great deal of support for these special age-conscious provisions. 76 percent of respondents supported annual road testing for drivers over 70, and 89 percent endorsed annual vision tests. The majority of respondents also favored mandatory annual physicals, training programs for older



LINDSYE FORSON

IN BRIEF

Targeted for drivers

It took the shiny firearms and the fe and daughter in a with a drunken driver Ybarra that he 't drink and drive. and local officials rong injection of TV fied enforcement of g laws around the oliday will have the Texas drivers. s two sons, Junior, 5, were the only sur- unken driver hit the May 2002. His 29- ona, whom he calls 'man," was believed antly and 1-year-old alive, Ybarra said. d father and some- used to drink and but the accident ing.

nk and then when ze, you cause an use a death, or you " he said. "This is just opened my new life."

at a news confer- to promote the own, which runs effort, the National Traffic Safety spending \$11 mil- and Spanish ads Texas is a special tar- Amoni, the admin- ite administrator in ram Development.

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