

Reader Forum

Why the U.S. must keep troops in the Middle East

By SCOTT M. REED

On Wednesday, Sept. 19, I was dismayed at the editorial opinion of *The Daily Collegian*. It was entitled "Time to Go, The United States has completed its job in the Gulf, should leave now." As a military person for six years in the Navy and currently in the Army National Guard, I would like to give my reaction to this article.

I have to ask, "What job has been completed?" Was it to show the world that the United States can move over 100,000 troops and their equipment to a Middle East country? No! Our job was to assist Saudi Arabia in protecting its borders and to provide a military option if diplomatic relations could not free Kuwait.

It was stated in the opinion that, "President Bush was right to send American forces to the Gulf when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait." What has changed? Nothing! It appears now that Saddam Hussein will not pull out of Kuwait, and if his position is not changed through diplomacy and economic sanctions, there is only one option — the military. Without a military, diplomacy is an empty word.

In the article, alternatives to the current situation were mentioned. They include: maintaining economic sanctions and a small peacekeeping force. Let me address each one of these so-called solutions.

The economic sanctions are already being enforced by the multi-national

naval forces in the Persian Gulf by military ships. (Another good reason to keep the military presence.) Also, there are leaks through Jordan and Iran that will make our stay even longer in Saudi Arabia. Since these leaks will delay the economic strain, our stamina for keeping our forces in Saudi Arabia must be maintained.

A small peacekeeping force is not an answer either. Any small force would be no match for the military machine of Iraq. Hussein has been building his forces ever since the end of the Iran-Iraq war. Even a force large enough to delay an Iraq attack would require numbers very close to the amount sustained at this time especially when calculating the possible use of chemical weapons. A small force could be crushed before reinforcements could arrive from the U.S., and we would be fighting an uphill battle. Not to mention the loss of life in such a useless endeavor.

Also, there is no United Nations peacekeeping force in Saudi Arabia (as stated in the opinion). It is a multi-national force provided by the United States, United Kingdom, France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria. There is a large difference between the two.

Furthermore, Hussein did not take Saudi Arabia, but he may have plans to take it soon. Kuwait was a pushover for Iraq, and Iraq has always been looking to expand its borders. It tried to take Iran and lost. It has taken Kuwait and the next two possibilities are Jordan and



Collegian Graphic / Jennifer Flannery

Saudi Arabia because they have the weakest military in comparison to other countries bordering Iraq. Hussein has taken the tactics of all beginning empires — take one country at a time.

Hussein is not stalled. He is just waiting for America to beat itself. Soon, we'll lose our commitment to Kuwait

because we won't be able to see beyond today or remember what happened yesterday. Internally, we will strike out against ourselves until we pull out. We will live up to our name given to us by the North Vietnamese in the '60s — "The paper tiger." If we don't stand up against Saddam Hussein now, we will

fight him later when he takes another country and has nuclear weapons. I ask that every American stand behind our friends, and relatives serving the military in Saudi Arabia. As a person in the military, I can appreciate the support.

Furthermore, the article stated that domestic issues were being neglected

because of the current crisis. Domestic issues do need attention, but pulling troops out of Saudi Arabia will not change the agenda. Attention will be brought on some other issue of little impact like — flag burning instead of the homeless and the budget deficit.

On the other hand, I do agree with the editorial's position that prejudice against Arab Americans is unjust. They are not in Iraq behind a rifle. These people are not the enemy. They have rights like all other Americans.

However, I would like to add some points to the comments on the United State's energy options. It has been too long since this country has taken any realistic steps on an energy policy. Since the 1970s, America has experienced an energy crisis at least once every decade. Following these crises, we experience high inflation and troubled economic times. It is time that we revive and sustain goals for increased energy independence. There must be an initiative to increase research on solar and fusion power. The use of wind and hydroelectric power must be expanded. The mandatory federal mileage rating must be followed.

If we don't begin and continue steps to wean America from foreign oil dependence, the United States will cyclically experience these economic and political problems time and time again.

Scott M. Reed is a senior majoring in political science

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