

Troops deal with reality of war's consequences

This is in response to Jessica Nguyen's letter (April 19) in which she said she was horrified at seeing an article about the war in Iraq which contained a "horrific, graphic description of the death of an 8-month-old baby" and a graphic picture of an injured child. She said the picture and description showed a lack of respect and were unnecessary.

In my opinion, it is the fact of the dead and injured children that is horrific, not the published information. And making the information available is necessary.

In order to have an informed opinion everyone needs to be aware of all of the aspects of this war, regardless of their opinion of the war. This includes awareness (and horror) that babies and children are among those who are being injured and killed.

It would be disrespectful to the victims and families to ignore their suffering and disrespectful to Americans to omit this consequence of the war. This information is as important as is more palatable subject matter, such as the pictures and descriptions of the Iraqis cheering the coalition forces.

It is important to have some awareness of what those who are fighting in Iraq are experiencing, and the consequences of their experiences. An article in The Sun on the same day Nguyen's letter was printed ("Some Iraqi veterans struggle to cope with killing") describes the reactions of those who face the reality of having to kill a fellow human being and seeing the results.

According to the article, mental health counselors estimate that one-third of combat soldiers will return emotionally wounded. A portion will develop disabling psychiatric illnesses. As the article says: "Trauma experts say soldiers will return home forever changed by what they've seen and done in the war."

We owe these men and woman the respect of having some miniscule idea of what they have endured, although obviously pictures and descriptions cannot in any way convey the true horror.

Sharron Bowker,
Gainesville

We're losing credibility

The credibility crises regarding this administration's Iraq policy runs deep. The record of U.S. foreign policy prior to this administration cast a distracting shadow over the lofty promises of providing democracy for Iraq.

Historian Howard Zinn recently stated on the PBS News Hour that the unexamined record of the U.S. foreign policy in the last century contradicts Bush's promises of democracy for Iraq. Around the world, the United States has generally subverted local democratic impulses and supported or installed repressive dictators who would insure U.S. corporations' access to natural resources to the exclusion of the Warsaw Pact.

Many believe the U.S. invasion of Iraq is about U.S. control of Iraqi resources (oil) and not about delivering Iraq from the "Beast of Baghdad" and his weapons. When U.S. companies were selling weapons technologies to Iraq and Iraqi oil flowed freely to the West, the United States voted against the U.N. Security Council president's 3/21/86 issuance of a statement of concern: "that chemical weapons on many occasions have been used by Iraqi forces against

Iranian troops."

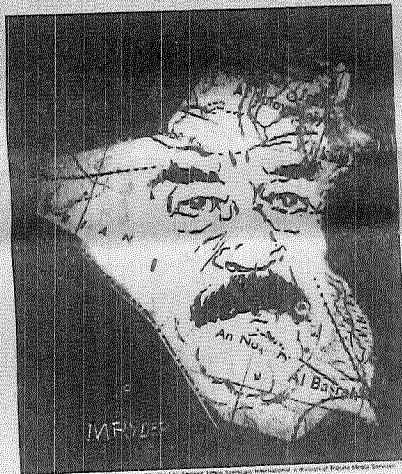
Much is made of France's threat to veto the final U.S.-sponsored U.N. resolution to forcibly disarm Iraq. But between 1972 and 2002, the United States vetoed more than 200 U.N. resolutions; including more than a dozen prohibiting the development or proliferation of the same indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction.

The United States vetoed nearly two dozen resolutions affirming the right of every people to choose their own economic and social system. In 1987, it vetoed a measure to prevent international terrorism and objected to the convening of an international conference to address the underlying political and economic causes of terrorism.

Approximately 70 (35 percent) of these U.S.-vetoed resolutions condemned Israel for variously terrorizing or oppressing the Palestinians or her neighbors. U.S. support of apartheid in Israel correlated to the dozen U.S.-vetoed resolutions that condemned apartheid in South Africa.

If regime change brings Iraq genuine self-rule, U.S. political credibility may begin to recover. If the U.S. conquest of Iraq becomes the springboard for other military adventures, Bush will be courting the next world war.

Perry Keidel,
Veterans For Peace,
Gainesville



Los Angeles Times Syndicate

Many died under Hussein

As I was reading Manuel Martinez's (April 21) column titled "Put names to the faces," I thought it would be very interesting to know how he was working for social justice in Iraq in a non-violent way. I would like to know what course of action he thinks would have been more appropriate that had not been tried in the last 12 years.

Saddam Hussein has killed hundreds of thousands, but Martinez doesn't seem to care about that. If the United States stays the course in Iraq, as it should, there is no question that this war will have saved lives.

The humanitarian crisis that Martinez describes as "developing" is actually ebbing. Hussein is no longer in power, which is the first step ensuring there will still be humans in Iraq in the future.

Next there must be food and water. The Iraqis will be getting much more of that now. The food-for-oil program that Hussein was looting for his personal gain will now go to the people it was meant to go to. The sanctions should also be dropped, even over the objections of the French and Russians.

Rule of law must be obtained. It was quite predictable that looting would take place, especially in a country that has the religious and tribal differences that Iraq has. We are patrolling Iraq with an increasing number of Iraqi police.

Martinez wants a counting of

civilian dead. I have that answer: much less than under Hussein and much less than if Hussein was left in power. He should be rejoicing that the Iraqis will now be free and not oppressed.

John Moss,
Archer

Leaders didn't stop looting

The United States has failed to prevent looting and destruction of museums, hospitals and public health facilities in Iraq.

The destruction of the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad, which contained 7,000-year old artifacts of human history from the cradle of civilization, was disturbing. The vacant expressions of patients in a destroyed mental hospital, where other patients lay covered in flies, were tragic. And the story about the looted public health laboratory, which contained biological samples of polio and the plague, was downright scary.

Our troops had been warned that such facilities might be looted. Where were they? Guarding the Oil Ministry and the oil wells.

A little-known international agreement called the Roerich Pact, signed by representatives of the United States in the presence of then-President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1935, creates the precedent that "the historic monuments, museums, scientific, artistic, educational and cultural institutions shall be considered as neutral and as such respected and protected by belligerents."

More than 250 people recently signed an "Urgent Petition of International Scholars of Mesopotamia and the Near East to the United Nations and UNESCO for the Safeguarding of Iraqi Cultural Heritage." Oops, sorry, I forgot — the United Nations is now irrelevant. I guess 7,000 years of human history must be irrelevant, too.

Meanwhile, multimillion-dollar contracts to help rebuild Iraq are now going to subsidiaries of Halliburton, which is still paying Vice President Dick Cheney, and to the current administration's Republican supporters at Bechtel. For anyone who thought that Operation Iraqi Freedom was about liberating the Iraqi people, think again.

Maybe it's time to put controls in place to ensure that those leaders who can send our sons and daughters off to die in wars are never again in a position to profit by those decisions.

Lucinda Faulkner Merritt,
Newberry

Give us your opinion

Letters to Voice of the People should be typed, if possible, and double-spaced.

Letters should be brief and to the point, and those selected may be shortened for space reasons.

Letters must be signed and include the writer's address and phone number. Letters are subject to editing.

Generally, only one letter from the same writer will be published each month.



BY MAIL: Voice of the People, The Gainesville Sun, P.O. Box 147147, Gainesville 32614-7147



BY E-MAIL: voice@gvillesun.com