

Serb action shows peace isn't goal

The war in former Yugoslavia took another turn for the worse this week, as Serb forces took more than 300 United Nations peacekeeping troops hostage and blatantly disregarded U.N. mandates.

The troops, who were handcuffed to key Serb installations, are being used as insurance against further attacks by NATO air forces aimed at stopping Serbian aggression. NATO troops have used military force to enforce U.N. resolutions and the will of NATO-member countries.

Other Serb leaders said the U.N. troops were against the Serbs and therefore part of the collective "enemy." In reality, NATO troops bombed Serb ammunition-storage facilities after the Serbs failed to return heavy weaponry stolen from the United Nations.

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Beside being the product of a long, confusing series of events, the Serb action demonstrates a callous disregard for peace and indicates that the Serbs are placing victory above peace — a bloody mistake.

Unfortunately, the Serbs, one faction of the ongoing conflict, are missing the point.

The U.N. troops are attempting to establish peace, or at least mitigate the damage and protect civilians. In no way is peace served by chaining troops to Serb installations. If the Serbs view the U.N. as an enemy, it becomes increasingly evident that Serbs are an enemy of peace, as this is the goal of the U.N. troops.

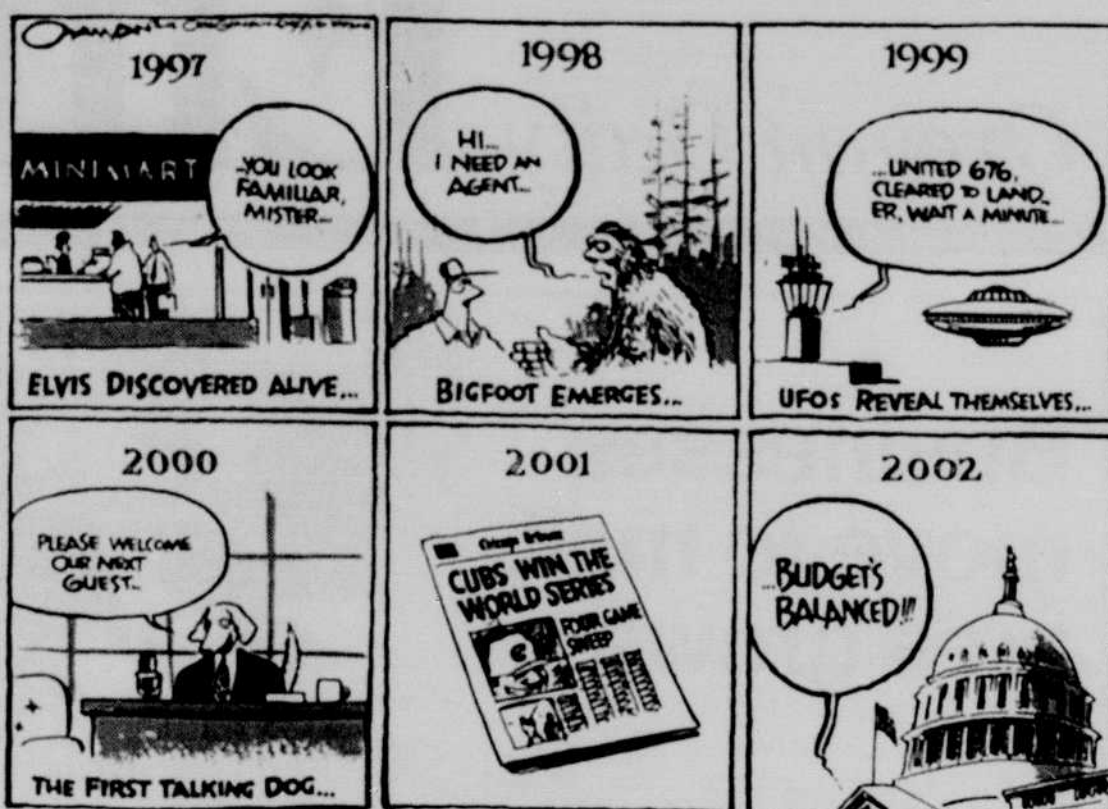
In recent days, Serb leaders have taken steps to isolate themselves from the world community. They have said they do not intend to follow the mandates of U.N. resolutions aimed at restoring peace to the war-weary land.

The hostage situation only exacerbates a number of problems in the region. The Serbs holding U.N. hostages not only increases the already high tension typical of this war, but it brings into question the effectiveness and usefulness of U.N. troops. If the troops become pawns of the Serbian army, what purpose can they serve in promoting peace?

Hostage-taking will only promote drastic action by world powers, including, at the very least, an invasion of Serb-held territory to rescue the held U.N. troops.

The Serb action prompts world leaders to question their resolve about ending the war in the Balkans. For some, pulling foreign troops out of the country looks tempting, and only their consciences stop them from allowing an even more lethal war from reigniting.

Serb leaders should listen to the message of world powers. Taking peacekeeping troops hostage crosses the line — a line blurred by the reality of war in an area that hasn't seen peace in years.



COMMENTARY

Police use of tear gas forces students out of home

Corrine Burden

As residents of a house which was rendered unlivable (as stated by the Eugene Police Department) by the tear gas dispensed by the EPD on May 19, we feel it is our responsibility to share with the public what we experienced that evening.

We did have a party in our house that night and until about 10:30 we thought it would be a dud. Around that time, the house suddenly filled with people. Apparently, there were two other parties in the immediate area which had been broken up or whose kegs had gone dry. Anyone familiar with the campus area knows that 17th Avenue and Hilyard Street is a busy and popular intersection. Our house sits on this intersection.

Essentially, our house became a magnet for everyone in the surrounding area. People gravitated toward our house first, because there was a party going on and second, to see why there were about 100 people standing on our front lawn. This crowd assembled as our house reached maximum capacity. As the crowd grew, we tried to clear people out of the house and then off the property. A number of us were trying to move people off the property and we were either ignored or met with open hostility.

What followed has already been made clear. Once police began to approach the crowd, they were "showered with bottles and obscenities." We saw that the situation had become dangerous to everyone in the area. At this time, a house member called the police to see what they were doing, to see what we could do to help and to explain that this situation (over 200 people standing on all four corners of 17th and Hilyard) had escalated beyond our control unforeseeably.

The point of this letter is to make known that after this "mob" dispersed (or, rather, as people scattered to escape the cloud of tear gas which engulfed the entire southeast region of Eugene), the police felt it necessary to discharge more canisters

of tear gas at our house. Several people heard two tear gas canisters ricochet off the large windows on the side of our house facing Hilyard Street.

One canister was shot at our front door and struck one of our friends in the chest. Another landed on our porch and was thrown off by a friend who was trying to keep people off our property. He suffered serious burns and blisters to his hands. As one of my house mates opened the front door to pull a person in from the tear gas, another canister went off on the porch.

When the two canisters were shot at the side windows, there were about 10 people still inside the house — not a mob and certainly not a threat. We want to clarify that there are very large windows and with the lights on it is easy to see inside. As far as our porch goes, one house member was standing behind the police lines on 18th and Hilyard and could easily see that our porch was clear, except for a few people trying to help those who had been gassed. Those who were inside claim that the house was close to empty until they pulled a few people in who had been gassed.

That night our house was rendered uninhabitable. Throughout the weekend, we asked the police for advice and assistance. They told us to air out the house and sent the fire department over to hose off the front porch. These efforts were not helpful and only further dispersed the tear gas, which we later found out requires a much more involved process to be removed from a house.

On Monday, the police

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advised us to rent large fans to blow the powder out of the house and, after throwing away the most saturated pieces of furniture, to clean every surface in the house, including curtains, clothing, housewares, furniture, kitchen utensils and personal possessions.

We have been unable to live in our house for almost a week, with slim resources to detoxify the house ourselves. We have been very ill, with symptoms ranging from vomiting to chest tightness, bronchial congestion, severe headaches, faintness, lightheadedness and spontaneous nosebleeds.

We are staying with different friends and are severely distressed. We are facing exams the week of June 5, without access to our personal possessions, without a home base in which to study and without a secure place to sleep.

The whole night was filled with unfortunate events and we empathize with everyone who felt the gas that night. Let's hope nothing like this happens again.

Corrine Burden and nine co-signers live near the area where Eugene police dispersed a crowd using tear gas May 19.

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Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

Commentaries should be between 600 and 800 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the commentary is submitted.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

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