

# COMMENTARY

Thursday, January 30, 2003

## Editorial

### Bush revealed nothing new in his speech about Iraq war

Tuesday night, in the same tradition that has been carried on by every president every January since the days of Thomas Jefferson, President George W. Bush gave us the State of the Union.

The problem is, he really didn't. There was precious little substance, only vague puffery about how to fix the nation's problems. That, of course is to be expected, as every president uses the State of the Union to "float" ideas.

But the reason most people said they watched the speech was to hear Bush's justification for war with Iraq. We listened for that reason as well, and what we heard further convinced us that war is the wrong path for America to take.

Media hype and Ari Fleischer's statements to the contrary, there was no further "building of the case" from the president. There was no new information, not even a crumb from the dossier that the administration is rumored to be releasing this week. Instead, we heard the same hyperbolic propaganda. It was, for all intents and purposes, an "off the rack" patriotic speech that could have come from any country on the brink of war.

We were actually taken aback by Bush claiming divine providence and guidance for the United States in an imperialist war against Iraq. It dredged up too many examples from history — "manifest destiny," "divine right of kings" and "Gott mit uns" to name a few.

Bush's speech also left us with too many unanswered questions.

Why, exactly, do we need to remove Saddam Hussein by force now? Have the inspectors failed and we don't know it yet? Actually, they haven't even been given the chance, and bombing will be counterproductive.

Where are Saddam's weapons? How will bombing stop the weapons from being used? How will killing innocent Iraqi civilians liberate them or make U.S. citizens safer?

What is the end plan after Hussein is out of power? Why is removing Hussein from power even on the table? How is Hussein a greater murderer than the butchers behind the civil wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast and Congo? Regime change is not what the world — and the president, sometimes — have said they are looking for. Why did Bush subtly conflate the two agendas into one?

We haven't heard any answers from the president, nor do we expect to, as we are skeptical that he even has them.

The times do not call for rhetoric about war — not when the game is disarmament. The world wants Iraq to disarm. America wants Iraq to disarm. Certainly nobody in their right mind would want to see Hussein with a nuclear bomb. However, unilateral action is not legal, necessary or helpful.

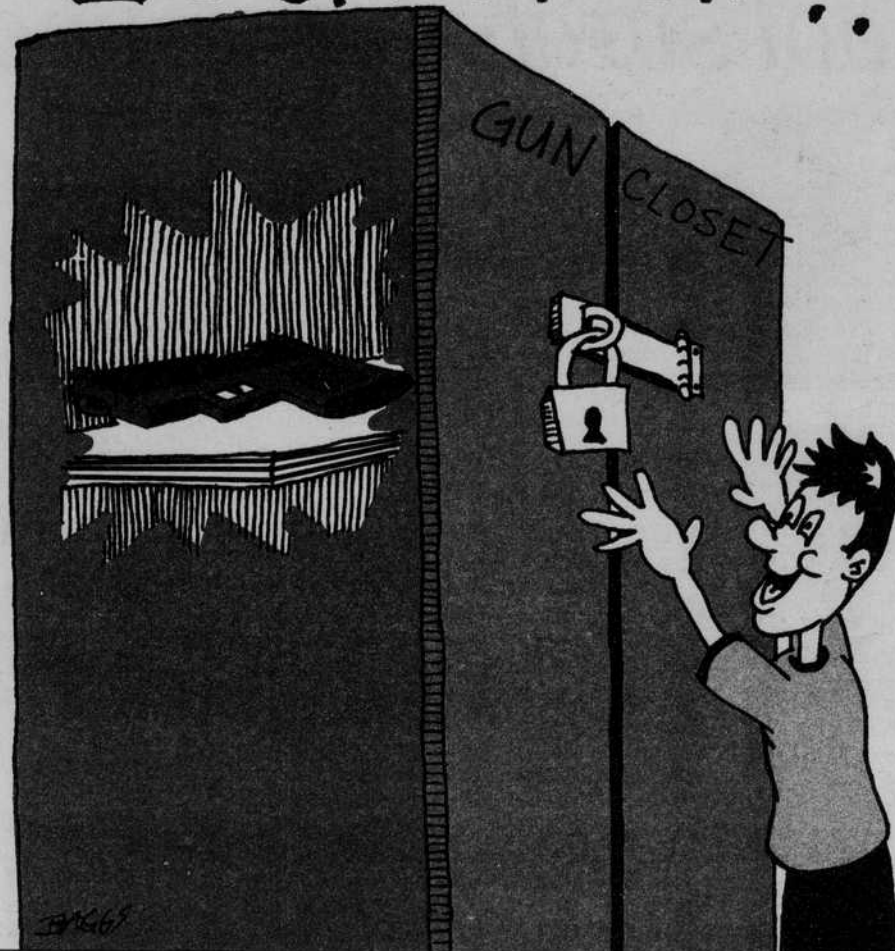
Instead, here's the plan: The United States should give some proof of the existence of weapons, then get U.N. approval and send in international peacekeepers to protect the inspectors — whose numbers must be increased substantially — as they do their job. The world will find the weapons and destroy them, and the agenda of disarmament will be accomplished.

That isn't what we heard Tuesday night, however. All we heard was more propaganda about war — a war Bush wants to portray as Hussein's fault even as he does the mongering.

## Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

## LOCK IT UP!!



Steve Baggs Emerald

## Guns and carelessness

Here we go again.

Sometimes, I sadden myself. I feel like I have become so desensitized by the parade of violence on nightly newscasts that when I hear that another child has been killed, it often goes unnoticed to me. These events turn up in the news reports so often that many times it really is easy for me to ignore it and often it leaves me unaffected.

But this time, it's different.

This time, when I heard the news that a 10-year-old girl from Vancouver had been accidentally killed by her older brother, I was left shocked and saddened. This time it stopped me dead in my tracks. This time I paid attention.

The Oregonian reported that on Jan. 13, Emilee Randall was accidentally shot in the head by her 13-year-old brother Matthew with his father's gun while their parents were out of the home. The gun was located in the master bedroom, unattended, on a high shelf.

To make matters worse, Matthew was already on probation for unlawfully possessing a firearm in 2001. He broke probation

by possessing this firearm and is currently serving his full 30-year sentence.

It gets even worse. The father of Emilee and Matthew is Craig Randall, a Clark County sheriff's sergeant. The gun used in the accidental killing was his duty gun.

This story upsets me beyond belief for many reasons. Of course, it is sad that any innocent child has to die much before her time should run out. But it is even more depressing when this situation could have easily been avoided.

The problem here is guns.

As one could easily notice from recent events, children and guns just do not seem to mix, often resulting in many tragic instances. One that is near and dear to Oregon natives especially: the Thurston High School shooting of May 21, 1998. When these acts are brought home, however, it can evoke different views from people. And this case is no different.

I am personally appalled by the fact that there was a gun left unattended in the house of this sergeant. As a man of the law, I would think he should have known better than to leave his gun unattended and that this wouldn't have had to happen. Although there is currently no policy with the Clark County Sheriff's Office regarding storage of guns, Craig Randall should have taken action and responsibility to prevent Matthew from getting a hold of the weapon. Whether a

safety lock was to be in place, or purely locked in storage, anything could have possibly prevented this tragedy.

Sure, the parents may have trusted their son, but with a background such as his, a "better safe than sorry" method needs to be taken. I can imagine that this family is sorry now.

Although the damage has clearly been done, I hope that as a society, we can finally learn from this. How many children have to die? How many families have to suffer with this great loss of a loved one until we finally get a clue? Guns are dangerous — period.

It is time that, as a nation, we put away our "it won't happen to me" mentality. It has become clear that a certain level of responsibility needs to kick in. I am not arguing that the possession of guns should be criminalized — it is our constitutional right and a privilege as American citizens. But with this privilege, responsibility must be taken to prevent children dying in the manner of Emilee Randall — through the carelessness of gun owners.

It is easy. Let's not let these accidents happen, and let's prevent them in the first place. Be safe — take responsibility.

Contact the columnist at sarahspellman@dailyemerald.com. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Sarah Spellman  
Spin cycle

## Letter to the editor

### Iraq forum deserves thanks

I attended the University forum on Iraq last week and was encouraged to hear the question — of whether the University should take a position — be fleshed out publicly in a civil and informed manner.

I would like to thank the University Senate for organizing the event, as well as University President Dave Frohnmayer and professors McLauchlan, Murphy and Pope for their efforts to examine the

issue and answer questions from the audience. I'd also like to thank the ASUO for doing a good job of publicizing the event, but they didn't do a good job, so I can't thank them for it (a Page 8 story written by an ODE staff member doesn't count).

Kudos to the University Senate and their speakers, though. And I look forward to Friday's University Assembly meeting to consider the issue of the University and Iraq.

Paul Griffes  
junior  
geography

## CORRECTION

Monday's article about women's basketball ("UO women struggle in win against Cougars," ODE, Jan. 27) should have said that while the Ducks lost to Washington State on a last-second shot at Mac Court in the 2000-01 season, they swept the Cougars in two regular-season games and at the Pac-10 Tournament during the 2001-02 season. The Emerald regrets the error.