

Monday, March 15, 2004

EDITORIAL

War in Iraq fails to meet objectives

For the past 362 days, U.S. military men and women have been half a world away, fighting against an unknown enemy in a war more complicated than, perhaps, it should be.

Since March 19, 2003, U.S. soldiers have occupied Iraq, first fighting to overthrow Saddam Hussein's dictatorship and defeat his army. Since the end of major combat on May 1, U.S. soldiers have remained in the country, helping ensure a proper transition to democratic leadership and prevent possible uprisings, facing attackers who wear no uniforms and have no faces.

Beyond these facets of war, many across this nation have felt very real consequences. As of March 12, 558 U.S. soldiers have died in Operation Iraqi Freedom. More than 75 percent of those deaths have occurred since May 1. Additionally, 2,788 U.S. soldiers have been wounded in action.

By the numbers, 10 U.S. soldiers have died each week the United States has occupied Iraq. About eight U.S. soldiers are wounded every day in Iraq. Since major fighting was supposed to have ended on May 1, more than one U.S. soldier has died for each subsequent day troops have remained.

The merits of entering Iraq have been hotly debated, most recently with the revelation that President Bush used inaccurate information during his 2003 State of the Union address, aimed at facilitating the impending need to preemptively strike Iraq.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Sunday on "Face the Nation" that the war in Iraq was "the right thing to do," despite the fact that U.S. troops have found absolutely no trace of weapons of mass destruction — the major justification for invasion.

"(Saddam) didn't say, 'Come in and look, and see what we have,'" Rumsfeld said. "He was engaged in active deception."

On "CNN Late Edition," Rumsfeld noted that simply because weapons of mass destruction haven't yet been found doesn't mean they will never be discovered.

"You could have hidden enough biological weapons in the hole that we found Saddam Hussein in to kill tens of thousands of people," Rumsfeld said. "So it's not as though we have certainty today."

What's most disturbing about this train of thought are the simple standards this country is founded on. President Bush presented his argument to Congress to invade another country on the supposition that weapons of mass destruction might be present. Congress approved military action. The U.S. military invaded Iraq, ousted its leader and has been looking for WMD for almost a year.

To contrast this, in America, prosecutors present arguments to judges to obtain search warrants, whereby the evidence gathered during the search will be used to convict. Judges, based on whether they believe there is enough probable cause to allow a search, either sign or do not sign search warrants. If signed, police can search an individual's premises for only the specific item listed on the search warrant.

For Rumsfeld to say that he's glad America went to war with Iraq is appalling. If a similar search occurred in this country — a yearlong search that has yet to render any results — civil libertarians would be up in arms, and many politicians would concur.

But some say that weapons of mass destruction are irrelevant at this point: A world without Hussein in power is a better place, and the United States should be applauded. Yet, since Dec. 13, when Hussein was captured, the United States has remained in Iraq with no end in sight.

While it's true that abruptly pulling soldiers out of Iraq would be detrimental to the efforts already under way, keeping Americans in Iraq without a solid plan for removal is unimaginable.

As the year anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom nears, President Bush needs to outline his plan to remove U.S. soldiers from Iraq. He needs to set a timeline for this endeavor. And he needs to follow through with it.

This being an election year, it's foreseeable that both Bush and Democratic candidate John Kerry will unveil a plan this week to bring Americans home. For this, we should all be grateful.

But until we start seeing results, more Americans will be lost in an outing that has resulted in zero WMD findings and a deck-of-cards worth of high-profile captures. It's time to start moving.

Because for every day we delay, at least one more soldier will be sent home with an American flag.



Steve Baggs Illustration

Schools must consider impact of allowing antisocial behavior

In a welcomed display of social decency, Northeastern University's president Richard Freeland yesterday informed students that he was postponing the visit of hip-hop star Ludacris, a \$125,000 event planned for the University's Springfest on April 2. His decision was based on his belief that deadly post-Super Bowl rioting, directly involving Northeastern students,

GUEST COMMENTARY

called for a type of "moratorium" on events that could negatively impact the neighborhoods again, not to mention to serve as punishment for errant behavior.

Mr. Freeland's gesture is a rare one among university administrators, who frequently lack the commitment to lead their student bodies away from the potential for antisocial behavior. But the decision is doubly impressive in this case, since the entertainer Ludacris, protests from students aside, represents precisely the values that any institution of higher education should assiduously denounce. Instead, the concert was ironically looked at, at least by one student leader responsible for booking it, Tom

Kneafsey, as "an answer to decreasing student apathy and increasing connection to the school."

How did the decision to hire the former Pepsi spokesman strike a blow against apathy and help create a connection for students to Northeastern? Perhaps it is the wide range of world themes and precise use of language that makes Ludacris such a draw.

Ludacris brings a vivid world view, replete with sociopathic babble and lyrics that simultaneously revile women, blacks (referred to regularly as "bitches"), the white establishment, and law and order; they also contain language and sentiment that could never be uttered on campus by anyone not in an "underrepresented" victim group without severe consequences, censure and indignation. How does bringing such a performer to campus further the intent of diversity, and what message of inclusion do the students give who push for inviting him?

"Welcome to the United States of America," he sings, as an example, in his song "Coming 2 America": "Time to roll out the red carpet on y'all bitch asses. / Hailin' from the filthy, dirty South, where the Kings lay. / Ludacris; / Disturbin' Tha

Peace family. / Recognize royalty when you hear it. / The throne has been taken, so kiss this nigga's earring. / Luda throw some grapes on these bitches!" All of which is summed up nicely, at least in Ludacris' lyrical imagination, by the chorus of: "Move bitch, get out the way / Get out the way bitch, get out the way / Move bitch, get out the way / Get out the way bitch, get out the way."

No wonder, with artistic expression like this, that Michael Romano, Northeastern's student government president, bemoaned the loss of an appearance of Ludacris, saying that "this was going to be the biggest thing to happen to student life and student activities — ever."

President Freeland may not have even considered the moral and artistic vacuousness of Ludacris in making his decision to cancel the April show. But in doing so, he sends a second important message to Northeastern's students: In addition to having to be law-abiding neighbors, they may also want to decide how the visits of antisocial, sociopathic artists reflects on who they are and what they value in life.

Richard Cravatts lives in Weston, Mass.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Willamette needs attention of Gov. Kulongoski, public

I attended the State of the Willamette Address last Saturday (Feb. 22), and I was very happy to hear the two senators express their dedication to river restoration. Since my aunt, several friends and many acquaintances have recently found out that they have cancer, I was very disturbed by what I learned about the large amounts of carcinogenic materials present in the water. The lead, arsenic, PCBs and pesticides found in the water have all been shown to cause cancer and other illnesses,

even at low exposure.

Since many farms and 70 percent of the population are located along the river, it would be naive to think that these chemicals do not come into contact with people. I demand that Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski keep his campaign promise (which is one of the reasons I voted for him) to clean up the river and to protect the health of our community. And I urge all people who care about their own health and the health of their families to write the governor.

Tannith Perry
 senior

international studies

War's dividends: debt, joblessness

University graduate student Sean Waltson's guest commentary ("Bush administration's removal of Hussein has paid dividends," ODE, March 5) paints such a rosy picture of the mess in Iraq. We are in a war we will never get out of, hundreds of Americans have lost their lives, thousands of innocent Iraqis have been killed by terrorists wearing bombs, while the United States implies that Libya, Iran, Pakistan and China are all too eager to open their countries up for inspection lest they be invaded also.

Turn to **LETTERS**, page 4A