

■ Guest commentary  
**ROTC cadets are students, not robots**

You've probably seen them around campus. They look like college students, they talk like college students, they eat like college students, but something makes them different from most students at the University. So who are these people and what makes them different? They're Army ROTC cadets — and I happen to be one of them.

Being associated with the military and attending a historically liberal campus can certainly be exciting at times. Sure, we get our share of harassment from the anti-war demonstrators and liberal "extremists," but for the most part, everyone on campus supports us, or at the very least will tolerate us. But something happened today that compelled me to write this commentary in hopes of breaking apart the stereotypes so often associated with military personnel.

As I was preparing to sit down before the start of my geology class, I noticed a young woman who was seated in the row behind my seat. She was looking at me with an expression of something far from friendly, so I inquired, "Why the stare?"

"Your uniform makes me uncomfortable," she replied. I insisted I wasn't going to bite, but was unable to convince her I wasn't the angry, stone-faced war-monger she perceived me to be. Realizing she was steadfast in her stereotype-driven opinion of me, I found a seat far from hers so I wouldn't make her uncomfortable.

During class I couldn't help but think how much different the entire scenario would have been had I been wearing "regular" clothes. I'm sure she wouldn't have had a problem with me then. But perhaps because I'm proud to wear a U.S. Army uniform, she assumed I support war, worship President Bush and can't wait to get a piece of an Iraqi insurgent. After all, everyone in the military is like this, right? Wrong.

Somebody once said to never judge a book by its cover. However, each time my fellow ROTC cadets and I wear the uniform, we become the book that everyone likes to judge. While I certainly cannot speak for all cadets at the University, I can safely say there are those among our ranks who oppose the war in Iraq, vote for Democrats and want nothing more than to serve our great country in a time of peace.

In fact, many cadets will leave the University to become engineers and help rebuild Iraq's infrastructure, pilots who fly supplies to countries in need during times of disaster, civil affairs specialists who work to build bridges between Americans and Iraqis, or doctors working in field hospitals treating civilians and soldiers alike.

So before rushing to judgment on a person in uniform, consider that while cadets are united in our uniform and our devotion to the Army and the desire to defend and serve the people of the United States, we are students too, with our own independent beliefs, political views and thoughts.

Get to know us — we won't bite.

Paul Sherwin is a journalism major

■ Guest commentary  
**Spreading freedom has its limits: U.S. doesn't know where**

Within 72 hours of President Bush's election victory, Frank J. Gaffney Jr., president of the Center for Security Policy in Washington, published an article in the Wall Street Journal that has been dubbed "the neo-con wish list" by the left. This article can be interpreted as the first quasi-official foreign policy statement by the Bush Administration. The article — which was incredibly shameless in its back-slapping cronyism and antagonism toward political bodies located in virtually every region of the world, including U.S. Democrats — called for a series of actions to be taken in order to spread "freedom" all over the world.

The second item on the list was "Regime change — one way or another — in Iran and North Korea, the only hope for preventing these remaining Axis of Evil states from fully realizing their terrorist and nuclear ambitions." This statement, in tandem with our President's recent inaugural address (which stressed the need to spread freedom to every part of the world), seems to be leading up to military action.

Seeing as we are engaged in regime change with Iran's two neighbors, Iraq and Afghanistan, it is logical to assume that war with Iran will come before war with North Korea. The war with Iran may not take the same form as the all-out military confrontation we are engaged in with the other two countries, but it looks as though regime change will occur, as Gaffney so eloquently stated, "one way or another."

The question remains: Is confrontation with Iran a good idea? The two reasons that Gaffney gave for regime change in Iran (which he classified as an Islamo-fascist enemy) were Iran's terrorist and nuclear ambitions. The Bush Administration must consider the consequences of confrontation with Iran balanced against the possible advantages.

Is it a good idea to go into Iran while we are fighting two other wars right next door? Would we be running the risk of over-extension, thereby falling victim to the same fate as the British before us? Do we have the resources to wage such a campaign quickly and effectively? If Iraq is any indication of our military prowess I would suggest that the answer is no.

Would confrontation with Iran encourage or discourage Iranian-based terrorists? Would American intervention in Iran motivate anti-American soldiers to wage attacks once we intervene in their country? Is it possible to wipe out guerilla-based terrorism by military means? Or would the U.S. presence galvanize support for terrorist groups under the guise of fighting for Iranian freedom from neo-colonialism? Is it possible to win the peace with the Iranians after the war? Again, if Iraq is any indication, I would suggest

that the answer is no.

Another question is what is the actual danger posed by the Iranian nuclear program. One of the main reasons for entering Iraq was that Saddam Hussein was thought to have WMDs, which he was going to pass on to terrorists. If Iran has nuclear weapons, would they pass them on to terrorists? This question is very difficult to answer. Iran is definitely hostile toward America (and vice-versa). Yet, no regime in the history of the world has passed nuclear weapons to a non-state entity.

If you are Iran, what happens if you give Islamic extremists nuclear weapons to attack the U.S. and they decide they'd rather take control of Tehran? What if these would-be terrorists are really an American CIA operation designed to lure you into a trap? I cannot imagine that Iran (or any other country) would ever give weapons to a terrorist; but the question remains, would Iran use their nuclear weapons against the U.S. even if they were unprovoked?

We must remember that our country is preaching the benefits of offensive doctrines and preemptive strikes — not Iran. Our country is also the only country in the history of the world to drop a nuclear bomb (let alone two), though I cannot claim that we were unprovoked. I have to believe the Iranians understand that using a nuclear weapon against the United States would be tantamount to national suicide. The Japanese bombed a U.S. military base in the Pacific and we killed hundreds of thousands of their civilians. Since the times of Truman and Eisenhower, our military has been committed to the concept of massive retaliation. Would Iran really be stupid enough to nuke us?

It is imperative that our nation considers these questions before the time comes to give the final answer. We cannot afford another Iraqi quagmire. It is essential that we do not give in to knee-jerk reactions fed by fear and propaganda. More than one thousand Americans have died in Iraq to date, and there were no WMDs nor plausible dangers to our security. If we attack another nation that did not present an authentic danger to our security, the world will not be sympathetic to us if that nation retaliates. While preemptive strikes are ideal militarily, they do not enjoy favor among the international community. If we launch another preemptive campaign we must make sure it is worth the political risks and potential loss of life on both sides of the battle. We cannot justify attacking non-belligerents under the banner of "spreading freedom" for much longer.

Jeremy Berrington is a freelance columnist for the Daily Emerald

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