

Matthew Messinger
STS.092
May 6, 2003
Weekly Writings: Week 9-12

Week 9: The Iraqi Conflict

As was seemingly inevitable two weeks ago, the United States and its allied forces have begun a campaign to rid Iraq of the Saddam Hussein lead government. I would like to focus on how Bush and the media have reported the war thus far and how the world public seems to be reacting.

The US led attack began with a surprise missile strike on Baghdad. The US military took its chances with intel it had gathered regarding the probable location of Saddam Hussein, and took a shot. Soon after, Bush addressed the nation in a short speech.

The media began focusing almost entirely on the new war with Iraq. Seemingly, all other news no longer mattered. They focused on even the smallest of details, and repeated even mundane stories over and over again.

Thus far we have heard of several incidences where US and Allied troops have lost their lives. Early on, many of these deaths were accidental, and not even in combat. Two helicopters collided killing about a dozen troops. A US soldier attacked other US soldiers with a hand grenade.

Bush reported that Saddam was losing control of his country. The Iraqi resistance is not made up of just the Republican Guard, but also smaller groups of soldiers, not lead by the Iraqi government. As US troops stormed north through the Southern cities, they unknowingly passed many of these smaller groups of soldiers.

These groups surprised attacked a US supply convoy as it followed behind the main line of fighting. Similarly, these Iraqi soldiers used unorthodox tactics such as pretending to surrender, and then attacking American forces.

It was at this time that Bush pointed out to the American people that the war had a longer road ahead of it than behind it. He said that there would be sacrifices and that the American public needed to be patient. He also asked congress for several 10's of billions of dollars to support the war and humanitarian efforts just for the end of the fiscal year.

Recently, the press has seemed to focus on the large number of civilian casualties. *The Boston Globe* is one of countless newspapers that have printed several pictures of injured or orphaned Iraqi children, hurt at the hands of US forces. Yesterday the US Army destroyed a fast-moving vehicle that failed to yield at a checkpoint, killing at least seven civilians including five children. Similar tragedies have happened throughout southern Iraq.

However, according to General Brooks for the Army's Central Command, the situation is not helped by other incidents in which many Iraqi vehicles have rushed checkpoints at a time – where sometimes a car carrying civilians would precede the others full of armed combatants. On Saturday near Najaf, a driver detonated explosives at a checkpoint killing four US soldiers. US soldiers can only naturally react in a more aggressive manner, as they have the right to defend themselves as well. This situation may lead to even more civilian casualties.

The way the world views the US and coalition forces now will determine how the world reacts to this war and to the US in the future. Unfortunately, even the British

government has admitted the world may see the coalition not as liberators, but rather as villains.

I argue that it may be in the psychological warfare that Hussein has the US beat. Encouraging civilians to treat this as a jihad, a holy war, and purposefully putting them in front of US guns and missiles will help him win world support, or at least reinforce what he already had. In the meantime, Bush calls for patients, as our troops continue their march north to Baghdad.