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Unconventional Warfare in Iraq
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It is well known now that Iraqi soldiers are using unconventional warfare tactics against the United States. The power of America's army is too great for an Iraqi army to confront it in open combat, so it must resort to deception. American soldiers have been killed and injured by Iraqi soldiers using guerrilla tactics such as the following: dressing up as civilians and waging surprise attacks, staging ambushes in urban areas (often with civilians nearby), faking surrender and then attacking, firing at American soldiers from crowded public busses, setting booby traps in public places, carrying out suicide bombing attacks, and various combinations of these.

For America, this type of war is very demanding because the enemy is elusive and unpredictable. U.S. soldiers have to hunt the guerrilla soldiers in towns and villages and the methods that they use to do that are not wholly humanitarian. Every civilian is considered a potential enemy until proven otherwise.

My first question is: Will the American public support a war that it knows will not have a clean ending? There is a good chance that this war will end without the capture or death of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. A recent telephone poll taken for Time Magazine (April 7, 2003) shows that 62% of over 1000 adult Americans polled would not consider such an ending a victory for American forces. And even though America has not successfully completed the War on Drugs or the War on Terrorism, we are already engaged in a third war that will probably not have a clear-cut ending.

My second question is: Will the American public support a war whose causes it has forgotten? This war of liberation for the Iraqi people is already turning into a drawn-out, but Army-defended massacre of potentially dangerous civilians if guerrilla

tactics are employed throughout. The media coverage of the war in Iraq will turn sensationalistic when viewers get tired of hearing just the facts. As remarked by Michael Elliott in a Time Magazine article entitled *Playing by Mogadishu Rules*, “One unarmed Afghan – or Iraqi – killed by a scared G.I. Can have greater political consequences than a truckload of humanitarian aid.”

The public will have to adapt to guerrilla warfare if the war is to be supported by the American public. However, people may be reluctant to do so after experiencing past military or political “mistakes” such as Vietnam and Mogadishu. To help the public grasp the fact that this is a guerrilla-style war and not a tête-à-tête WWII-style war, the Bush administration should make it clearer that Iraqi casualties are not wholly the fault of American troops and tactics.

American troops opened fire on a car carrying seven women and children that did not stop for inspection at a checkpoint. The Army defended the actions of the soldiers and has not changed its rules of engagement. The problem with reporting statistics of Iraqi casualties is that the media does not know how many of those innocent civilians were being used as human shields by Iraqi soldiers. Furthermore, if it is reported that American troops bombed a hospital in Iraq, it may not be reported that that hospital was an outpost for Iraqi troops and contained no civilians at all.

Unconventional warfare will hurt U.S. public support of “Operation: Iraqi Freedom” due to over- or improper exposure by media. Guerrilla warfare in the end will make this war long and frustrating, but will not do anything to help the Iraqis win.