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Troops head to Baghdad, face fierce opposition

By David Espo/Associated Press

Aiming for Saddam Hussein's seat of power, U.S.-led warplanes and helicopters attacked Republican Guard units defending Baghdad on Monday while ground troops advanced to within 50 miles of the Iraqi capital. President Bush put a \$75 billion price tag on a down payment for the war.

The helicopter assault marked the first known engagement between forces in central Iraq, and many of the American craft were hit by Iraqi groundfire. One went down behind enemy lines — the cause was unknown — and the Pentagon said the two-person crew had been taken prisoner.

Five days into Operation Iraqi Freedom,

resistance prevented American and British forces from securing the southern cities of Basra and An Nasiriyah and thwarted efforts to extinguish burning oil wells.

"These things are never easy," conceded British Prime Minister Tony Blair, on the day his country suffered its first combat casualty of the war. "There will be some difficult times ahead but (the war) is going to plan despite the tragedies."

Hussein sought to rally his own country in a televised appearance. "Be patient, brothers, because God's victory will be ours soon," he said, appearing in full military garb and seeming more composed than in a taped appearance broadcast last week.

Despite Hussein's defiant pose, a military

barracks in the northern part of the country was bombed, and Baghdad fell under renewed air attack by day and by night. Iraqis set up mortar positions south of the city and piled sandbags around government buildings and other strategic locations, in evident anticipation of a battle to come.

"Coalition forces are closing in on Baghdad," Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal told reporters at the Pentagon.

He said U.S. Apache helicopters attacked Hussein's Republican Guard forces arrayed around Baghdad while another official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said a "large portion" of the day's bombing runs were dedicated to hitting the same units.

Defense officials at the Pentagon said the

Apaches encountered heavy groundfire during their assault on the Medina armored division. One official said many Apaches were hit by fire, but managed to kill about 10 Iraqi tanks before cutting off their attack.

Asked about ground forces, McChrystal said, "We have not gotten into direct firefights with Republican Guard forces."

That seemed a matter of not much time, though.

The Army's 3rd Infantry Division was within 50 miles of the capital, battling sandstorms more than Iraqi fire as it neared the approaches to Baghdad.

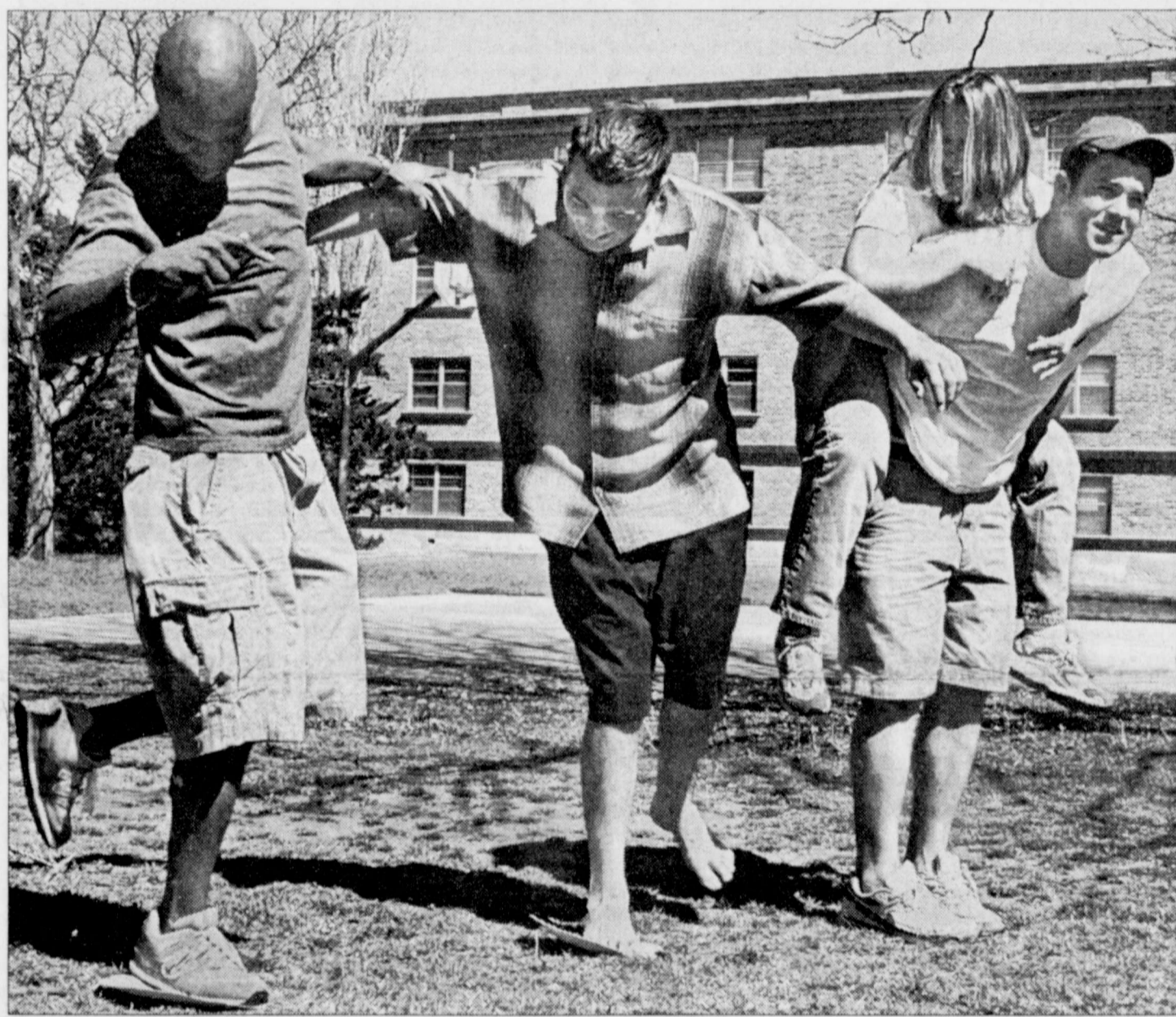
Some Iraqis waved or gave a thumbs-up as the convoy passed on its dash through southern Iraq, while others stood stoically.

The advance of long columns of thousands of vehicles was aided by heavy air protection that wiped out a column of Iraqi armor at one point and sent some of Hussein's outer defenses withdrawing toward the capital. The convoy passed bombed anti-aircraft guns, empty foxholes and berms dug for tanks that had been abandoned.

President Bush invited senior lawmakers to the White House, and aides said he would ask Congress for nearly \$75 billion. Of that, \$62.6 billion would be in direct war costs, according to these aides, for 30 days of combat. The request also was expected to include up to \$3 billion to guard against terrorist threats,

WAR continued on page 3

PAPER PREDICAMENT



DAVID JOHNSON/Staff Photographer

FROM LEFT TO right: Obinna Nwabuko, A senior international business major from Austin; John Birdwell, a freshman finance major from Fort Worth; Kristin Evans, a junior physical therapy major from Pecos; and Kyle Pippins, a freshman business major from El Paso; play a game by the basketball courts between Hulen and Gates residence halls during their introduction to oral interpretation class. The object of the game is to stay on three paper plates and maneuver 15 feet with out falling off.

Student indicted for child pornography

By Heidi Toth/Staff Reporter

A Texas Tech student was indicted last week for more than a dozen counts of child pornography.

David Russell Brigham, who is working toward a teaching certificate at Tech, was released by his own recognizance, which allows him to be released without paying bond, and will be arraigned Wednesday on 13 counts.

The charges are for knowingly transporting child pornography in interstate commerce by computer in April 2000 and November 2000. He is accused of uploading several files depicting a female under the age of 18 engaged in sexually explicit conduct with adult males.

The images were put onto a Web site soliciting guesses on how old the children were.

Brigham did not meet the requirements to be retained further, Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven Sucusy said. To keep a suspect in retention, there must be a flight risk or danger to the community.

"There's always a concern anytime a defendant is released on conditions that they may violate the law in the same way charged ... but there are particular rules that have to be followed in cases where the government seeks retention," he said.

Federal Magistrate Nancy Koenig set forth several conditions that Brigham must abide by. According to court records, Brigham has to advise

the court, defense counsel and the U.S. Attorney's office in writing before any changes of address or phone number, and he must appear at all proceedings.

He can continue with his education, according to records, but cannot leave the Northern District of Texas and has to participate in a mental health evaluation and any subsequent mental health counseling directed by pre-trial services.

He cannot possess any firearms or other dangerous weapons, or pornographic material of any kind. He also cannot use sexually oriented telephone numbers or services. Brigham cannot have any unsupervised contact with children under the age of 18 or loiter near schools, playgrounds or other areas frequented by children.

He cannot have contact with devices that communicate data via a modem or dedicated connection, and he cannot have any access to the Internet, according to court records.

Sucusy said it is difficult to know if someone is complying with the conditions.

In addition to the 13 counts, there is another count seeking the forfeiture of the computer, which the prosecution believes was used to store and transport images, he said.

At the court appearance Wednesday, Brigham will enter a plea, and a trial date will be set, which Sucusy said

INDICTMENT continued on page 3

Officials learn Legislature could return funds

By Angela Timmons/Staff Reporter

Texas Tech officials met with the Texas Legislature in Austin on March 14 for a last-minute hearing with a subcommittee for higher education. Tech President Donald Haragan, Chancellor Dr. David Smith and Health Science Center Interim President Elmo Cavin appeared for the hearing.

Smith said the Legislature is looking to add additional revenue back into the budget, which recently experienced a 12.5 percent budget cut. All

Texas state universities were forced to return 12.5 percent of their budgets, Smith said, but the Legislature is looking at the possibility of returning 10 percent above the cut level.

Smith said Tech would be restored about \$14.5 million, and the HSC would be returned about \$8.5 million. The university would still face between 7 and 8 percent deficit against appropriations, not counting growth.

"This still doesn't get us back to this year's budget or to fund the increased enrollment," he said of the possible budget return. "But we're see-

ing some movement in the right direction."

Texas needs to see a higher level of restoration or the state will not be able to respond to university needs, Smith said. However, the Legislature is using projections to see where needs are and where appropriations should go.

Smith said the university's budget would increase to \$60 million from \$54 million if the Legislature returns funds. However, Smith said Tech needs to see a restoration that would bring the budget closer to \$63 million.

The Legislature has not made restorations yet.

"The lieutenant governor made some recommendations Tuesday and Wednesday," Smith said. "We hope it will create some legislation to return some funding."

Smith said he, Cavin and Haragan expressed the need to fully fund Tech's budget formula, and the worry about budget burdens shifting to students and parents, as students are already facing a 21.5 per-

LEGISLATURE continued on page 3

Security increased as result of war in Iraq

By Angela Timmons/Staff Reporter

NEW YORK — While Americans watch the war in Iraq on their televisions, effects of the war may be closer than many think.

As the armed National Guard is becoming an ordinary part of airport security, New York City has been forced to become familiar with guns and uniforms in their subway, train and bus stations. Airports and all travel thoroughfares throughout the city are now home to a level of security unprecedented in America's history.

"Security's got to be tighter," a Special Services security employee for Northwest Airlines at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City said. "We're looking for bombs, mainly explosives, chemical and bacteria weapons; we're not worried about guns or anything so much."

The employee, who asked to remain unnamed, said being in a New York airport is a different experience for him than for passengers because he is there every day.

"I've been here three years, and it

feels the same to me now as it always did," he said. "I never think about the war going on. It would make it too hard to get the job done."

The employee said it seems New York City and its people have bounced back from the trauma of Sept. 11, 2001, after a short period of shock. He added the city must go on, much like the nation, as normally as possible.

"People just have to know that we're at the gate every day to check people," he said. "If they have something, they're going to get zapped."

Security is the top priority at airports. At JFK, passengers checking in prior to flight must leave their luggage with security while they begin to check in. After confirming identification, passengers are then instructed to go back to the luggage checkpoint, where an employee escorts the luggage back to the check-in counter.

At other airports, such as Dallas-Fort Worth, luggage is checked in as usual but most likely will be inspected. Locks will be broken if necessary. At most airports, an automated message sounds, stating that "due to security

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Texas Tech professors research dirty bomb effects

By Joey Kirk/Staff Reporter

Since Sept. 11, 2001, America has been on high alert to the threat of terrorism. With the constant threat of attack, three Texas Tech professors are testing if the citizens of the United States are ready.

Through 12 years of research at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Pripjat, Ukraine, Robert Baker, Ron Chesser and Carleton Phillips, professors in the Department of Biological Sciences, have looked at how radiation moved in the aftermath of the nuclear reactor explosion that occurred in 1987.

The team of three has undergone investigation

of radiation dispersion devices and the impact they have. Commonly referred to as "dirty" bombs, a radiation dispersion device contains radioactive material that can spread and contaminate upon explosion.

With a grant of \$1 million to support the professors' research project, Congress believes this program is necessary for the safety of the United States.

"We communicated with Kay Bailey Hutchison and encouraged that it could have a direct tie with the strategy of United States' security," Chesser said.

Phillips, also the assistant vice president of research, said there is a great concern about the

threat of a "dirty" bomb attack because of the ease to construct such a weapon.

"It is relatively simple to make one, and it doesn't necessarily take real skills to do," he said. "Now, people can obtain radioactive materials with no problem. This kind of attack will frighten many people."

In a city that used to be home to 50,000, Pripjat is now abandoned because of the event that shocked the world more than 15 years ago. Chesser said he never tires of the research he is involved in.

"It is exciting; it never gets old. One of the

RESEARCH continued on page 3

MOORE'S COMMENTS IN BAD TASTE LIFE & LEISURE, PAGE 5

TECH SOFTBALL SWEEP IN DOUBLEHEADER SPORTS, PAGE 6

LADY RAIDERS FACE UC-SANTA BARBARA TONIGHT SPORTS, PAGE 6

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The Rundown
NATION WORLD

Fort Bliss soldiers taken prisoner in Iraq

MISSION (AP) — A South Texas family has identified a prisoner of war in Iraq, and members of another family say their relative is the only woman among captives shown on Iraqi television.

Joel Hernandez, 19, said military and Mission police officers came to his family's house with the news that 21-year-old Edgar Hernandez was captured. Hours later, he saw television footage of his brother held hostage.

"He was all beat up from his face," he said. "He was hurt. I could tell he was really scared."

Hernandez said his parents immigrated from Reynosa, Mexico, and his brother was the oldest of four siblings. The soldier is a supply truck driver for the Army, stationed at Fort Bliss near El Paso.

"His job really is not that dangerous, but once you're out there anything you do is dangerous I guess," Joel Hernandez said.

The soldier's mother said she had a message for her son.

"To have faith in God and he will bring you back and we are here for you," Maria De La Luz Hernandez said in Spanish to The Associated Press.

Relatives of Army Spc. Shoshawna Johnson said she was the female POW shown on Iraqi television. They said on NBC's "Today" show that Johnson is the daughter of a military man and grew up near Fort Bliss.

"I can't imagine what she's going through. I can't begin to imagine what she's feeling. She looks scared," said a cousin, Tracy Thorn. "You know, hundreds of thousands of soldiers are out there. You never think that one of your family members would be one of those to be taken captive."

On Sunday, two other soldiers believed to be held by Iraqi forces were identified by relatives as Army Spc. Joseph Hudson, 23, of Alamogordo, N.M., and Pfc. Patrick Miller of Park City, Kan.

Sergeant detained for deadly camp attack

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. (AP) — When Sgt. Asan Akbar was taken into custody on suspicion of killing a fellow serviceman with a grenade, an Army spokesman said he may have acted out of resentment. Where such bitterness may have come from remains a mystery.

The deadly attack at a 101st Airborne Division brigade command center in Kuwait also wounded 15 other soldiers Sunday, three seriously.

Akbar had reportedly told his mother he feared persecution because he is a Muslim and had been reprimanded recently for insubordination.

The woman who said she is Akbar's mother, Quran Bilal, told *The Tennessean* of Nashville that she was concerned her son might have been accused because he is a Muslim. She said he was not allowed to participate in the first Gulf War because of his religion.

"He said, 'Mama, when I get over there I have the feeling they are going to arrest me just because of the name that I have carried,'" Bilal, of Baton Rouge, La., told the newspaper for a story published in Monday's editions.

Akbar, of the 101st's 326th Engineer Battalion, was in custody, said George Heath, a civilian spokesman at Fort Campbell. Heath said Akbar had not yet been charged with a crime Monday but was the only person being questioned in the attack.

Heath said Akbar should eventually come back to Fort Campbell, though military officials could convene a court-martial in Kuwait. He said he was not sure what kind of penalty Akbar could face.

Jim Lacey, a correspondent for Time magazine, told CNN that military criminal investigators said Akbar was recently reprimanded for insubordination and was told he would not join his unit's push into Iraq. Heath also said Akbar had been having "an attitude problem."

The motive of the attack "most likely was resentment," said Max Blumenfeld, another Army spokesman.

U.S. helicopter crash in Afghanistan kills six

BAGRAM, Afghanistan (AP) — A U.S. Air Force helicopter on a mercy mission to help two injured Afghan children crashed in southeastern Afghanistan, killing all six people on board, the U.S. military said Monday.

The HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter from the 41st Rescue Squadron at Moody Air Force Base in Georgia was on its way late Sunday to pick up the children, who had suffered injuries to the head, said Army spokesman Col. Roger King said. There were thunderstorms in the area at the time, he said.

"You think about the sacrifice these guys made, especially in this case where you've got military personnel who are conducting a flight that's basically a humanitarian mission," King added. "They're trying to go out and save some Afghan kid's life — it's wrenching."

The remains of the six people on board have been recovered and were to be flown to Bagram Air Base and prepared for transfer back to the United States, King said.

"The investigation will probably bear out as to whether weather played any part in it," King said.

King said the area is not considered a hostile region, and there are few U.S. military operations there.

Press officer Master Sgt. Richard Breach said the cause of the crash was being investigated but: "This is not believed to be the result of enemy action."

U.S. Central Command confirmed that the helicopter was not shot down.

"The names of those killed are being withheld until their next of kin can be notified," Moody Air Force Base spokeswoman Lt. Alysia Harvey said early Monday.

The helicopter crashed late Sunday about 8:50 p.m., some 20 miles north of Ghazni, Afghanistan, according to officials at Bagram Air Base, north of the capital, Kabul. Ghazni lies 50 miles southwest of Kabul.

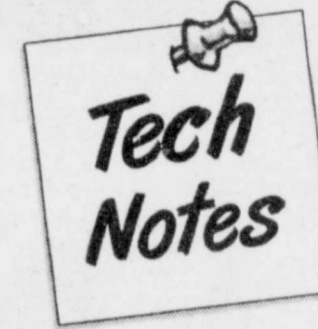
In Kabul, Foreign Ministry spokesman Omar Samad said "We express the Afghan government's sorrow for this incident, which occurred during a humanitarian operation to reach some Afghan children in need of medical care."

SCULPTING SKILLS



JENNA HANSEN/Staff Photographer

ANNE ULLRICH, A freshman studio art major from Houston and Darcey Achin, a senior geology major from St. Louis, Mo., work on sculptures for their class in the Art building Monday afternoon.



The Student Union food court is moving to facilitate construction. Alternative dining venues will be available in the Student Union Ballroom, including hot food and grab-and-go items. The same payment options will be accepted.

Students of all majors are invited to join the Pre-Physician Assistants Club's first meeting at 7 p.m. Wednesday in Room 113 of the Chemistry building. The meeting will feature guest speaker

Al Bendeck. Refreshments will be provided. For more information, call (806) 724-5149 or e-mail pre_pa_ttu@yahoo.com.

University of California philosophy professor Robert Cummins will present "Representation and Indication" at 3 p.m. Wednesday in Room 160 of the Philosophy building and "Evolution and Cognition: The Puzzling Mix of Learning, Selection and Development" at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Lecture Hall 001 of the English and Philosophy building.

The Socrates Smackdown will be at 7 p.m. Thursday in Room 49 of the Chemistry building. For more information, call the Center for Campus Life at (806) 742-3621.

Students are invited to sign up for the Nutrition on the Run 5K Race and the 1 Mile Fun Run/Walk at 9 a.m. Saturday. Registration is online at www.lubbockdieticians.org.

Lambda Theta Alpha invites students to attend its fund-raiser,

"Spring Break Continues," from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. Friday at the Santa Fe Restaurant at 50th Street and Slide Road. The event will feature hip-hop, rap, salsa and merengue music, as well as a "Hot Bod" contest with a cash prize. There is a \$5 cover at the door.

The Chancellor's Ambassadors organization is accepting applications through Friday in the Administration building.

Texas Tech Music Theatre is presenting the opera *La Traviata* in Italian at 7 p.m. Friday in the Allen Theatre of the Student Union building. Admission is \$6 for students and \$12 for the general public. For more information, call the Music Ticket Office at (806) 742-2270, ext. 267.

The 19th annual All-University Conference on the Advancement of Women in Higher Education is from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday in the United Spirit Arena. For more information, visit www.depts.ttu.edu/wstudies/conference.htm.



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Bush accuses Russian firms of aiding Iraq in war effort

WASHINGTON (AP) — Russia is putting U.S. troops at risk in Iraq by selling antitank guided missiles, jamming devices and night-vision goggles to Baghdad, the Bush administration said Monday in a growing rift with Moscow.

President Bush raised the issue in

a tense telephone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who in turn charged that the United States was creating "a humanitarian catastrophe" in Iraq.

It was the latest flare-up in a recently bumpy relationship between Washington and Moscow over issues

information in the past 48 hours about "the kind of equipment that will put our men and women in harm's way," Secretary of State Colin Powell said Monday on Fox News Channel.

Later, he told Britain's Sky News that he hoped to convey fresh information to Moscow. Asked if he is certain the equipment was in Iraq, Powell replied: "Yes."

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said there was "ongoing cooperation and support to Iraqi military forces being provided by a Russian company that produces GPS jamming equipment." The technology blocks satellite signals that guide bombs, missiles and even troop movements.

Asked if the items were being used against U.S. troops, Fleischer said, "They were not provided for the purpose of sitting on shelves."

However, Maj. Gen. Stanley McChrystal told reporters at the Pentagon that the jamming devices had not hurt U.S. troops on the battlefield thus far.

Fleischer said the United States also is concerned that Russian firms have sold night-vision goggles and anti-tank guided missiles to Iraq.

The United States holds Moscow responsible for sales by Russian com-

panies, arguing that the government should do more to monitor the companies and stop exports.

Earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov hotly denied selling military equipment in violation of international sanctions against Iraq.

"No fact supporting the American's anxiety has been found," he said.

But Powell told Fox News that the Bush administration has given Ivanov and his government "more than enough information" to support its assertion.

Administration officials said the accusations were based on confidential U.S. intelligence.

"President Putin assured President Bush that he would look into it," Fleischer said. "President Bush said he looked forward to hearing the results."

This is not the first time Moscow has been accused of leaking sensitive technology to U.S. enemies in spite of pledges to tighten its export controls.

Fleischer said concerns have been raised at the "highest levels" of government over the past year, but Monday's call was the first time to his knowledge that Bush broached the subject directly with Putin.

The personal relationship between Putin and Bush is strong enough to overcome this disagreement, Fleischer said, though he made clear the telephone call was unusually blunt.

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PERSONALIVES

Images of Baghdad hit close to home

It's difficult coming up with pointed, timely commentary on world events when things are as volatile as they are and there's a lag between composition and publication. As I write, U.S. troops are in Iraq, headed north toward Baghdad and encountering unexpected resistance in Basra and An-Nasariya. Just so you know.

I've been watching the news coverage of our air assault on Baghdad. I've marveled at the granite composure of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who somehow manages to keep a straight face even upon the 200th repetition of the presidential media machine's most inane catchphrase to date: "shock and awe."

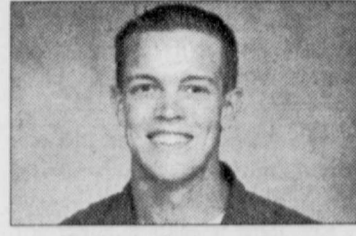
As seriously as I try to take the unfolding violence, our executive branch doesn't help things any by blatantly playing on the potential entertainment value of bombing a city of five million people. I wonder if "shock and awe" translates to Arabic with as much witless silliness as it has in English. I suppose we'll soon hear about the patented

Flashastic explosions of our shocking and awesome cruise missiles, followed by the airlifted rations of Crunch Berrylicious relief meals for the Iraqis. They're Grrrrreat.

Seriously, I know nobody better realizes the gravity of our current situation than the decision-makers in Washington. And though I tease, I do trust they know what they're doing and they aren't thoughtlessly dragging us into a bottomless pit of irresolvable, self-perpetuating military colonialism.

That considered, I respectfully ask that whoever is in charge of marketing this war to me and my countrymen please take the cheesy sloganeering down a notch. We are keen enough to evaluate our nation's military undertakings without our government acting as if they're trying to sell us a pickup truck.

There is something eerie about watching a live video feed of a modern city as it's laid to siege. The camera view is different depending on which station you watch, but I prefer the one that shoots down on an intersection framed



Brian Carpenter

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by a mosque and what I suppose is a monument, all Romanesque arches and whatnot.

From what I've heard, I have a mental image of Baghdad as a seething cauldron of evil and despair, looming over by an omnipotent man-monster who's made the city into his macabre playground. While that may be theoretically true, what strikes me as I watch dawn in Baghdad are the glimpses of normalcy that I'd assumed wouldn't exist in the kingdom of evil.

As an ashy blue fills the sky, I notice morning in Baghdad looks a lot like morning in Lubbock. At the intersection below, where two large roads con-

verge, the traffic light goes through the familiar cycle. While the air still smells of smoke and concrete dust, cars whiz by as people start their days. Some stop in the turning lane, blinkers flashing, waiting for the arrow. I don't know why I feel the whole Iraqi traffic phenomenon noteworthy. You'd see the exact same scene play out at Indiana Avenue and 50th Street, or anywhere else for that matter.

I think that's exactly it. With all the talk of evil dictators and axes thereof, the camera atop a building is an important link to something that is completely forgotten in all the talk of illicit weapons, preemptive strikes and things both shocking and awful.

When I hear "Iraqi," the word has always invoked images of stooped, dusty Arabs in long robes; unfortunate, wretched pawns placed here and there by their evil, bogey-man leader to thwart bombing runs. It was easy to hear "Iraqi" and immediately see this pitiful amalgam made of my assumptions and half-truths.

But through the TV camera, I can see two heads, a man and a woman, sitting in their Honda, waiting for the left-turn arrow. I can see a man in a shirt and slacks, riding a bicycle. I can see a minivan, for God's sake. Whoa, someone in Baghdad drives a minivan! The ultimate embodiment of bland, sheltered suburbanism is calmly cruising around the heart of darkness.

That did it. I'd seen satellite images and heard stories. I'd seen Saddam Hussein's palaces and his corny monuments to his hallucinated triumphs. But I'd never seen a neighborhood. For the first time, I saw something I have in common with those people. They drive around, wait at stoplights, get up in the morning and start up the minivan. I do that. My parents do that. Everyone I know does that.

As day breaks in Baghdad, when it's evening here, look closely at the scene on TV. We're beginning a long and difficult relationship with these people. It's amazing when you can see your selves in them.

Innocence precious, fragile, cannot be regained

The desert sun rose on the sinners and the saints alike that morning. He awakened to the sound, and unfortunately, the feeling of two little girls, five and three, and an eight-month-old long-haired Chihuahua having recess on his head.

Currently, they were all pretending to be puppies, which to them entails a lot of barking, laughing and climbing on anything and everything on the floor. The night in the city had left a hedonistic taste in his mouth he wished he didn't love so much. He hoped the girls couldn't smell the mix of beer and self-destruction on his breath.

But then again, they wouldn't even know what alcohol smelled like anyway. He saw they are immune to demons like his. Amid their early-morning romp, he felt an overwhelming feeling of innocence.

Innocence, that fragile characteristic too quickly abandoned by most and forgotten by many. These two girls were innocent (he assumes the puppy is too) like him, and everyone once was.

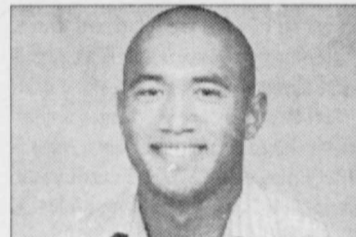
His thoughts drifted amid a barrage

of skinny knees, elbows and tails. There was that feeling again. This innocence, imagined or real, was something he lacked. It was something most people he knew lacked.

"Why is it we turn our backs on one of our greatest characteristics?" he asked himself. "Why can't we all just run around laughing and playing, pretending to be spacemen and ponies? Who says we can't be 'forever young?'"

Later as he, his friend and his cousin sat around watching the news, he found himself subject to being a jungle gym once again. As they climbed over and jumped off him, he saw how these girls had no idea that men, women and children are at the moment running for their lives in the face of blaring sirens, thundering explosions and an impending notion their lives would never be the same.

But that didn't matter to the girls. One was currently double fisting cherry suckers, one was chasing a hamster in a yellow plastic ball, and one was trying to take a mid-morning nap in his lap.



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He tried to pinpoint the time in his own life when he left the sanctuary of Eden in pursuit of this thing called "life" everyone keeps raving about, but couldn't quite find one. He was amazed at the events that led him to this particular instant. He felt he had sufficient life experiences to tell between what is generally right and wrong. But in the confusion, his own childhood now seemed blurry and surreal, like it happened to someone else and he just got to watch.

There was a part of him who always sought out a certain quality in others that gave him hope, and it dawned on him that the quality was innocence. He

realized most good relationships depend on this belief in innocence. He thought of all the people he was ever close to before and even now. It seems there is always this dream that this person is innocent somehow, and that is why he wants them in his life and he in theirs.

Always he thought, "Somewhere in there is a great person." Always he questioned, "Will I see how better this person is today than she was yesterday?"

He felt every great relationship he's had held that hope in some aspect. That little part in someone we all can't wait to see, even though it might not be there anymore. And sometimes, the further from innocence we know somebody is, the greater the hope and illusion we feel.

Can we ever get back to innocence? Is there a threshold that, once crossed, can never again be breached? Is it always our fate to lose this precious virtue?

True innocence, by definition, can never be regained. Once you taint it with ideas of morality, maturity and ma-

terials, all you have left are memories and questions. But it is this idea of an imagined innocence that keeps giving us hope.

It is comforting to think this close "someone" has a part, even if small, that quietly shouts, "I'm still here! That little you who liked Superman pajamas, lying in the grass and laughing at your cousins until you lost control of all nasal functions!"

I believe most people have good intentions. I think we strive for a betterment of some kind on many levels. But there still remains the fact most people aren't truly happy. They lose the mind-set that there is a simple beauty in childhood all around and within us. But instead of trying to rekindle that type of thinking, they turn their backs and try to do important "grown-up" things.

But the saddest part is we can never go back to a true innocence. Because real innocence doesn't know the difference between what is good and what is bad; it does not know that a "bad" even exists.

Springtime means return of America's favorite pastime

As odd as it might sound, the end of March is my favorite time of the year. Could it be that Spring Break has rejuvenated my spirits? No, that's not it.

Maybe it's the jovial attitude that I carry thanks in part to the Catholic Lenten season? No, that's not it either.

Wait, I know. It has to be my deep love for springtime; the birds are chirping, the flowers are beginning to bloom, there are young lovers all around.

That can't be it. I don't really care for any of those things; the noisy birds, allergy-causing flowers or depressingly happy lovers.

The end of March might be the beginning of the spring season, but there is another season that holds my interest a lot more than springtime.

That's right, March 30 marks the beginning of America's favorite pastime. At exactly 8:05 p.m. March 30, the grueling Major League Baseball schedule begins with a single pitch.

While March 30 is the peak of my

excitement, my love for the end of March is not only in the first game, but the conclusion of spring training, the posting of starting rotations and lineups, and the thought that all teams still have a chance to become the world champions.

I am a reasonable person; I realize many people don't share my love for the game. So for those of you who would rather get hit by a baseball bat than watch a game, believe me, I understand.

I myself have an unexplainable bitterness toward women's basketball. As talented as I believe those women are, I have really never been able to get into the game. It might be the anticlimactic way women basketball players finish the fast break with a soft layup instead of a thunderous jam. Whatever the reason, women's basketball just doesn't do it for me.

For those of you who feel this way toward the game of baseball, it's no big deal; my love for the game can be compared to your love for football, soccer,



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baseball or any other number of sports or activities.

The aspects of baseball that really get me are the sounds and smells which go along with a nine-inning classic. Even when I am watching a game on television, I can close my eyes and hear the slap of the leather ball hitting the glove, the hot dog vendor shouting at the top of his lungs and the smell of the newly-cut grass.

Due in large part to my interest in baseball, it's really quite interesting how I can hardly remember the names of my professors, but if you ask me to name the entire bullpen of the Boston Red Sox, I would have no trouble remem-

bering not only their names, but also their stats from the year before.

It seems to me the reason people can become so completely engrossed with a sport is our competitive spirits. In every aspect of life, humans strive for greatness, or more simply, we strive for victory over those around us.

Baseball really has captured my interest because it can be viewed as very individualistic, and also each player is nothing more than a wheel in the big machine.

For example, each player has to use his or her own skills when in the batter's box. However, those skills are all being aimed toward a common goal: even the living legends of baseball like Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens, while being exceptional within their own right, are a part of a team.

I would like to think that in a past life, I was a great ball player; perhaps I was Hornsby or maybe even Babe Ruth. However, in my present life, my baseball aspirations never panned out. Although my defense skills were solid,

when I stepped up to the plate, I spent more time attempting to run out a grounder than trotting around the bases after a long ball.

While I have 100 baseball memories, the truth of the matter is many of the students who fill the hallowed halls of Texas Tech also have very similar memories. Maybe in high school you were the varsity quarterback, or maybe you were a cross-country phenom, or even the under-appreciated water boy.

Whatever the case, those memories are weaved into the people we have become.

In our present times, with terrorism and war dominating the news and our lives, it seems very important to me that we need to have a simple focus and not forget the things that we enjoy. The game of baseball, while insignificant in the grand scheme of things, is this country's pastime, and if it truly is the small things that matter, this is something that really matters to me.

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