

FASHION: 'H' SECTION

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Behind the scenes with CNN in Iraq

COMPLETE REPORT ON THE WAR IN THE GULF — PAGES A18-B20

U.S. Patriots fend off Scud attacks on Israel, 3 targets in Saudi Arabia

Weather
 Carpet clouding.
 Mostly cloudy.
 High 54, low 36.
 Details, page A-30

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Misrepresentations lead U.S. down war path

A close examination of the stated reasons shows contradictions

By GREG LEROY
 SPECIAL TO THE HOUSTON POST

America is at war again as a result of a steady diet of half-truths and misrepresentations force-fed to us by the Bush administration over the past four months.

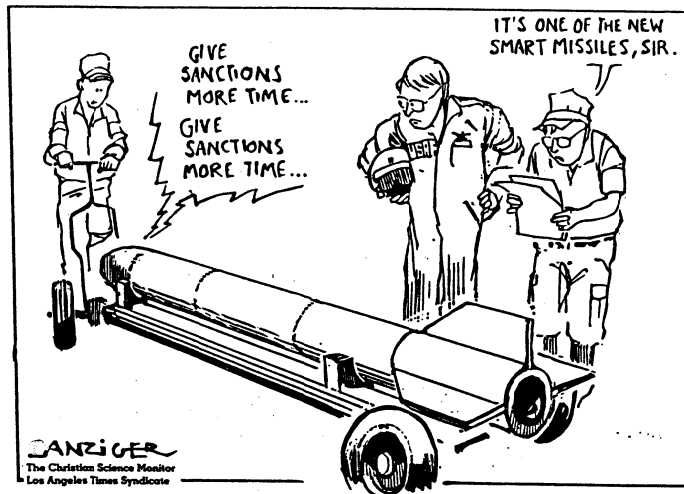
Iraq's attack of Kuwait, for example, has been characterized by President Bush as naked, unprovoked aggression, as if it came unexpectedly and without reason. The truth is that last summer Saddam Hussein warned the Arab League that Kuwait was conducting economic war against Iraq. The New York Times corroborated this argument by reporting, only one week before the invasion, that "Iraq has clearly threatened to use force against those who weaken the (OPEC) accord by overproducing — a threat mainly directed at the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, which together have been exceeding their quotas by about a million barrels a day."

Iraq believed that Kuwait was using slant-drilling technology to steal Iraqi oil from the world's largest oilfield, the Rumailia, that borders both countries. Kuwait, ignoring Iraq's protests, had raised production and begun to sell oil for as much as 40 percent less than previous OPEC-set rates. As a result, Iraq lost, according to The New York Times, over \$14 billion in revenue at a time when they were "in desperate need" of "greater revenues" to replace the funds spent during eight years of war with Iran.

The administration also claims that we are defending democracy in the region. You can't defend what doesn't exist, and there hardly exists democracy anywhere near the Middle East — but especially not in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait.

"Saudi Arabia is a monarchy," a recent report by our own State Department says. "There are no elected assemblies or political parties." And "public demonstrations" are "prohibited" and "citizens do not have the ability to peacefully change their government. There are no formal democratic institutions, and most Saudi citizens have no voice in the choice of leaders or in changing the political system."

We must re-establish the legitimate government of Kuwait. The Emir, former "legitimate" government of Kuwait, was never elected, while only 3½ percent of his population were eligible to vote in any election. According to the Institute for Poli-



cy Studies, voter eligibility was restricted to male "citizens" over 21 years of age — although citizenship was given only to those families that had resided in Kuwait since 1920. Since the preponderance of Kuwait's population had immigrated during the last 25 years, that left two-thirds of the population (including 80 percent of the total workforce, and 100 percent of the women) with absolutely no right to participate in their government whatsoever.

We have lost access to a lot of oil as a result of the Iraqi takeover. U.S. Department of Energy statistics prove otherwise. Until recently Kuwait had provided only about 1 percent of annual total of U.S. imported oil — while Iraq, on the other hand, had been giving us 8 percent. Meaning that America has lost access to more oil as a result of the blockade of Iraq than through the takeover of Kuwait alone. Add, ironically enough, the percentage of Middle East oil imports to the U.S. have increased during the Gulf crisis.

Saddam Hussein is a Hitler, and The Butcher of Baghdad. There are grounds for comparing Iraq's absorption of Kuwait with Germany's annexation of Poland. In both cases there were strong historic and nationalistic reasons for the move.

But there the comparison ends as Israel, Iran, Egypt, Syria and Turkey serve as very real buffers to any expansionist daydreams Hussein may have and, moreover, there will always remain the Western superpowers which could have contained the Iraqi dictator if the need arose.

Along the same lines, Hussein most certainly is a butcher, having slaughtered Kurdish minorities in his own country. But

then the question remains: why didn't the U.S. protest about the massacre when it happened, and why have we now allied ourselves with Hafez al Assad of Syria who murdered in cold blood 10,000-25,000 of his own subjects a few years ago?

Iraq must not be allowed to develop nuclear capabilities. There are over 50,000 thermonuclear weapons in the world today in the hands of the U.S., the Soviet Union, Britain, France, China, India, Israel and South Africa. However, Pakistan, South Korea, Brazil and Argentina (as well as Iraq) are capable or will be capable of making nuclear warheads shortly. A half a dozen other countries will have similar capabilities, says the National Resources Defense Council, within the decade. Can the U.S. adopt a foreign policy of going to war every time another nation with cranky leadership is about to join the nuclear club? As former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski argued before a recent Senate hearing: "Deterrence has worked in the past and I fail to see why thousands of Americans should now die in order to make sure that at some point in the future . . . Iraq does not acquire a militarily significant nuclear capability."

The U.S. response indicates U.S. commitment to international law and a "New World Order." The imposition of a naval blockade by the president, without U.N. sanction, was an act of war and violated international law. The airlifting of over a quarter of a million U.S. soldiers into a war situation without congressional approval was a violation of our own War Powers Act. And President Bush's denial of food to the population of Iraq violates the Geneva

Protocols which state that "starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited."

This is not about oil. The Middle East contains one half of the world's known oil reserves; six of the 12 largest U.S. corporations are oil monopolies (many of the others are major military contractors); and if that isn't enough evidence: President Bush himself is an old oil-man, and his son, Neil, through a company he had interest in, according to the Washington Post, had recently purchased off-shore drilling rights near Kuwait.

"The vital interest of the United States in Saudi Arabia," confirms Richard Helms, "is oil . . . any interest that we have in Kuwait," says the former CIA director and former ambassador to Iran. "is the same: oil."

This will not be another Vietnam. To those of us with a sense of history it already is.

In December of 1964 we recall that Lyndon Johnson wrestled from Congress the right to wage war in Southeast Asia by lying to Congress and the American people. In an impassioned national broadcast LBJ claimed that two U.S. destroyers had been attacked while on a peaceful reconnaissance mission in the Gulf of Tonkin.

Our boats, however, never were attacked (it was only a story made up by the Defense Department), although it was not until Daniel Ellsberg began to leak the Pentagon Papers to the press, many years later, that the American people learned that they had been duped.

Today, America is beginning the sacrifice of what could amount to tens of thousands of lives and hundreds of billions of dollars to protect the investments of oil conglomerates, to shore up gulf state monarchies who invest heavily in U.S. securities, and to keep American military contractors content with fat government contracts — not very glamorous ideals — and certainly not the sort of things that most Americans are willing to die for. president did a con-job on Congress and the American people, and sold them a war that is not in their best interest, a war that already is escalating beyond the tidy drawing boards of the Pentagon, and could conceivably engulf the entire Middle East.

The only question is: Will Bush have the vision to withdraw our troops before his presidency, like Johnson's self-destructs and a handful of little White House lies has once again left our nation morally and financially bankrupt?

LeRoy, the director of a local non-profit public interest group, is also a founder of the recently formed Houston Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention in the Middle East