

Another day, another bomb



Halifax's Voice of Women activist, Betty Peterson, 5000 children currently die per month in Iraq.

"Smart" bombs of 1991 missed almost 75 percent of their targets.

The mistakes continue. A million or more rounds of ammunition coated in depleted uranium were exploded in 1991 by the Western forces. Biologic and chemical agents may also have been released (and continue to be released) from the targeting of these facilities. Radioactive materials are believed to be the cause of above normal congenital birth defects showing up in Iraqi newborns — and newborns of American and British soldiers posted in the Gulf.

However, the full result of these unleashed substances remains unknown.

The US and England have chosen to manoeuvre independently from the United

Nations. But by law, they are required to act with the Security Council. Permanent council members include China, France, and Russia. Russia and France have offered many alternative non-violent scenarios with which to deal with Iraq.

Canada is currently on a two-year rotating position on the Council. Peterson feels that citizen pressure on our representatives could bring concrete peaceful Canadian initiatives to the forefront. The United Nations could allow infrastructure materials into Iraq, permitting Iraq to rebuild basic civilian services. This could also make it possible to pump the greater quota of oil now allowed under current sanctions. In terms of human cost, perhaps it is time to change tactics in the ongoing Gulf War.

"We must be aggressive about diplomacy," said Peterson.

BY MICHELLE ZURBRIGG

The television camera spans Baghdad's skyline, which is lit up in green. It looks like a celebration. It's Christmas.

But not for Iraqis.

Since the week before Christmas and Ramadan of 1998, bombs have regularly dropped on Iraq. Just last month, missiles killed civilians in Basra. Even the southwest Iranian city of Abadan was hit.

On Mar. 1, 1999 the United States dropped the biggest number of bombs on Iraq since December. The attacks continue to this day.

In early 1991, the Mulroney government sent warplanes and frigates as support for American offensive missions in the Gulf. Canadians have backed the US against Iraq for eight years.

Nasih, a computer science student at Dalhousie, is an Iraqi citizen. She has been living in exile her whole life. She is "disappointed in Canada" for not taking a stand to help her country's people.

"Americans are interested in their own well-being. They really believe in their government's one-sided story," said Nasih.

The other side is that Saddam Hussein is not the only one who suffers US aggression. Estimates show that approximately 200,000 Iraqis died as a direct consequence of the 1991 bombing campaign.

This represents more than half the population of Halifax. 70 percent were civilians.

Before the Gulf War, and in spite of the preceding 1980 to 1988 Iran-Iraq war, Iraq had advanced social, health, and educational institutions. That was before Western bombs targeted the country's oil refineries, bridges, telecommunications and electric plants. Water and sewage systems sustained damage as well.

The Ministry of Health has also taken a direct hit. Basic medical supplies are unavailable to most, including vaccines, syringes, anaesthetics and basic drugs. Surgical, radiological, laboratory, and diagnostic materials are in short supply.

Sanctions make daily life a struggle. Before the war 70 percent of food was imported. But without export earnings from oil, dates, gas, and chemical fertilizers, food and medical imports are a tiny fraction of pre-war levels. The citizenry depends on meagre United Nations (UN) and other foreign aid.

To Dr. Ismail Zayid, of the Canada-Palestine Association in Halifax, "large masses of the Arab community are appalled at [what he considers] the genocide".

In protest of sanctions, Denis Halliday has resigned from his posts of UN Assistant Secretary General and Chief UN Coordinator for Iraq.

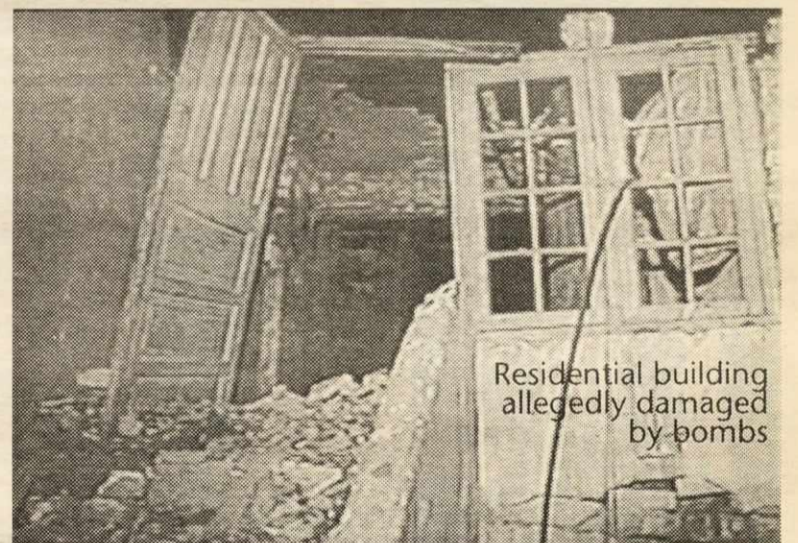
"There can be no justification, in my view, for the death and malnutrition for which sanctions are responsible," Halliday said while speaking at Harvard University in November of 1998.

Unemployment plus hyperinflation have dropped Iraqi incomes to five percent of 1990 levels. Most people depend on food rations.

According to a 1997 study, many women and children receive merely two-thirds of their caloric needs. Nasih mentions that some people turn to selling their organs for cash.

With no income, infrastructure has not been repaired. Previously treated sewage flows into the rivers used for drinking water. Easily prevented infectious disease now prevails in the population, including cholera, diarrhea, polio, and typhoid.

The Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that by 1995, 500,000 indirect child casualties occurred. According to



Residential building allegedly damaged by bombs



Baghdad residential street flooded by bombings

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