

OPINIONS

Importance of Canadian troops in Persian Gulf

by Brent Poland

Canada needs troops in the gulf. The current crisis in the Persian Gulf is now escalating to proportions that will have political and economic ramifications reaching far into the next decade.

The Gulf crisis is important in that it is the first real test of the United Nation's ability to keep world peace. If the U.N. fails to keep a united front against Saddam Hussein it will be forced into the same predicament that the League of Nations found itself in 1938. Because the League was splintered by opposing factions it had no teeth to enforce restraints upon the rising powers of Mussolini and Hitler.

The idea for a united front originates from the new era of a global community. If the U.N. peace keeping forces fail to hold Hussein in check and deteriorate to an extent that the U.S. makes an unsanctioned strike upon Iraq, this new era of global cooperation could come to an end.

Even at the risk of being labelled a capitalist, war-mongering extremist, Canada, as an emerging nation in the global community, must be a player. If we are not, we will be alienated from global decisions.

To become a member of the global community, Canada has no

Pulling troops out of the Gulf will not appease Saddam Hussein

choice but to send troops, otherwise we run the risk of limiting the U.N.'s power and cutting ties with major trading partners such as France, Britain and, of course, the United States.

I dislike the American policy of manifest destiny as much as any Canadian. I am well aware that the Gulf crisis is largely due to the fact that the U.S. regards Kuwait as one of its vital interests. But like it or not, the U.S. is also our largest trading partner. This is an economic reality.

The U.S. also happens to be the dominant power in the world and Canada is in the unfortunate position of being its closest ally economically, politically and geographically. If Iraq succeeds in controlling a large portion of the world's oil, industry in the U.S. would suffer immensely and, symbiotically, so would that of Canada. This is another reality.

Certainly, the Gulf crisis is all about oil and oil companies; we cannot survive without them. Even if free trade did not exist, Canada

along with half of the Western world would suffer from a weakening of the American economy.

These are the realities. Pulling our troops out of the Gulf is not the answer. Without a military presence (or at least the appearance of one), we do not have a vote in the outcome.

What is the world suppose to do. Stand idly by and watch Saddam Hussein walk into Kuwait and grab control of 25 percent of the oil reserves. In the seventies, the OPEC nations put a strangle hold on the world economy by collectively rising the price of oil. It was a legitimate power play and it worked effectively. But times have changed. Saddam Hussein does not represent all Arabs. He is a totalitarian leader. He has been accused of a long list of human and civil right charges. The same people who were protesting human right violations are now demonstrating to prevent an international peace keeping coalition from doing their job. No longer is it an issue of letting the

Arab nations work out their differences. The socio-political conflicts in the Arab states have divided them to a point that it is obvious that they can't. Assuredly the presence of a large contingent of American troops does not help ease tensions. This is why the presence of the international coalition is vital to the outcome.

Thus Canada and the other nations in the U.N. have another responsibility. The United States cannot be allowed to have its way with the Gulf crisis. The U.N. must remain there as the leading contingent to prevent the U.S. from assuming free reign over the situation.

If the U.S. launches an unsanctioned strike against Iraq (which they have a right to do now that Iraq has been labelled an aggressor), Arab alliances might swing to support Hussein. As Bashar Abdul Quader stated at the Nov. 15 anti-war teach-in: "Arabs will not fight against Arabs on the side of foreigners." Iraq has the capability to attack Israel. If this were to

happen, the U.S. would come to the aid of Israel. An assault on the combined forces of Israel and the U.S. might cause Middle-East administrations such as those of Jordan, Turkey, Syria, Iran and the PLO to ally with Iraq. Further complicating matters, Iran and Turkey might launch counter-attacks against Iraq to regain lost territory.

The U.S. could be described as a potential catalyst for an all out Middle-East war with Canada and other nations as unwilling participants. The scope of this conflict would in all likelihood make Vietnam look like a spitball fight.

The U.N.'s involvement in the Gulf crisis is of utmost importance in establishing a precedent for global cooperation. Canada's troop commitment, however small, is a necessary part of this initiative.

We must work through the U.N. to prevent the outbreak of a potentially disastrous war in the Middle East.

Pulling troops out of the Gulf will not appease Saddam Hussein, it will only serve to show him that he can divide the united front against him. It will also give the U.S. an excuse to dig its fingers deeper into the Arab world. This cannot be allowed unless we want history to repeat itself.



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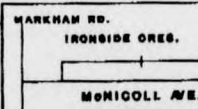
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