

# commentary

from other pens...

## U.S. wants pressure on Iraq, others balk

By George Gedda

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Suppose Saddam Hussein wants to import trailers to transport heavy loads of wheat. Is there any certainty he won't use them to cart tanks around?

That is the kind of question diplomats will be sorting out over the next month in deciding what type of "dual use" items Iraq should be permitted to import under the new "smart sanctions" regime being discussed in the U.N. Security Council.

A resolution approved Friday is aimed at tightening controls over Iraq's exports of oil and imports of arms and other strategic materials while ensuring there are no restrictions on imports of civilian goods.

There are expected to be arguments over dual use items, with some countries, notably Russia, wanting to give Saddam the benefit of the doubt and the United States taking a more hard-nosed stance.

The State Department saw the approval as a breakthrough. "It really represents a substantial coming together of the international community and the council on the right policy," spokesman Richard Boucher said.

The commitment of many countries is suspect, especially Russia. "Russia wants to be the best friend Iraq has and wants to get the sanctions lifted," says Richard Murphy of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Among other reasons, he says Russia wants to be positioned for contracts when the oil industry opens up again in Iraq.

Russia is not the Bush administration's only headache. There also is what Lee Feinstein, a former State Department policy planning director, calls the "elite versus the street" problem in many Arab countries.

Some Arab governments are hostile to Saddam, he says, but cannot ignore the view of many ordinary Arabs that the sanctions are hurting the Iraqi people and therefore must be removed.

Feinstein says no matter what Secretary of State Colin Powell does to make sanctions more palatable, they never will win the support of Arab public opinion.

Mark Ginsberg, a former ambassador to Morocco and Democratic foreign policy consultant, agrees. He also says the collapse of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process has heightened anti-Americanism in the region and complicates Powell's quest for support for his Iraq policy.

When Powell took office, he had visions of rebuilding the anti-Saddam coalition that drove Iraqi forces out of Kuwait a decade ago. That goal seems far-fetched nowadays.

And even if disputes over dual use items are sorted out, there are questions about enforcement and effectiveness. Of particular interest to the U.S. is a provision to require tighter controls of illegal smuggling operations from which the Iraqi regime has profited in recent years.

Perhaps because of this provision, Iraq has reacted angrily to the U.S.-backed proposal. It has responded by suspending the more than 2 million barrels a day it is authorized to sell under the U.N.-approved oil-food program. This could result in increased pressures on oil prices.

Compared with a decade ago, Saddam is looking strong. He has been able to avoid U.N. weapons inspectors since late 1998.

Saddam has been more of a problem for the administration than some of its top officials felt he would be before they took office. At various points, these advisers had suggested the United States counter Saddam by seizing some Iraqi territory or by recognizing a provisional government of Iraq headed by a coalition of anti-Saddam groups.

Powell said a few weeks ago the administration was trying to determine whether there are any Iraqi resistance organizations capable of mounting a serious effort against Saddam.

The statement implied that no group has met the threshold, even though many members of Congress see it as the best hope for bringing Saddam down.

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — George Gedda has covered foreign affairs for The Associated Press since 1968.



## The trials and tribulations of renting



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

Eldest daughter is being evicted. My children just seem to have trouble with places to live.

Last year, my son went off to college with no place to stay. His would-be roommate had not made good enough grades to stay in school, leaving him homeless. After sleeping on his sister's kitchen floor for two weeks, he found an apartment of his own.

Last May, eldest and I drove to Augusta, Ga., and started looking for a place that would let her keep animals. She has a large dog and two cats.

Finding this place would be the easy part, as it turned out. Using a rental agency, we found two places that were within her price range that took animals and would be available within a week, when the truck with her furniture was supposed to arrive.

She signed a lease on a nice little bungalow in a slightly seedy but respectable neighborhood.

They moved in and she started making improvements to the neglected lawn and deteriorating back porch.

She received word in January that the landlord had been killed in a car-train accident, but since they were dealing with the rental agency, everything was cool. She paid her rent on time, put out the trash and kept the yard mowed.

In April, daughter asked to have her lease re-

newed for another year.

No problem, the agency said, the lease agreement will be sent to your landlord's heirs. Early in May, daughter again checked with the agency.

No, the lease hadn't been sent back but there was nothing to worry about, they said.

Two days later, May 4, she received a notice that she had until the end of the month to vacate the property.

She was not mad. She was furious. She was ready to sue. She was ready to find the new landlords and dump dog doo on their lawn.

After stewing and griping for several days, during which time she called home a dozen times, yelled at the agency, talked to a renter's group and found out that she couldn't be evicted without a 60-day notice, she remembered that the landlords had an \$800 deposit that belonged to her and figured if she caused too much trouble, she would probably never see it alive again.

She started looking and found a nice upstairs

apartment, which would take her animals, but had no yard.

It wasn't ideal, but it would work. Unfortunately, she couldn't get it before sometime in June.

She checked with the rental agency.

Yes, that should be OK, they said. She put her deposit down on the apartment.

She got a call from the rental agency. The landlords were giving the property to a granddaughter of the deceased owner. The granddaughter would be moving in on June 1.

This was a problem.

She had no place to live in June.

There was more fuming, but by now she was resigned to her fate. She had already realized that she would have to store some of her furniture and appliances while in the apartment.

The answer, she decided, was to store almost everything. Farm the dog and cats out to friends or put them in a kennel for June and move into a residential motel or efficiency apartment for a month.

The rest of May is being devoted to packing. She has dug up all her flowers and is no longer clipping the hedge or watering the lawn. The window boxes are bare again and she's planning to take her light bulbs and partial rolls of toilet tissue with her.

The house will be in better shape when she leaves than when she arrived, she says, but she's not leaving anything behind but scorched earth.

## Plain English word describes 'action' best



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

The caller was unhappy about a story which said a school board had fired two teachers.

It wasn't the first call we would get. It wouldn't be the last.

And the same thing was happening at more than one newspaper.

"Why did you have to say they were fired?" the caller complained. "They just had their contracts non-renewed."

As if the teachers involved had any say in the matter.

For awhile, it seemed as if everyone, from the superintendent to the teachers' union to the public at large, was complaining.

Everyone except the teachers involved.

They didn't have a job. They knew what had happened to them.

In a way, it's hard to figure out why anyone would be mad at the newspaper. All we did was describe the situation in plain English, but that is something that is all but absent in the education industry today.

Educators have developed a whole different language. Schools don't have a training day or a seminar, they have an "inservice." No one is ever fired; they are non-renewed. If you don't believe this, try going to a meeting at school, listen and explain to someone what they are talking about.

This isn't unusual; every business has its lingo. But at the newspaper, our job is to explain things in plain, simple English. If someone is separated

from their job, they might be fired or retired or even laid off. But non-renewed? Never.

People don't pass on. In plain English, they die. No amount of prettifying the description will change the fact that they are dead.

Someone said that we were insensitive to use the term fired. More insensitive than the school board that fired the teachers?

Perhaps it was insensitive of us to report on what happened. But that's part of our job, to let people know what their public servants are up to. Some days it's good news, some days it's bad.

We know the legal niceties of teacher contracts. Teachers who do not have "tenure" with a district, which is granted under state law if they are rehired after the third year, can be released at will. The school board does not have to give any reason for releasing them, and usually won't even discuss it. Tenured teachers must be proven to be grossly incompetent or have committed a crime before they can be fired. Bad teaching seldom enters into the equation.

In some recent cases, the teachers were warned

that their contracts would not be renewed and given a chance to resign quietly. That seems like a sensitive way for the schools to handle the situation, but the teachers chose to be fired instead. In another case, the board fired a teacher despite the principal's recommendation that she be retained. She wasn't exactly surprised, though.

Let's be clear about one thing. It's the school board's job, and the administration's, to weed out poor teachers, those who can't get along, those who shouldn't be teaching our kids.

It's not easy to decide to fire someone, especially a teacher who will reach the safety of tenure. But sometimes, perhaps, it has to be done. We are not here to make that judgment, only to report it.

When it does happen, though, why mince words?

When someone has a job today, and tomorrow, or next month, they do not, the common English term for what happened to them is fired: A plain, simple little English word for an act that is never pretty and seldom simple.

The term fired, by the way, has an interesting history. The most common word today for the act of terminating an employee, it started out as a pun.

The original term is "discharged," and the synonym developed because discharge also meant to "fire" a gun, my dictionary says. Eventually, it became part of the language.

## berry's world



## All veterans' graves deserve flags

Dear Sir:

The Goodland Cemetery was as beautiful as ever this year on Memorial Day, The flags flying on all the Veterans' graves. That is except one.

My brother Paul B. Harper has been buried in that cemetery for 36 years and almost every year in that 36 years we have had to ask why there wasn't a flag put on his grave. We have heard a lot of excuses mostly "we are sorry or we missed it."

When his wife was able to come from Colorado Springs to decorate his grave she would ask, "Why no flag on Paul 's grave?"

Every year my mother would ask why and she would get the same story. "We are sorry or we didn't see his grave." My sister even had his tombstone turned around so you could read his name from the road.

His grave isn't that hard to find. It is the last one in the last row in the southwest corner of the Catholic cemetery.

This year no flag again. When we asked why we were told "maybe he wasn't a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars." I didn't know you had to



**from our readers**

• to the editor

be a member of the VFW to be a veteran. I always thought you had to be a veteran before you could belong to the VFW.

My Brother served four years in World War II. He was stationed in France. He fought for our freedom. He deserves a flag.

I guess what I have to do is go to the Cemetery Board, ask if I can put up a big flagpole on this grave so that he can have a flag flying over his grave like the rest of the Veterans.

It saddens our hearts to think our loved one who fought for our country doesn't get the respect he rightly deserves by getting a flag put on his grave on Memorial Day,

Lucy (Harper) Ackerman  
Goodland

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