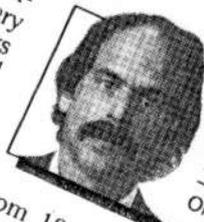


Iraqi awaits day when we're all brothers, friends



John Mecklin
On the Scene

DHAHRAN, Saudi Arabia — A management employee of a construction company here is very worried. His mother and six sisters live in an area severely threatened by the gulf war. His brother is in the army and stationed, apparently, very near the front lines. And the manager is a native of Iraq, living in Saudi Arabia.

While Americans are understandably concerned about U.S. citizens in the Persian Gulf area, there is another side. Ordinary people, who work at their jobs, remain in Iraq. And the Iraqi native asked that his name not be used for fear of reprisal. He will be called Ali.

Ali works for a construction company run by Jamie Dunlap, who lived in the Clear Lake area of Houston before taking a job here in August. Dunlap said Ali is one of his best employees, a real problem-solver.

Recently, the company, which also will not be named, had trouble obtaining gas masks for employees. After weeks of delay by Saudi authorities, Dunlap said, Ali was sent out and, two hours later, the company had 500 masks. He has won in winning ways.

her killed in war

a soft-spoken, cherubic 29-year-old said he and his wife left Saudi Arabia because of the Iran-Iraq war and came to Saudi Arabia to work for his father in that country.

He brought my family here later, he said. Ali's mother was in the Baghdad area when it was attacked and he contacted her to get her safe. He doesn't know if she is still here.

er is now in the last of the gulf war, he said, and he is waiting for the danger to pass.

from 18 to 30. They see nothing from life," Ali said. Although he has become a citizen of Saudi Arabia, he said he would go back, even now, in the middle of war, if not for his wife and four children.

"If I surrender myself to the (Iraqi) Ministry of Defense, who will care for my family? For that, it is very hard in Baghdad," he said. Although he left Iraq because of war, and has family in danger because of a new war, Ali does not blame Iraqi president Saddam Hussein for the worries in his life.

'I like Saddam'

In fact, Ali said, "I like Saddam. Before Saddam Hussein nobody asks about the Arab nation, the Palestinian problem. And the Arab world spent more than 40 years on this problem, and nothing. And now you can do something about the Palestinians." For now, all Ali can do is work in Saudi Arabia, wait for the "green light" to go home to Baghdad and worry. The working part is the easiest.

It is clear his co-workers are fond of him. When asked how the other employees are treating him, Ali began to joke with his boss, Dunlap, one of the few Americans at the firm. "We'll make small war in office. Just us two," Ali said, laughing.

In turn, Dunlap obviously likes Ali. In fact, Dunlap said, he has encountered very little animosity among Saudis for the Iraqi people. "Nobody has really got anybody to hate," Dunlap said. "This thing really happened overnight, and nobody really had time to get mad at anybody."

It is clear, at least, that one Iraqi native is not mad at America as he was when the war started.

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While Americans are understandably concerned about U.S. citizens in the Persian Gulf area, there is another side.

Ordinary people, who work at ordinary jobs, remain in Iraq. And their friends and relatives elsewhere worry about them, too.

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Father killed in war

Ali, a soft-spoken, cherubic 29-year-old, said he and his wife left Baghdad and came to Saudi Arabia in 1980, because of the Iran-Iraq war. He lost his father in that conflict.

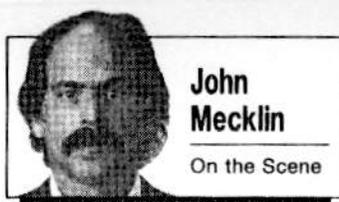
"For that I brought my family here. For life," he said.

Now, 11 years later, Ali's mother and sisters are in the Baghdad area while allied forces attack it fiercely. He has no way of contacting them, or knowing if they are safe.

"I just see TV. I don't know if I believe (what authorities say) here or there," he said.

Ali's 33-year-old brother is now in the Iraqi army. Ali said the last information he received, which came before the start of the gulf war, placed his brother in Kuwait, where he also may be in danger from the allied air campaign.

Ali's brother did not volunteer for service. Few do, Ali said. "Nobody likes to go in the army. This means war. This means die. All the people in army (range in age)



from 18 to 30. They see nothing from life," Ali said.

Ali would like to return to Iraq. Although he has become a citizen of Saudi Arabia, he said he would go back, even now, in the middle of war, if not for his wife and four children.

"If I surrender myself to the (Iraqi) Ministry of Defense, who will care for my family? For that, it is very hard in Baghdad," he said.

Although he left Iraq because of war, and has family in danger because of a new war, Ali does not blame Iraqi president Saddam Hussein for the worries in his life.

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In fact, Ali said, "I like Saddam. Before Saddam Hussein nobody asks about the Arab nation, the Palestinian problem.

"And the Arab world spent more than 40 years on this problem, and nothing. And now you can do something about the Palestinians."

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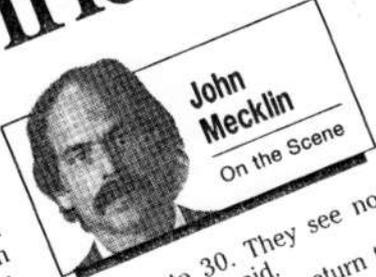
It is clear, at least, that one Iraqi native is not mad at America as he worries about his family and hopes for a quick end to the war.

"I'd like to say (to Americans), I'll see them after the war stops, and there is peace also, and we are brother and friend.

"And then we shake hands."

WAR IN THE GULF

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"I just see TV. I don't know if I believe (what authorities say) here or not," he said. "My 11-year-old brother is now in the gulf."

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