

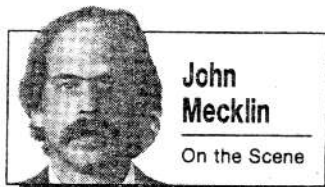
Civilians, soldiers face latest enemy — nightly anxiety

EASTERN SAUDI ARABIA —
The night is the bad time for civilians and soldiers alike during these days of waiting.

But while the allied air war continues, those on the ground are learning to cope with Scuds, Frogs and anxieties that have no acronyms attached to them.

Here in the rear, attacks by Iraqi Scud missiles have become a nightly occurrence. Reaction to the thought of missiles falling out of the sky varies greatly.

Because Patriot missiles have so far shot down all Scuds threat-



**John
Mecklin**

On the Scene

ening Dhahran and Riyadh, some people treat the Scuds as a harmless light show.

During a recent air raid alert, the grounds in front of the Dhahran International Hotel were crowded with about 50 people, mostly reporters, hoping to catch sight of a Scud interception. For them, the days of quivering in an air raid shelter strapped into a hot, uncomfortable gas mask are over.

Along the same lines, pieces of destroyed Scuds have become prime souvenirs.

But it is the Patriot missile that is truly revered. In one hotel lobby, a cylindrical section of a Patriot has been placed on a small pedestal for display. Written on the spent anti-missile: "We love you all."

The display has become a favorite spot for picture-taking, with people waiting in lines for their chance to stand next to the Patriot. Somehow, the missile seems like a shopping-mall Santa Claus.

Several betting pools also have been formed, the winner being the person to guess the time when the first Scud makes it through the Patriot shield protecting the Dhahran area.

Despite the frivolity, the Scud threat clearly has spooked many



Associated Press

This hotel display of a cylindrical section of a Patriot missile has become a favorite spot for picture-taking. The source of the message is unknown.

full-time residents here. One reason is the civil defense warning system, which generally sounds an alarm a few moments after the window and door rattling explosions announce that Patriots have been fired.

One full-time resident, Jamie Dunlap, the general manager of a construction company here, said instant worldwide news coverage of the Scud attacks has affected the 1,000 workers, most from the Philippines, at his firm.

Soon after the broadcasts, his workers receive a steady stream of phone calls or faxes telling them about a death in the family or some other emergency that requires them to suddenly leave the country, Dunlap said.

Despite the disruptions, "... we've been able to keep working right away," he said.

Shortly after making this remark, a volley of Patriot blasts shook Dunlap's office, and it soon was full of his workers, shifting from foot to foot and smiling feebly through their terror.

While soldiers in the rear deal with Scuds, soldiers near the front are spending parts of every night in bunkers, waiting out alerts and intermittent shelling from artillery and Frogs, a ground-to-ground missile with slightly longer range

than Iraqi guns. This fire is undirected but disruptive, according to press pool reports.

One unit near the border has nicknamed a particularly regular round of shelling "eight o'clock Achmed" for the time of evening it usually arrives.

The pool reports from forward areas reflect a mixture of fear, boredom and preparation for war. Occasionally, the reports, by pure chance, quote soldiers from Texas. They tell the tale of the front about as well as anyone.

For Marine Lance Cpl. Kevin Gately, 23, of Sugar Land, the war right now is a waiting game. Standing guard at a supply compound, he said, "None of us thinks they'll use gas, but if they do, we're ready for it."

"But sometimes we worry about the gas," Gately added after thinking awhile. "Like, man, this is a war we're in."

Marine Sgt. Robert Bowles, 27, of Houston, was ready to head north as soon as the war started.

"We were ready to be there (in Kuwait) by breakfast," he said. "We were tearing down our tents. The ball was finally in motion."

But the air war needs time to work, and most near the front are content to prepare and let the Air Force pound the Iraqis.

Medical units are doing some of that preparing, and Maj. Jim Leech, a San Antonio neurosurgeon, is learning to do without technology he once considered fundamental. Leech, 47, and two other neurosurgeons at one military hospital are practicing without the aid of a CTscan, a three-dimensional X-ray machine.

Other techniques are available to provide diagnostic information, but, because the Army has only four CTscan machines in the war zone, Leech said, "It's been a bit of an experience doing without it."

Waiting for the ground war to begin has not been entirely grim. Some pool reports say soldiers have begun to engage in good-natured arguments over the Super Bowl.

And at one military hospital, two tents have been joined together to make a dance club, complete with disc jockey.

The dance club skirts the Saudi prohibition on male-female dancing.

"We cover the the women in black," said Lt. Col. Hudson Berry.

"We don't know who the women are we're dancing with," Otte added. "Stealth women."

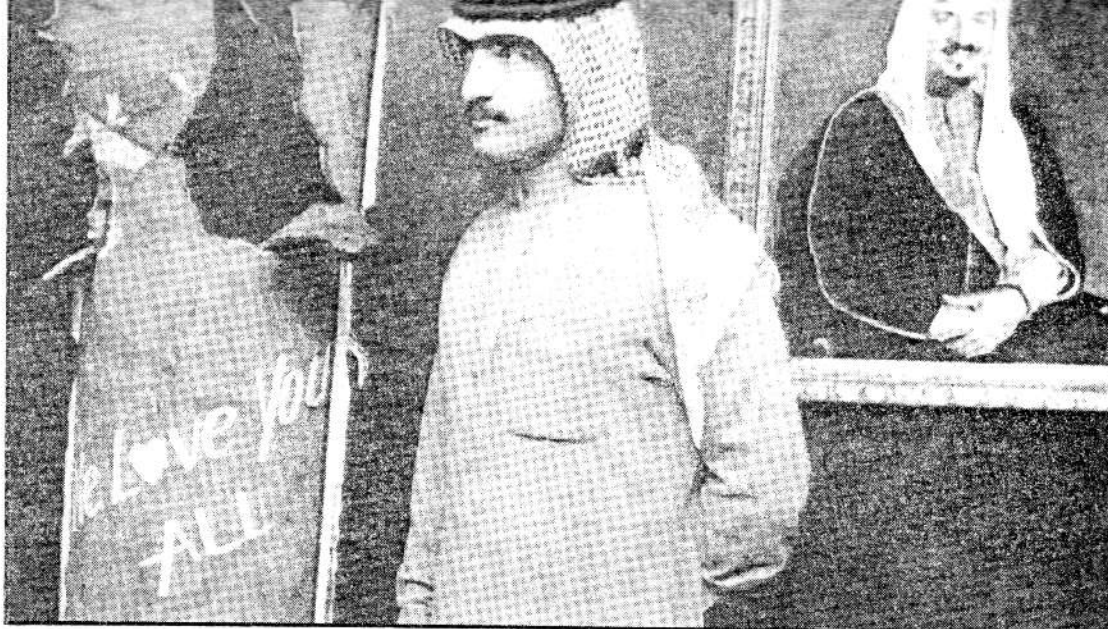
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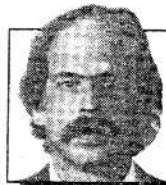
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