

IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

Give me peace, a balanced budget and sex any day

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell reminds me of a star basketball player on a losing team. He is sent to the Middle East like a lamb to the slaughter, with a weak and vacillating President Bush giving him lip service, while Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney whisper to Israel behind his and our backs, OPay no mind, we're really on your side. Ó

As a result, Powell, who could be an outstanding Secretary of State, is undercut from the moment he leaves our soil. Israel, led by warhawk Prime Minister Sharon, and to whom we have provided arms and money for decades, is literally thumbing its nose at us. The other Arab countries, who have supposedly joined us in a coalition to fight terrorism in Afghanistan, are increasingly restless as President Bush rattles the saber and announces his intentions to obliterate Saddam Hussein's government in Iraq.

It seems to me that our policy and involvement in the Middle East has done little but fan the flames of old hatreds and caused increasing grief and loss of life. Our role in Israel's defense has been a bone of contention for years with other countries of the Middle East. In 1947, when Israel was first formed as a state for the Jews of the world, it was carved out of the state of Palestine by the United Nations. The Arab Palestinians, who had co-existed with the Jews in Palestine until then, vehemently opposed the partition.

As I mentioned in an earlier column, the



moment Israel was proclaimed a State, it was attacked by Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. With American and British help, Israel gained more land in that battle and has in numerous battles since. Unfortunately, this may be a problem with no solution. However, our involvement makes it all the more volatile and brings Middle East terrorism to our doors around the world and into the United States.

Even though it is considered politically incorrect to criticize our administration since 9/11, it is also irresponsible, in our free society, not to. The moment George W. Bush hit the White House, we became a target

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for those in the Middle East who hated his father, who led us into Desert Storm, a military action that was questionable and may have been staged to save our oil interests more than the great liberty of Kuwait. As it turns out, the people of Kuwait are not very liberated even if left to their own determination. And Saddam Hussein, like a stirred-up hornet's nest, remains a dangerous and influential leader in the Middle East.

The more our country is perceived as becoming weak and vulnerable, the more terrorism will occur. President Bush, probably underestimated most of the time, still talks to us in fourth grade language and hasn't the slightest ability to negotiate a peace. He simply doesn't have that kind of talent, nor does he have the intelligence or ability to be president of the strongest country in the world — and our enemies know it. I believe he and his foreign policy team are taking us down into the biggest maelstrom we've found ourselves in some time.

Former president Jimmy Carter was also perceived as weak and international events tested his immobility. According to other news media, I'm not the only one who misses the negotiating skills, intelligence and broad knowledge of history of former President Bill Clinton. He also utilized the skills of Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, former Senator George Mitchell and activist Jesse Jackson to solve international crises. Contrary to the current administration, the world knew that former Secretary of State Madeline Albright and the president were on the same page, representing the same policies and goals.

The Republicans spent \$70 million dollars of our money trying to take down president Clinton. Don't think the rest of the world didn't pay attention and think the whole thing was ridiculous. They did. They do. And now the Republican leadership, who arrived at the White House in a weakened position and presents multiple faces to the world, expects to be taken seriously.

Compared to this mess, give me peace, a balanced budget and sex any day.

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