



Iraq forum answers questions and creates dialogue about pressing issue

The History and Politics Club sponsored the event to ponder the possibility of war with Iraq.

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We see the coverage everyday on the news, yet how much do we really know about the situation in Iraq? Last Wednesday, an information session about Iraq was held to answer the very question on everyone's mind: what is the deal with Iraq?

Students and other interested people gathered to hear from a panel of experts who put many questions to rest and explained those that may never be answered.

The panel consisted of Dr. Jim Piazza, whose specialty is international relations; Captain Lisa Phillips, who has served in the U.S. Air Force and has been to Afghanistan and Iraq; Dr. Greg Vitarbo, who is a 20th century historian with an interest in military history; and Dr. Akram Khater, who specializes in modern Middle Eastern history.

Several other members of

the history and politics department, including Dr. Carolyn Happer, Dr. Barbara True-Weber, Dr. William Price and Dr. Clyde Frazier, added their knowledge to the discussion about the Iraqi-U.S. situation.

"I continue to believe that the better informed we are, the better decisions we are going to make," said Dr. Michael Novak, head of the Department of History and Politics, as he opened the session.

The session began with a quick explanation of the modern history of Iraq, emphasizing the political instability of the country.

Saddam Hussein, who gained power in 1979, became a common name in households across America during the Gulf War in 1991. Khater pointed out that the CIA actually had a part in Hussein's rise to power. So the U.S. not only helped create a problem, but also had to solve it.

The U.S. helped lead a coalition to drive Iraq out of Kuwait. As part of the United Nations' resolution with Iraq, the country had to disarm all weapons of mass destruction and allow United Nations arms inspectors to search Iraq for weapons.

In 1998, Iraq evicted the U.N. arms inspectors, claiming they were spies. Only recently has Iraq stated they would allow U.N. weapons inspectors back in. "I can't imagine that Saddam would [allow] a complete inspection," Piazza said. "He can't just give them the keys to the kingdom. He'll lose his job." So where does that leave the U.S.?

It is hard to cite just one reason behind the desires of President Bush and his advisers to go to war with Iraq. Claims of mass weapon production and financial support for terrorists are among some of the

main motives for war with Iraq.

Would an invasion actually help the problem, or would it create further damage to the unsteady situation in the Middle East?

"I think in the short run we may solve a problem. In the long run we are going to create a serious problem for ourselves because we are going to create a generation of very angry people," Khater said.

"The argument that he poses a threat to the United States is a rather ridiculous argument at this point. The man is terrible, the man is horrible, but he is not a threat to anyone but his own people that he is oppressing everyday," he added.

Students were encouraged to express their own views and ask questions after the background information was presented. Several students and members of the Meredith community took advantage of this opportuni-

ty.

"I expected the panel to be impressive, but I was also impressed by the depth of thought many of the students exhibited within their questions and comments," freshman Hillary Madden said.

Those who attended the session on Wednesday were left with many points of view to consider in the Iraqi issue. To understand the conflict, a person must research the situation from all sides because it is not just the U.S. that is involved.

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