

Developments cause concern in Gulf crisis

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Faith is a touchstone for Catholics from Pope John Paul II on down in what is called, in media shorthand, the "Gulf crisis."

But as rapid developments crystallize the Persian Gulf conflict into a heavily armed standoff between Iraq and virtually the rest of the world, the fears of what could happen if war breaks out loom large in many minds.

The pope, in a midday Angelus talk Aug. 26, made his most explicit comments yet on the current situation.

Prayers are needed, he said, so that "the star of peace may shine brightly on the troubled populations of the Persian Gulf," but said that the crisis is "truly worrying" with world stability "gravely threatened."

Pope John Paul said the Iraqi actions in its takeover of neighboring Kuwait, which precipitated the crisis, were "grave violations of international law ... as well as the ethical principles which must rule the living together of people."

In disclosing an August meeting between the pope and Archbishop Marian Oles, papal pro-nuncio for the two Persian Gulf nations, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the Polish-born archbishop's title remains "pro-nuncio to Iraq and Kuwait." Iraq maintains that Kuwait no longer exists.

Stock markets worldwide were tumbling and the price for a barrel of oil on the spot market soaring because of the Gulf crisis.

Unfolding events over the weekend of Aug. 25-26 included:

- U.N. Security Council approval for nations to use force to maintain against Iraq a naval blockade, the chief method of enforcing U.N. economic sanctions levied

Aug. 6 against Iraq.

- U.N. Secretary General Jose Perez de Cuellar offering to negotiate a peace settlement with Iraq President Saddam Hussein, who said he was willing to meet with Perez de Cuellar.

- Iraqi troops encircling the embassies of foreign nations in Kuwait who defied Iraq's Aug. 24 deadline to leave. Iraq had cut off electricity and water at some of the embassies.

- The continued detention of thousands of Westerners in Iraq and Kuwait, many believed to be near military installations. France spurned an Iraqi offer to release French hostages. But Austrian President Kurt Waldheim — whose alleged secret past of Nazi war crimes complicity made him almost as repugnant on the world scene as Hussein is today — secured the release of more than 80 Austrian hostages.

The family of Joan Hoehn Khaja, an Indiana Catholic woman visiting in-laws in Kuwait, said they had been told Aug. 20 by the U.S. State Department that the 7-months-pregnant woman and her two infant children were OK when they contacted the U.S. Embassy Aug. 17 in Kuwait City. Family members have had no direct contact with Khaja since Aug. 3, and U.S. officials could not or would not say where she is.

Khaja's sister, Pauline Gerard, asked for an outpouring of prayers to get Khaja safely home. British church leaders also called for prayers for foreign nationals being held hostage in Kuwait and Iraq and for peace in the region.

Pax Christi USA and 11 priests and brothers of the Sacred Heart order also called for peace in separate statements. Pax Christi asked the U.S. bishops to determine whether the Gulf crisis meets



AP/Wide World Photos

Rangers from the 82nd Airborne division wear gas masks during maneuvers under the desert sun in Saudi Arabia last week. The soldiers are training to familiarize themselves with the rubberized equipment they would use if attacked with nerve agents or poison gas. Daytime temperatures in the region have been routinely exceeding 100 degrees.

Catholic principles of a just war, while the Sacred Heart religious called for the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops in the region.

President Bush has summoned reservists for active duty in the crisis to join the huge buildup of soldiers and hardware in Saudi Arabia, believed to be Hussein's next target in a quest for Arab-world and oil-production dominance.

Gulf-bound soldiers are given a little bit of hospitality before they head overseas by the United Service Organization — better known as the USO. One chaplain at the U.S. Marine Corps base at Fort Bragg, N.C., reported that the troops headed to the Persian Gulf are asking for medals of St. Michael, the patron saint of the airborne.

Dan Gilmour of Beaufort, S.C., a Catholic who is a retired Marine captain, said he feared the effects of a defensive posture on Marines who are trained for offensive combat.

Gilmour compared the Saudi Arabia deployment to his own experience in Viet-

nam. "I was not happy being there and being there in that type of position," he told the *Catholic Banner*, newspaper of the Diocese of Charleston, S.C. "Marines are an offensive trained force."

Another South Carolina Catholic, Betty Melcher of Lexington, S.C., hoped to avoid another similarity between Vietnam veterans and Persian Gulf troops — that they will be "ignored" once they return home.

"I went through that with my husband," said Melcher, who has two sons in the U.S. Army. "I don't want to go through that with my sons."

Melcher has purchased \$5 of yellow ribbon to cut into smaller ribbons that will fit on a car's radio antenna. She has convinced the U.S. Veterans Affairs office in Lexington to distribute the ribbons.

Aware that \$5 wasn't going to stretch very far, Melcher said she would like to see all Americans deck their trees and cars in yellow ribbons to remember the departing troops.

Both sides claim partial success in abortion rulings

By Liz Schevtchuk
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Pro-life and abortion-rights group both claimed partial success in court rulings overturning abortion restrictions in Guam and Pennsylvania and suggested the disputes might reach the U.S. Supreme Court.

In separate decisions, federal judges struck down Guam and Pennsylvania statutes Aug. 23 and 24 respectively.

Bernard Shire, spokesman for the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, said the Pennsylvania ruling has mixed ramifications, adding that "we're not really surprised."

"In a sense, it's a setback because key sections of the law were struck down," he said Aug. 27. "On the other hand, it's a victory as well. We feel very strongly that this is the case that is going to go to the Supreme Court."

U.S. District Judge Daniel H. Huyett III struck down major provisions of the Pennsylvania law, the Abortion Control Act of 1989, ruling that the provisions represented another example of women's rights being "subjected to the vicissitudes of the legislative process."

The National Abortion Rights Action League praised the judge's action as "a very sensible and courageous decision" that vindicated the view that the law was unconstitutional.

The overturned stipulations required that before having an abortion, a married woman notify her husband and a minor obtain the consent of one parent or a court order. The law also required that a woman wait 24 hours after receiving information on the nature and effects of abortion, fetal development, and abortion alternatives.

Huyett also ruled against the state's definition of a medical emergency that would permit exceptions to the law.

Speaking to the news media in Pennsylvania, a critic of the measure agreed with Shire's assessment that the dispute could reach the Supreme Court. "If the court is looking to overturn *Roe vs. Wade*, (the 1973 high court decision legalizing abortion), this case provides an opportunity," said Linda Wharton, a lawyer from the Women's Law Project, which challenged the provisions.

The state has promised to appeal the district court decision to the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. From there it could go to the Supreme Court. However, "I think Judge Huyett's opinion is so obviously prejudiced that it's the type of case that can be handily reversed by the 3rd Circuit," said Kevin Todd, an attorney with Americans United for Life in Chicago.

"The judge's opinion was horrendous," he said. Among its other flaws "it fails totally to take into account any type of legislative prerogative," the lawyer said.

The appeals court also might return the case to the district court level, but assign it to another judge, Todd added.

Guam's law also could face appeals court action.

Passed unanimously by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Joseph Ada in March, the law banned abortions except when the mother's life is endangered.

In striking it down, U.S. District Judge Alex Munson said the statute violated a woman's constitutional right to choose abortion and that *Roe vs. Wade* "applied with equal force and effect to Guam." One issue in the case was the extent to which *Roe vs. Wade* did affect Guam, a Pacific island territory of the United States.

Paul Linton, another Americans United for Life attorney, said that if further court action on the Guam law follows, it is "definitely possible that it has the potential to" lead to a striking down of *Roe vs.*

Wade. "It's a step on the way," he said.

"I wouldn't call it a pro-life victory because the statute was struck down," Linton added. At the same time, "I don't think it's a cause for dismay," he said.

"The bad news is that Guam's tight abortion bill was struck down," said Joseph Scheidler, director of the Chicago-based Pro-Life Action League.

Brazilian newspaper reports that Vatican may punish theologian

By Karla Bruner
Catholic News Service

SAO PAULO, Brazil — A Brazilian newspaper reported the Vatican is threatening again to punish Franciscan Father Leonardo Boff, a Brazilian liberation theologian.

The newspaper, *Folha de Sao Paulo*, reported the Vatican is upset with Father Boff's criticism of what he considers the centralization of power in the church.

Folha de Sao Paulo reported that the head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, has sent a letter to the Franciscan superior general in Rome, Father John Vaughn, questioning three articles by Father Boff. In Rome, a Franciscan spokesman would not comment on the report because he said it involved private correspondence between the Franciscans and the doctrinal congregation.

Folha de Sao Paulo said the Vatican wants the Brazilian bishops' conference to analyze the articles and assume a punishment for Father Boff. The bishops' conference has not commented publicly about the matter, but the next meeting of the conference's doctrinal commission is sched-

uled for Sept. 24.

One of the articles questioned is "A Project for Latin America," published in December, 1989, in *Vozes*, a general interest monthly magazine published by the Franciscans. In the article, Father Boff criticized the predominance of bishops' appointments among "conservatives" and described the Vatican's desire to eventually reduce the power of bishops' conferences.

From April 1985 to March 1986, Father Boff was barred from lecturing and writing on theology after the Vatican declared that his book, *Church: Charism and Power*, contained views that "endanger the sound doctrine of the faith."

Father Boff said that from August through December, 1989, he agreed under pressure not to travel or grant interviews outside Brazil. He told Catholic News Service he agreed "to calm Rome, to quiet them," and to be allowed to continue teaching at the Institute of Theology in Petropolis, Brazil. The agreement was with Father Estavao Ottenbreit, head of the Franciscans' Immaculate Conception Province in Sao Paulo.

"I had to accept, or I would have had canonical punishment," he said.