

World leaders watch as troops free Kuwait

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Catholic leaders in the United States and worldwide continued to promote Catholic perspectives in the Persian Gulf War as U.S.-led forces drove deeper into Kuwait.

Those perspectives increasingly dwelt on the consequences of the war and its aftermath.

In a statement issued from the White House Rose Garden Feb. 26, President George Bush said the war would continue despite Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's radio announcement earlier that day that he would withdraw his troops from Kuwait.

Bush called the Iraqi leader's announcement "an outrage" because it did not meet the strict conditions for withdrawal that had been imposed by the United States and allied forces.

Earlier in the week, the United States rejected a Soviet peace proposal. The initiative — the second proposed by the Soviet Union, but the first to be accepted by Iraq — was rejected by allied leaders because of conditions it tied to Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.

A Feb. 22 Vatican statement had strongly supported the Soviet peace initiative. "Reason and a sense of justice make one see that peace is within reach" through the proposal, said Vatican spokesman, Joaquin Navarro-Valls.

A Pax Christi U.S.A. statement Feb. 20 said Bush's "cavalier dismissal" of the Soviet proposal was "unconscionable and immoral."

In a Feb. 25 speech issued just moments

before the nation learned that 28 U.S. military officers had been killed in an Iraqi Scud attack on Saudi Arabia, Archbishop John R. Roach of St. Paul-Minneapolis said coalition forces "cannot fight evil with evil means."

The Scud missile, which hit a U.S. barracks in Dhahran, also wounded 100 soldiers.

"I do not envision any circumstances that would justify the use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons against Iraq, even in reprisal," said Archbishop Roach, chairman of the U.S. bishops International Policy Committee.

Before the start of the ground offensive to retake Kuwait, Archbishop Roach had called for intensive diplomacy, not military escalation, to end the war. "Now is not the time for escalation," he said. "Now is the time to pursue diplomacy with urgency and skill." The ground battle started the next day.

Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, head of the Vatican's Cor Unum umbrella organization for Catholic relief agencies, has been asked to put together a new Vatican committee for gulf war victims, and met Feb. 21 in Geneva to outline the Vatican relief initiative.

The Vatican, meanwhile, continued to prepare for a March 4-5 meeting of Middle East Catholic patriarchs and Western bishops to offer what the Vatican said would be a "concrete contribution" to peace.

Speaking at a noon blessing Feb. 24,



AP/Wide World Photos
American military police restrain Iraqi prisoners on Feb. 21 following a mass surrender of Saddam Hussein's troops. More than 400 Iraqis surrendered when helicopter gunships overwhelmed their positions near Saudi Arabia.

Pope John Paul II said the war in the gulf appeared more and more as a "sower of death." He added that the Vatican had done all it could to help "avoid this terrible war."

"Now we can only work and pray so that it ends as soon as possible and so that similar painful tragedies disappear from the world horizon," the pope said.

Members of other faiths joined a Feb. 24 service at a Catholic church in Amman, Jordan, to light candles and pray for peace after the ground war began. Jordanian sentiment in the war has been generally pro-Iraqi.

Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago said Feb. 25 that he was pleased that just war principles had entered into the war debate, but noted that moral discernment does not cease with the onset of hostilities.

In a Feb. 22 column for *The New World*, Chicago's archdiocesan newspaper, Cardinal Bernardin said he was not prepared to "categorically" condemn the war, but that "I continue to question the wisdom of going to war when we did."

Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York, current chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Ac-

tivities, asked Feb. 25 how members of a society that permits destruction of the unborn can be expected to worry about distinguishing between soldiers and civilians in a time of war.

In a Feb. 23 letter to British Prime Minister John Major, British Cardinal George Basil Hume voiced concern over coalition use of napalm in the war, asking "urgent assurance that they will not be used against Iraqi troops and civilians."

An allied coalition military spokesman in Saudi Arabia had pledged that napalm would not be used in the war because of the bad image given napalm after the Vietnam War, but a U.S. Marine Corps spokesman said Feb. 22 that napalm was being used to destroy oil-filled trenches set up by the Iraqis to stop opposing ground forces from advancing.

Concern for war victims and soldiers were two points of a four-point statement by Scotland's mainline church leaders. The other points were a call for peace and guarantees that Iraq will not be destroyed.

With the conflict a month old "many of our worst fears are being realized," the statement said.

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