

# WORLD & NATION

## Military archbishop questions actions against Iraq

By Jerry Filteau  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The head of the U.S. Archdiocese for Military Services said Dec. 30 that the U.S. bombing of Iraq "should cause serious moral concern for all Americans."

In a statement sent to all Catholic chaplains, Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien warned that military personnel "are not exempt from making conscientious decisions" if they are ordered to take an action they regard as a clear "violation of the moral law."

"I join the bishops of our country as well as the concerned voices of the Holy See and other hierarchies in calling on our president and his advisers to initiate no further military action in the Middle East," he said.

Archbishop O'Brien, who as archbishop for the military services is responsible for the pastoral care of Catholics in the U.S. armed forces around the world, was visiting American troops in the Middle East when the U.S.-British bombing of Iraq occurred.

He praised "the courage and professionalism of the men and women of our armed forces during the very trying days of military action."

He stressed that the military activities of U.S. troops "are ever subject to civilian policy decisions as formulated by the executive branch of our government."

"Once civilian leadership decides a policy requiring military action, it is the sworn obligation of all in our armed forces to execute their mission in complete obedience unless in a specific instance the required action is judged clearly illegal or immoral," he said.

He noted that top officials of the bishops' conference in November and December raised "serious questions ... as to the justifiability of military action at this time."

He said they were concerned "whether just war requirements for noncombatant immunity, proportionality and probability of success could be met in this situation."

When the bishops met in November, just after the United States had pulled back

from the brink of an attack, Bishop Anthony M. Pilla of Cleveland, then president of the bishops' conference, issued a statement expressing concern about the morality of a military response.

Following the U.S.-British attacks in December, Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick of Newark, N.J., head of the bishops' International Policy Committee, said that in his own opinion "these military strikes unduly risk violating just war criteria."

In his statement Archbishop O'Brien quoted a portion of the Catechism of the Catholic Church spelling out "rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy" that must be met to justify the use of military force.

Spelling out moral principles for soldiers and officers, he wrote: "In executing orders that might violate just war requirements military personnel face a serious moral challenge. ... Any individual who judges an action on his or her part to be in violation of the moral law is bound to avoid that ac-

tion. When clear moral conclusions that a particular act is unjust cannot be reached because, for example, of lack of sufficient evidence, the individual is justified in following the presumably better informed decision of his or her superiors."

In related news, Detroit Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton vowed to keep taking medicines to Iraq even if the U.S. government fines and imprisons him.

"I have been to Iraq. I intend to go again. ... It is an atrocity to kill defenseless children," he said at a Dec. 30 press conference.

Bishop Gumbleton, and 16 other Americans who have brought medical supplies to Iraq without license from the U.S. government, met with reporters just before going to the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control to deliver their response to the government notice of more than \$160,000 in fines for violations of U.S. regulations enforcing the Iraq embargo. The regulations prohibit any unlicensed ex-

ports, including medical supplies, to Iraq and the purchase of any goods or services in Iraq by any American who is not there on official U.S. or U.N. business or on assignment as a journalist.

"The sanctions on Iraq have claimed the lives of one-and-a-half million people. What possible goal could justify that?" asked Jesuit Father G. Simon Harak, a professor of ethics at Fairfield University in Connecticut. He said if the American people were to realize the devastation wrought by U.S. policy on the people of Iraq, they would not agree with that policy. "This is not American. It is not Godlike to target women and children," he said.

Bishop Gumbleton added: "I think the leaders of our country could be put on trial for war crimes. These are war crimes."

"I don't like to say this," he continued. "It's my country. But I believe the leaders of my country are war criminals in this particular instance."



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### Team named to study anti-Christian violence

NEW DEHLI, India (CNS) — The president of the Indian bishops' conference appointed a team to investigate an ongoing wave of violence against Christians in Gujarat state.

Archbishop Alan Basil de Lastic of New Delhi, conference president, also asked India's prime minister for government efforts to end the violence that began Christmas Day.

Hindu extremists, who accuse Christians of using education and social services to attract converts among the poor of Gujarat, are thought to be behind the attacks.

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