



A child holds up a toy pistol during a demonstration Feb. 17 against the Feb. 16 air strike at targets near Baghdad. The British- and U.S.-led bombing raid was targeted at facilities near the city.

Airstrikes against Iraq prompt condemnation

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Three days after U.S.-British airstrikes against Iraq, the Vatican's secretary of state condemned force as a means of bringing stability to the region.

"Maybe some think that the problems can be resolved with force, but the Holy See thinks differently," Cardinal Angelo Sodano told reporters Feb. 19, according to ANSA, an Italian news agency.

Without ever specifically referring to the Feb. 16 raids, the cardinal said the Vatican hoped that violent "methods do not continue. If you want peace, you have to prepare for peace."

U.S. and British warplanes targeted air

defense installations on the outskirts of the Iraqi capital, striking for the first time in two years north of the southern "no-fly" zone they patrol. Iraq said two civilians were killed and 20 injured in the attack.

Cardinal Sodano, speaking at a reception at the Italian Embassy to the Vatican, also renewed the Holy See's condemnation of a U.N. economic embargo directed against Iraq since the end of the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

He noted that many countries, including Italy, shared the Vatican's position, and said, "We hope wisdom will finally prevail."



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Nursing homes fight cuts

On Jan. 31, at Rochester City Hall, New York state legislators got an earful of complaints from nursing home administrators. The setting was a public hearing on Gov. George Pataki's proposed cuts of more than \$320 million in Medicaid funding to nursing homes, among other issues.

Typical of the comments made by nursing home administrators at the hearing were these by Frank Tripodi, chief executive officer of Monroe Community Hospital in Rochester, which serves elderly and disabled individuals.

"The public's perception of nursing homes is worsening by the day," said Tripodi, a member of the board of directors of the New York Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (NYAHS). "These increasingly negative perceptions are being fueled by sensationalistic journalism, political pressures ... the menacing terminology used in the (state nursing home) survey process, fraud and abuse allegations, and chronic labor shortages.

"Nursing homes and their employees are being held to unreasonable and, in many cases, unattainable standards," he continued, "and we are already seeing caregivers and administrators exiting the field entirely, without adequate numbers of new applicants coming in to replace them."



Tripodi added that the Medicaid cuts were proposed at a time when the governor was also proposing criminal background checks for nursing home staff — without funding the efforts needed to make such checks. The governor has also proposed increasing fines for deficiencies found during surveys of facilities, and the hiring of more inspectors to carry out such surveys. Tripodi concluded his presentation on this note:

"Nursing homes are under attack on many fronts — government funding cuts, intense competition for workers, an unpredictable and damaging survey process, heightened legal scrutiny, sensationalistic and unbalanced media coverage and increasingly negative perceptions.

"To what end — improved quality or the eventual demise of an entire segment of our continuing care system? The governor's proposals will only hamper providers' efforts."

Profits, losses

Tripodi's sense of frustration was shared by the administrators of St. Ann's Community, made up of St. Ann's Home, a 354-bed skilled nursing facility; The Heritage, a 19-story building boasting 237 single studio apartments; Chapel Oaks, 120 one- and two-bedroom independent living apartments; and three adult day-care services — one called Home Connection on campus, one at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Rochester, and one at Holy Spirit Church in Penfield.

Betty Mullin-DiProsa, St. Ann's president and chief executive officer, attended the Jan. 31 hearing but did not testify. In an interview, she gave this view of the climate in the state's nursing home industry.

Taking its cue from the federal government, which called for stricter inspections of nursing home care nationwide in 1998,

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