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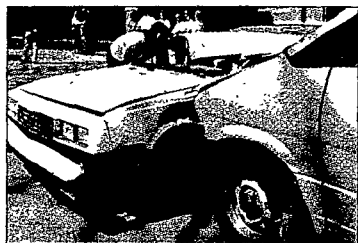
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Iraqi children play May 9 around an anti-aircraft gun that was left behind by fleeing Iraqi forces in the suburbs of Baghdad. Now that the war in Iraq has been won, thoughts have turned toward winning the peace there as well. Some Catholics believe that peace can be achieved over the long term, but that it will take a tremendous amount of time and resources to do so.

Winning the peace in Iraq

The war in Iraq took less than a month to win, but winning the peace there will no doubt take considerably longer.

Peace, said Egypt-based Catholic Relief Services regional representative Chris Tucker, is not defined by the absence of war. Rather, she chooses a definition the U.S. bishops have used: "the sharing of the goodness of society among all of its people."

Tucker notes that Iraq — like much of the Middle East — doesn't share well.

"The whole relationship on many different levels is fraught with injustice," affecting Iraqis of different ethnic and tribal groups, political parties, and religious leanings, she said in a telephone interview. Meanwhile, she said, what infrastructure had not been degraded by the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the ensuing economic embargo against Iraq was knocked out of commission "by the (recent) war itself, or by the subsequent looting."

The security situation in Baghdad remains a concern despite

recent signs of progress, observed Tucker, who arrived in Iraq May 3 as part of a Caritas Internationalis humanitarian aid convoy. Because of concerns about looting, the convoy had coordinated with the U.S. and British military's Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Office in Amman, Jordan, before leaving for Iraq, she said.

Tucker said the supplies reached the Caritas warehouse in Baghdad by May 4 and were to be distributed to Caritas centers throughout Iraq. The convoy included two trucks carrying more than 20 metric tons of medicine worth \$336,000, which will treat the needs of 25,000 people, Tucker said.

CATHOLIC CONCERNS

On May 4, members of the aid convoy celebrated Mass with Latin-rite Archbishop Jean Sleiman of Baghdad, Tucker said. The

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Story and photos by Catholic News Service

