



-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #75
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2357

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas, 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5100
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

January 18, 1991

91-69

NOTE TO EDITORS: Mike Creswell, Baptist Press correspondent for Europe and the Middle East, is continuing to cover the impact of the gulf war from a base in Cyprus. Please note sections of Jan. 17 Middle East release need updating in view of these developments.

Baptist workers endure
Iraqi missile attack

By Mike Creswell

N-FMB

Baptist Press
1/18/91

LARNACA, Cyprus (BP)--Southern Baptist personnel in Israel wore gas masks and sat huddled in sealed rooms as missiles from Iraq screamed through the air, exploding close enough for some to hear the blasts and feel the shock vibrations during early morning hours Jan. 18.

No Southern Baptist workers were injured as Iraqi missiles struck Tel Aviv and another struck in Haifa just after 2 a.m. Other missiles were reported to have fallen in unpopulated areas.

Although the opening round of missiles carried conventional loads and not deadly chemicals, the workers said they fear this may be only the opening salvo in a continuing missile attack on Israel.

David Groseclose of Melbourne, Fla., who lives in central Haifa, guessed the missile that hit his city may have impacted six miles away, close enough for him to hear the explosion.

Groseclose, who is single, said it was a frightening experience. "You're awakened from sleep by sirens. Your heart starts beating quickly. You're nervous. You don't know if it's just a drill. You can't be sure, so you turn the light on. You get up and start looking for your gas mask. You turn the radio on, because that will tell you if it's real or not.

"Then you hear BOOM, BOOM. You know it's real. You put your gas mask on. It's uncomfortable. You want to see what the booms are, but you don't go out. You listen to the radio with your stomach churning," Groseclose said of the episode. When he finally was able to look outside his apartment, he could see smoke in the distance.

Later in the day Groseclose was able to call Christian believers with whom he works. "They are nervous, but not panicking," he said. One believer told him, "You're in the safest place you can be -- the arms of the Lord."

Thomas and Martha Hocutt of Birmingham, Ala. and Cedartown, Ga., who live on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, also were awakened by air raid sirens and scrambled with their daughter into their sealed room, taping up the door and putting wet towels against it to keep out potential poison gas.

"By the time we were in the room and had the door shut, we heard the first explosion. Shortly afterwards, we heard two more explosions which sounded like sonic booms more than explosions," Hocutt said.

He guessed he was hearing the missiles that struck Tel Aviv.

--more--

"They came in quickly. There was little advance warning," he said. "It was very frightening. For me, it probably was the most frightening experience I've ever been through. Breathing in through a filter and expelling air through it makes it harder to breathe. The tension level was so high right then that it took us a long while to relax and be able to breathe properly."

Although the missiles were classified as carrying small explosive loads, Hocutt said a Jerusalem newspaper carried a photo of one missile explosion site that showed two demolished cars and the front of a building knocked off. "It reminded me of Beirut -- that's what it looks like," he said.

When he went out briefly later in the morning to buy the newspaper, he said most people out on the streets were carrying their gas masks with them.

Ray and Suzane Altman of Post and Slaton, Texas, who live outside Tel Aviv, said the missiles that struck Tel Aviv were close enough to shake the ground where they were.

When Altman heard the air raid sirens, he quickly woke up his wife and they hustled to get their four sleepy children dressed, sealed into their "safe room" and wearing gas masks. Mrs. Altman said it was hard to make their daughter Sarah, age 3, wear her mask. Their other children are Leah, 10; Adam, 8; and Noah, 6.

The Altmans were to travel Jan. 18 to a hotel in what is considered to be a safer location. They were joining Southern Baptist workers Norm and Martha Lytle of Gadsden, Ala., and Jim and Kathy Sibley of Dallas and their two teen-age daughters.

Lytle said he heard artillery shells and aerial bombs in Israel during the 1967 war, but added, "Somehow, those did not seem as threatening" as the crashing down of missiles that might be carrying poison gas.

Dale Thorne, area director for Southern Baptist work in the Middle East, and Bob Fields, associate director, were up most of the night calling personnel in Israel to ascertain their safety. There was some question for several hours about the status of volunteer Suzanne Griffin, who had been scheduled to leave Tel Aviv on a flight just minutes after the missiles landed.

The Iraqi attack started just 20 minutes before Griffin, of Fayetteville, Ark., was scheduled to leave Tel Aviv on a 2:30 a.m. Tower Air jetliner with an undisclosed number of passengers. The attack did not disrupt the jet's departure, according to the New York-based company.

The flight stopped in Brussels, Belgium, where Griffin boarded a Sabena Airlines jet scheduled to arrive first in Boston at 1:30 p.m. EST Jan. 18 then in Atlanta at 5 p.m. Sabena officials confirmed Griffin was on the flight, said her sister, Tiffany Matherly of Fayetteville.

Griffin had completed two years of work in Israel as a Southern Baptist volunteer.

Communicating with Southern Baptist workers in Israel was complicated by jammed telephone lines, making phone calls into the country difficult. Also, telephones of some workers were not in their sealed safe rooms, and during alerts they were unable to leave their rooms to answer calls.

Despite the horrors of continuing war, all the remaining workers said they still feel comfortable about their decisions to remain in the country. The Altmans had tried to book passage out of the country before war broke out in the early morning hours of Jan. 17, but were unable to do so.

Jan. 18 was Mrs. Altman's birthday, meaning Southern Baptists across the nation were praying for her. "I could really feel the prayer support," she said.

--more--

Although Southern Baptist administrators stayed in touch with personnel in Israel and consulted with them on the options of leaving, the choice to go or stay was up to the workers. Some personnel elected to evacuate to the United States and others to Cyprus.

Among other Christian organizations represented in Israel, some workers also elected to remain in the country while others evacuated.

In the midst of the missile attack, Hocutt said he was able to aid a distraught British woman. She called seeking a former resident in their home to get advice on what to do in the crisis, since she does not speak Hebrew. "In the midst of this, we were able to help and to minister," Hocutt said.

--30--

Art Toalston of the Foreign Mission Board contributed to this story.

Foreign missionaries
face threat of terrorism

By Mary E. Speidel

N FMB

Baptist Press
1/18/91

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--"Face after face after face" flashed through her mind.

When she learned allied missiles had hit Iraq Jan. 17, "All I could see was faces," said a Southern Baptist representative now in Western Europe.

The faces were of Arab friends she made while working in the Middle East for more than a decade. "I know so many people there," she said of the region. "I'm praying that somehow out of this God would work some kind of miracle."

The woman was among many Southern Baptist missionaries worldwide who prayed for miracles as the Gulf war began Jan. 17. And as war broke out, foreign missionaries -- including those living outside the Middle East -- realized they could be potential targets of terrorism against Americans abroad.

Iraq has warned a U.S. attack would cause that nation to unleash a wave of terrorism against American targets. In light of the threat, airports and U.S. military bases around the world have stepped up security.

The U.S. State Department has issued a travel advisory warning all Americans abroad to "be aware of the threat of terrorist actions against U.S. citizens or property in other locations worldwide." The advisory gives specific warnings for Europe, north Africa, the Persian Gulf region and south Asia.

Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials in Richmond have sent the advisory to mission administrators living overseas, according to board officials. Those administrators decide how best to share the information with missionaries on the field, officials said.

Keith Parker, the board's area director for Europe, issued a statement Jan. 17 to all mission chairmen in Europe. He advised missionaries to "be alert and have a low profile," to keep in touch with the nearest American consulate and to be aware of anyone who may be acting suspiciously.

Parker pointed out that Americans in Europe have lived with the threat of terrorism for years. "This is not something new," he said, naming several terrorist groups that have been active throughout Europe.

"You can go to almost every country or every part of Europe and find most of our missionaries have learned over the years how to avoid the places where these folks (terrorist groups) might be focusing their attention," he said.

--more--

John Faulkner, area director of eastern and southern Africa missions, reported that the State Department travel advisory has been sent to every missionary in his area along with other security information. "Please assure parents, families and relatives that missionaries are being careful," Faulkner told officials in Richmond.

In addition, officials in the board's volunteer department are informing Southern Baptist volunteers of the travel advisory. Officials planned to meet Jan. 18 to discuss further details of volunteer travel. Several overseas trips for Foreign Mission Board staff members already have been postponed because of the advisory.

Several Southern Baptist representatives in Europe contacted by Baptist Press said they were heeding the State Department advisory.

"We're keeping a low profile as Americans," said one representative in Western Europe. He said he and his family are avoiding any America-affiliated institutions and are careful about not speaking English to one another while outside their home.

Another representative in Europe said she plans to be careful and use common sense. "But I will just go ahead and live and not let it keep me from doing the things that I think I ought to be doing," she said.

In light of potential terrorism, Parker said missionaries in Europe have shown a mood of "caution and concern but not terror in the sense of anxiety for one's life. ... By far the majority of our missionaries are totally integrated into the national picture." Such missionaries "would have the same risk as a national but would not necessarily be spotted as an American," he said.

News reports said the European countries at greatest risk for potential terrorism are Germany, France and England. Police across Europe have tightened security at airports, embassies and other places considered possible targets of terrorism. American schools were closed as a precaution in some European cities.

As tensions began to mount in various parts of the world earlier this year, the Foreign Mission Board produced a new crisis manual for missionaries, according to John Cheyne, associate director of research and planning.

The manual suggests precautions missionaries can take in a variety of crisis situations, including potential terrorism. It incorporates information from a 1986 document, "Awareness Document on Field Dangers," which suggests ways missionaries can safeguard against terrorism.

The new manual was sent recently to area administrators living overseas. Each administrator will decide how to best share the information with individual missionaries in his area, Cheyne said.

Another factor is potential mission property loss. Many missionaries forced to leave Liberia last year lost their belongings because of civil war. The loss may increase the Foreign Mission Board's personal property insurance premiums, said Don Listrom, director of the missionary benefits department. If property losses occur in Middle East because of war or terrorism, they will add to the growing expense of supporting missionaries.

--30--

Donald D. Martin of the Foreign Mission Board contributed to this story.

Could Soviet crackdown
affect Baltic churches?

By Martha Skelton

N-FMB

Baptist Press
1/18/91

TALLINN, Estonia (BP)--In one of those self-revelatory statements East Europeans are famous for, an Estonian said last summer that his city's architecture ranged from the baroque to the "barraque" -- as in army barrack.

--more--

Always a presence the Baltic peoples lived with, Soviet troops began taking over public facilities in Lithuania and Latvia in mid-January this year. At least 13 Lithuanians died trying to stop the troops. The military reality has resurged.

The reordering of Soviet society under Mikhail Gorbachev and last year's declarations of independence by the three Baltic states brought new hope and life to the peoples -- including the Christians -- of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. They faced many problems, but with a renewed sense of the possibility to direct their own destinies. All this is now in question.

Gorbachev appears determined to quash the independence movements in the republics, starting with the Baltics. The three once-independent nations on the coast of the Baltic Sea -- swallowed by Stalinist Soviet expansion in 1940 -- began the parade of republics seeking independence last year.

The debating and demonstrating revolve around several key issues -- ethnic and cultural preservation, economic interdependence and local or centralized government sovereignty.

Over the past decades, non-Balts by the thousands have been relocated in the three republics. They have manned a buildup of industrial power in this area. But local people believe there is another reason for their presence -- to dilute the nationalistic fervor of the republics. By one recent estimate, the population of Estonia is 38 percent non-Estonian and Latvia is 48 percent non-Latvian.

Obvious tensions arise. Outsiders get a higher priority for jobs and housing. They do not speak the local language or know the culture and history of their new home. That breeds resentment in some local peoples. The non-Baltic citizens resent being told to learn another language and culture. In most republics where nationalism is an issue, restoration of mother-tongue languages and the open use of national flags have been key gestures in attempts to reverse the effort to weaken ethnic and cultural ties.

Emigration and deportation, both widespread in the 1940s, also have contributed to the problem. Thousands of Baltics left their homelands to settle in other lands, depleting the local populations. Many Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians were among the millions of people deported and exiled in Siberia during Stalin's reign. Baptist groups in both Latvia and Estonia also were weakened by emigration and deportation.

Economic interdependency of the republics is another complex issue. The Baltic states provide all of the Soviet Union with industrial goods and shipping access through Riga, Latvia's capital, and Tallinn, Estonia's capital. Factories produce many times more goods than they need for local use.

"Factory goods are shipped elsewhere; only the pollution stays," said one Estonian man. However, industrial operations in the Baltics depend on various raw materials from other republics.

Ongoing dialogues were attempting to reshape relations between the Baltic states and the Soviet Union when military action came in January. It's unclear whether laws and procedures established by legislators elected by the republics will stand.

Christians -- including the 6,000 members of Evangelical Christian-Baptist churches in Estonia and the 4,500 members in Latvia -- find themselves and the future of their work for Christ intertwined with these events.

When the Latvian government established a new department of religion in December 1989, a profound change was made in how the government and churches relate to each other.

"Before it was an apparatus to control the church," said a department spokesman in 1990. "Now our main function is to help the different churches in their work."

--more--

In former years, Christians were seen as not needed in society; the fewer Christians the better. "Now it is quite the opposite," he added.

In both Estonia and Latvia, Baptists have requested and received the return of some church buildings confiscated during the Stalinist years.

Churches in Russia and other Soviet republics have had similar experiences under the relaxing of stiff regulations in recent years. A comprehensive law of religious freedom was passed for the Soviet Union last fall.

With the new law in place, opportunities should continue for churches in all Soviet republics to expand open evangelism, Bible teaching, children and youth work, social ministries and seminary training. The local application of such laws is critical, however. Local abuses have occurred in the past.

In the last two years, amazing inroads have been made for the gospel in the Soviet Union and the Baltics. Believers have been acknowledged as full citizens, to be treated equally in education and employment.

"Before we were only borne in society. Now we are asked to take part," said one Latvian man.

Religious services, Christian films, interviews with church leaders broadcast on television or printed in newspapers have shown the public the numbers of believers and diversity of ministries they have in the Soviet Union. Churches have reported Communist Party members coming to enroll their children in Sunday School.

Christians also are taking part in the overall life of their communities. In Talsi, Latvia, the pastor of the Baptist church, Aivar Skuburs, is a member of the town council.

In Parnu, Estonia, a local high school includes a religion class in its academic course of study. "There was a real need to fill this gap," a school administrator explained. "With religious studies and ethics, perhaps pupils will be better people."

Churches in the different republics reflect both the unity of faith and the diversities of their national and ethnic orientations.

Baltic Baptist unions work on their own programs and theological education while maintaining a fraternal relationship through the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, the overall organization of churches in the Soviet Union.

"Christians are always a closer community than others in society," says Janis Eisans, leader of Latvian Baptists. "We are the last to be divided." Baptists from Estonia and Latvia were included in the large Soviet delegation attending last summer's Baptist World Alliance meeting in Seoul, South Korea.

At the same time, ethnic Russians or Ukrainians or Estonians cherish their own diverse cultures, languages and heritages. "We always lived enclosed (by) other people, but Latvians always tried to be themselves in all situations. We have our own culture, our own identity," said Eisans.

In both the Latvian and Estonian Baptist unions, there are Russian-speaking churches and pastors, as well as ethnic Russians in the other congregations. The Evangelical Christian-Baptist Union in Estonia has approximately 600 ethnic Russians in different churches -- about 10 percent of the total membership.

The first Christian mission organization registered with the Soviet government was the Latvian Christian Mission, founded in 1988 by Vadim Kovalev. He is a Russian pastor from Riga. Believers from both Russian- and Latvian-speaking groups have participated in the mission's ministries of prison evangelism, hospital volunteer work and feeding the hungry. But its work is mainly for Russians. Now Latvian Baptists plan a similar ministry.

One of the struggles Baltic Baptists have faced is that a popular, generic type of Christianity will overshadow the authentic gospel message. A teacher went to a Lutheran church last year and asked that his name be put on their roll. "I don't believe in God," he told the pastor, "but the church has so much contributed to our culture."

Believers have a responsibility to counter that idea, according to one Baptist pastor. "There is a spiritual search among the people. Christianity is traditional in Estonia," he explained. "Estonians want to be again a part of Europe. Romantic Europe is a Christian place, therefore it is popular." Believers must preach and live an authentic Christianity, showing their society what faith really is, he indicated.

If a new period of hardship lies ahead, Baltic believers will face the future as they have faced the past. "We learned to depend only on God," one Latvian pastor said.

"If you come to truth, it is the beginning of hope," an Estonian added. "If there is no truth, there is no hope."

--30--

Martha Skelton, a veteran of coverage in the Soviet Union, visited Estonia and Latvia last year. She is associate editor of The Commission, magazine of the Foreign Mission Board.

Photos sent to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Baptists prepare ministries
while praying they go unused By Ken Camp & Orville Scott F-20x00 Baptist Press
1/18/91

DALLAS (BP)--Texas Baptists are organizing ministries that they hope will not be needed. At least, not for long.

As stateside hospitals stand by for a potential influx of wounded personnel from Operation Desert Storm, churches near medical facilities in San Antonio and Dallas are preparing a ministry response to the needs of visiting family members.

Meanwhile, the Baptist General Convention of Texas is working to establish a Gulf Crisis Task Force to help facilitate local church and associational ministries in the event of prolonged conflict in the Persian Gulf.

And in Baptist associations near Fort Hood and Fort Bliss, churches already are providing a model for ministry to hurting military families.

Churches in San Antonio and Dallas are preparing to offer assistance to families of injured military personnel in five basic areas: housing, transportation to and from hospitals, emergency food and clothing, child care and counseling. Support groups also will be established as needed.

Before conflict occurred in the Persian Gulf, church leaders in the two Texas cities learned that U.S. military wounded would be treated initially in field hospitals. Once stabilized, they would be flown to Germany or England. Burn and gas victims, as well as others requiring long-term care, then would be flown to hospitals stateside. The Dallas Veterans' Administration Hospital and Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio are two of 22 national medical facilities prepared to accept chemical burn victims.

More than 150 churches in San Antonio Association are now "plugging into" the ministry program initially launched by Trinity Baptist Church, and the associational office is joining Trinity as a point of referral. The associational Woman's Missionary Union, under the direction of Jean Smith, has established a command center for the association staffed by wives of retired or active military personnel.

"The bottom line--the key phrase--is 'long term,'" said Camille Simmons, coordinator of church and community ministries for San Antonio Association. "The indications we receive are that the patients to be brought here will be here for long-term recovery.

--more--

That means we need to gear up for long-term ministry."

In Dallas, three chaplains at the Veterans' Administration Hospital who are members of Cliff Temple Baptist Church asked their fellow church members to help minister to families of injured personnel.

Cliff Temple set up a committee to enlist volunteers, and to broaden the ministry base, an appeal for volunteers was shared at a meeting of the Dallas Association Pastors' Conference. Within 24 hours, at least 50 churches responded.

George R. Dickens, pastor of Cliff Temple Baptist Church, pointed out that if casualties come, they will be "in all shapes, sizes, colors and religions." Consequently, the church is working not only with Baptists and other Christian churches, but also with leaders in the Dallas-area Islamic community.

"It's a tremendous relief for us to see the churches activating themselves and rallying to a need. Even as we all pray that there will not be any need, we have to prepare in case there is," said Jeni Cook, Southern Baptist chaplain at the Dallas VA Hospital. "There has been kind of a Desert Shield -- I guess now that's Desert Storm -- frenzy around here at the VA."

William M. Pinson Jr., BGCT Executive Director, met on Jan. 15 with a small group of Baptist Building staff and Dallas-area Baptists to discuss potential needs and statewide strategies in response to the crisis in the Persian Gulf. Plans discussed included producing and distributing printed resources related both to ministry and to ethical issues of war and peace, promoting prayer emphases and providing other assistance to affected churches and families.

The next evening, as many Texas Baptists gathered for mid-week prayer services, the Desert Shield operation became Desert Storm.

"It is appropriate that we were at prayer when war broke out. Let it be a reminder that it is time for Baptists to draw together as brothers at the altar of prayer, not just for world peace, but for peace among ourselves," Pinson said.

In Central Texas, churches in Bell Baptist Association are continuing to pray and to minister to the families of deployed Fort Hood personnel as they have for several months.

"The Lord already has done some great things through this in bringing people back to prayer. A lot of people are back in church, and churches are discovering ministries and opportunities they had never addressed," said David Cannon, director of missions for Bell Baptist Association.

"The ripple of the ministries is spreading further and further and including more people. We are doing grief management seminars, drawing in churches of all denominations and encouraging them to establish grief management teams within the churches to deal with all stages of grief. One of the things we're experiencing is that anticipatory grief can be just as severe as post-event grief."

Joda Weston, pastor of Pershing Park Baptist Church, Killeen, Texas, said volunteers at his church are dealing with considerable counseling related to grief and depression, as well as caring for everyday needs.

"Twelve men of the church held an auto round-robin and winterized 25 cars of women whose husbands have been called to the front," Weston said.

"One woman confessed that she didn't even know how to put gas in her car, so one of the men took her to the station and showed her the procedure."

In far West Texas, an associational task force is in place to minister through churches near Fort Bliss, according to Lorenzo Pena, associate director in El Paso Baptist Association.

"We are planning a full-scale mother's day out program to provide free child care and an 'adopt-a-family' ministry in which a family will be partnered with a church or church family, and we coordinating transportation efforts for families of troops in the Persian Gulf," Pena said.

Scotsdale Baptist Church in El Paso reports an intensified prayer ministry. In addition to completing a 24-hour prayer vigil recently, the church also maintains an on-going intercessory prayer room where the names and addresses of persons serving in the Middle East are listed, and "prayer-grams" are sent as prayers are offered.

Prayer also is an important aspect of the ministry at Immanuel Baptist Church, El Paso, according to pastor Richard Blake, who notes that 37 men connected to the church are in the Persian Gulf.

"We began with small American flags marked with yellow ribbon and the names of the men to remind people to pray for them.

We have committed to pray for them every time we gather. We have paired up couples who agreed to adopt one of their families -- to love and care for them and to serve as resource people to tell the church of needs," Blake said. Extensive counseling also is part of Immanuel's ministry, he added.

"There's a lot of anxiety among wives," he said. "I was called out at 2 a.m. for a woman whose baby had a medical emergency. She said, 'I feel God is getting me ready for the sorrow when my husband dies.'"

--30--

BWA saddened by Gulf War urges
prayer for peace and for all people

By Wendy Ryan

N-CO
BWA

Baptist Press
1/18/91

MCLEAN, VA (BP)--Deeply saddened by the news of the outbreak of war between the United States and Allied Forces and Iraq, the Baptist World Alliance is calling on Baptists to pray for peace; for all of the people of the Middle East, and that this not become a holy war.

"We want to assure our brothers and sisters living in Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and the Middle East that we are joining them in prayer for peace," said Denton Lotz, general secretary and Knud Wumplemann, president of the BWA. "We extend our hand of peace to our Muslim friends and say "Salaam," "Shalom."

In a statement to the 70 million Baptists represented in the BWA, Lotz and Wumplemann said "It is a tragic fact of history that the area of the world where three great religions find their home is also a place of enmity and war."

Because there are Christians, Jews and Muslims living in all of the countries represented, the BWA leaders say we (Baptists) "must call all men and women of goodwill to prayer."

The BWA leaders call for a quick end to the conflict and a just settlement of all the problems confronting the nations of the Middle East. They extended their sympathy to those families bereaved by the death of loved ones in this war, whether in the Middle East, Europe or North America.

An appeal was also made to the government leaders on both sides for "compassion and forgiveness. We pray that the world will be preserved from future tragedies by establishing instruments of peace and justice in the Middle East" the statement said.

"We pray for that day" says that BWA leaders, "when men and women will no longer live by the sword but by the word of the Lord."

--30--

1/18/91

Page 10

Baptist Press

Seminarians called
to military service

By Pat Cole

N-10
(SBTS)

Baptist Press
1/18/91

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--The crisis in the Middle East has forced at least three Southern Baptist Theological Seminary students to swap their seminary textbooks for military uniforms.

Terry Roberts, a master of divinity student from Dayton, Ohio, Robert Brill, a master of social work student from Louisville, Ky., and Kristin Kennedy, a master of divinity in Christian education student from Edmond, Okla., have been called from military reserve status to active duty. On Jan. 17, Roberts was the only one of the three in Saudi Arabia. Brill is serving in Fort Knox, Ky., while Kennedy received orders Jan. 12 to report for active duty the following day in an undisclosed location.

Kennedy, whose abrupt call to duty forced her to leave most of her personal items her dormitory room, arranged for friends to find a place to store her belongings while she is on active duty.

About 10 other students at the Louisville school are subject to call for service with National Guard or reserve units. They serve as chaplain candidates and in other military roles.

Timothy Mallard, a master of theology student from Lakeland, Fla., has been informed by the Army that he will be called to active duty as a chaplain candidate by early February. "There are several ways you can look at it," said Mallard. "From a personal standpoint, I could say my education is being disrupted. From a spiritual standpoint, I could say this is where the Lord wants me to be. From an Army standpoint, I could say that's the way things are."

Mallard started the process of changing his status from chaplain candidate to chaplain before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. As a chaplain candidate, he can serve only in the United States, but he expects the current crisis will speed up his transition to chaplain. He also believes there is a high probability he will go to Saudi Arabia. Mallard's father, an Army chaplain who holds the rank of colonel, and his older brother, a second lieutenant who is an Army tank commander, also are awaiting orders to go to Saudi Arabia.

Mallard, immediate past chairman of the seminary organization "Ministers to the Military," said his own opinions of the conflict in the Middle East are not important when he is called upon to serve. He sees his first task as ministry to the soldiers. "Soldiers aren't interested in my political views about whether this war is morally just," he said. "They want to know 'what kind of ministry can you bring me to help me through this hell I am going through?'" he said.

Keith Goretzka, current chairman of Ministers to the Military, agreed that soldiers should put political views aside when called upon to serve their country. Goretzka, a master of divinity student from West Chester, Pa., is an armor training officer with the Army reserves and holds the rank of captain. "When we raised our right hands, we agreed that if called upon, we'll serve our nation," he said. "At this point, it is one weekend per month, but it may soon be more."

--30--

Contributing to this story was Ron Kline, editor of The Towers, Southern Seminary's campus newspaper.

Southern Seminary
prays for Gulf crisis

By Pat Cole

F-10
(SBTS)

Baptist Press
1/18/91

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--About 1,000 students, faculty and staff at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary gathered Tuesday, Jan. 15, to pray for God's intervention in the Persian Gulf crisis.

--more--

Southern Seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt said he called the service at the Louisville, Ky., school to ask for God's help in bringing a "sensible resolution" that would avert war in the Middle East. He also said the service was "a time of intercession for those who will suffer most in the days that are just before us."

Honeycutt acknowledged that those in attendance had differing opinions "on the role of armed conflict in the world." Nevertheless, he said, "all of us come with a common concern."

"My burden is not simply for people who are 'our people' for all people are God's people and therefore all the people of the world are our people," he said, noting that several seminary students who were part of reserve and National Guard units have been called to active duty.

"I do not know your theology of prayer," he said. "This is no time to fine tune that theology. I only know that in times like this it is time to pray that God in his own providence will do what we have been unable to do. It is a time to pray for his intervention with his mighty power and pray that he will be there with grace to sustain those who suffer."

Honeycutt said when he decided to call the convocation he first thought the seminary community could "do no less" than pray together for the Middle East situation. "From another vantage point, I know of nothing more we could do at this late hour than to call the community together to ask that we pray and intercede in the presence of God," he said.

--30--

Judge rules anti-obscenity
NEA rules unconstitutional

By Tom Strode

N-CO
Washington

Baptist Press
1/18/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--A federal judge in Los Angeles has ruled that the anti-obscenity commitment required of grant recipients by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1989-90 was unconstitutional.

U.S. District Judge John G. Davies said in his decision announced on Jan. 9 that the requirement infringed upon freedom of speech.

The ruling's effect is limited to the extent that the anti-obscenity pledge was not included in the latest congressional reauthorization of the NEA. Instead, Congress directed the chairman to make certain that grants are made "taking into consideration general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American public."

Julianne Davis, general counsel for the NEA, said she is conferring with the Justice Department to determine if the decision will be appealed. She said she would not comment on the court's ruling until a decision on an appeal has been made.

"We urge the Administration to appeal the trial judge's decision," said Michael K. Whitehead, general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. "Although the affidavit requirement is no longer a part of the NEA law, the case raises the important issue of the power of government to oversee the use of public funds.

"Every taxpayer is required to sign an oath on his IRS Form 1040 declaring that the contents are true, correct and complete. In effect, he must promise not to violate the Internal Revenue Code and the laws of perjury. If the taxpayers who fund NEA grants must sign an affidavit agreeing to obey the law, why is it unfair to ask the artists who take NEA grants to sign an affidavit simply agreeing not to break the law?"

"The NEA affidavit requirement does not, in our view, violate an artist's free speech rights." Whitehead said, "Obscenity is not protected by the First Amendment, according to longstanding Supreme Court precedent. The artist has no legal right to produce obscene art with public funds. Asking for a written declaration of law-abiding intent is a small price to pay for these federal handouts.

--more--

"If the courts ultimately adopt Judge Davies' rationale, voiding any and all content restrictions on tax supported grants, then this becomes a compelling argument for abolition of the NEA. If the courts take away the power of government to regulate the use of tax funds for lawful public purposes, then the program is out of control and should be abolished."

Congress' anti-obscenity language was adopted after revelations were made in 1989 of NEA grants for such projects as a crucifix submerged in urine and homoerotic photographs. The legislation required that grant recipients during the 1989-90 budget year could not produce or exhibit art that was obscene. The NEA included the text of the law in the guidelines it distributed to the grant and fellowship recipients. For 15 years, it has asked artists to sign an agreement to abide by the endowment's guidelines, an NEA spokesman said.

This time, some artists and arts organizations rebelled. About 20 recipients refused to agree and rejected their grants. Three others would not sign and sued the NEA to receive their funding.

Two of the suits were decided when Judge Davies ruled in favor of choreographer Bella Lewitzky, who received a \$75,000 grant, and the Newport Harbor Art Museum, which had three grants totaling \$100,000.