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◆ Fort Collins Coloradoan ◆

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Impact of Saddam's capture debated

By Coloradoan staff

The following questions and answers were compiled from interviews with U.S. Sen. Wayne Allard of Loveland, U.S. Republican Rep. Marilyn Musgrave of Fort Morgan and Jerome Bookin-Weiner, director of international programs at Colorado State University.



ALLARD



MUSGRAVE

Should we expect to see less or more violence in Iraq now that Saddam Hussein has been captured?

Allard: It wouldn't surprise me if we saw an increase, but in the long run I hope to see a decrease in the violence. It would be hard to attribute that to the capture or if we're just doing a better job on the ground. We're beginning to figure out how to control the situation, and we will figure out how to handle some of the terrorist problems in Iraq.

Musgrave: Hopefully, it will be less. He not only was the epitome of evil but was a symbol of evil, and his capture will be demoralizing for those on the

other side.

Bookin-Weiner: In the short term, there may be more. The long term has more to do with what we do with Saddam Hussein than with him being captured.

What impact does the capture have on the everyday person in Fort Collins?

Allard: Indirectly, it does have an impact. It makes America safer and potentially less apt to have problems with terrorism. It's all tied in with what the U.S. is doing in Iraq and in trying to eliminate terrorism throughout the world. We have to be able to manage international

criminals when they emerge. If they can behave themselves and respect the sovereignty of other countries and they don't try to export terrorism, they can join the rest of the world and maintain peace. That indirectly helps everyone, not only Americans, but worldwide.

Musgrave: It impacts all of us in that the nation has been engaged in this conflict. The capture of Saddam is an encouragement to all of us and proves wrong the naysayers who believed we should have gotten out earlier.

Bookin-Weiner: We all should be happy, but in terms of a real impact on our lives, it doesn't have much. For all practical purposes, Saddam has been out of the picture since April.

Does Saddam's capture do anything to lessen the threat of terrorism in the Middle East and the world, or is Osama bin Laden still the top threat?

Allard: Terrorist groups are

still out there. Saddam was more of a symbol to the terrorist community that there was hope in Iraq. With Saddam's capture, the symbol of hope is less. But terrorist organizations continue to persist. We will be dealing with terrorist acts for some time, including in the U.S.

Musgrave: This will demoralize the terrorists. In their gut, they know there are consequences when they harm U.S. citizens or cooperate with other terrorists who harm U.S. citizens.

The fact that Saddam could see his palaces from where he was hiding is a good picture of what happens when the military comes in, to take care of business. He was captured looking bewildered and filthy. He was just like a dog in hiding.

Bookin-Weiner: Osama bin Laden has been the top threat all along. Personally, I think this has been a diversion from the main job. But finding bin Laden will likely be a lot tougher than finding Saddam Hussein.

Does the capture portend a more rapid end to U.S. involvement in Iraq?

Allard: It speeds up the democratization of Iraq, and in that way it could get people home quicker. As long as Saddam was free, there were people in Iraq who didn't want to step out and be proactive in the democratization efforts because they were afraid of being a target if he were to come back. This could help Iraq move the democracy that much faster and get troops home faster.

Musgrave: It's a huge step in the Iraqi people's ability to govern themselves and establish a nation.

Bookin-Weiner: Probably not. Saddam's capture was inevitable eventually. But the critical issues haven't changed with his capture. It's a fairly minor piece of the puzzle. The issues are still working out how various interests in Iraq will be balanced. They were balanced for the last 30 years by fear. Balancing them by a set of compromis-

es will be more difficult.

Does this capture help George Bush's re-election efforts and hurt the Democratic challengers seeking the presidential nomination in 2004?

Allard: The president has been doing very well. I don't think it helps him as much as it hurts his opponents, especially those who used Saddam as a symbol of failure of Bush's foreign policy. Now that Saddam is captured, it puts them in a position where they have to admit that it was a success.

Musgrave: It could give the president a well-deserved boost for having the tenacity to hang in with this effort and supporting the troops.

Bookin-Weiner: I doubt it will help his re-election. The story will have a relatively short half-life. If it happened next October, it would have been a different story. It also depends on what the U.S. gets from its interrogation of Saddam.