

Jews from Iraq voice support for war

BOSTON (AP) - Despite their complex heritage, Iraqi Jews who live in the United States say there's little conflict in their feelings about the Persian Gulf war.

"There is a very strong feeling of support for the United States and Israel," said David Sheena, a 46-year-old Jew raised in Baghdad.

"Our feeling toward Iraq is a cultural one. There has never been feeling for the government or the particular landlord of the time."

Fred Ezekiel, 61, also a native of Baghdad, refers to himself as "a Babylonian Jew" in reference to the region's ancient name. While dismayed by the bombing of his homeland, he called it justified by the aggression of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

"I'm proud to be an American and

that we have taken the initiative to drive him out," he said.

Salim Mahlab, born in Kuwait and raised in Iraq, agreed.

"The war was inevitable," he said. "This man (Saddam) is obsessed. After Kuwait, what? Syria? Israel? Saudi Arabia?"

All asked not to be identified by hometown because of concerns about terrorism.

Iraqi Jews are among Judaism's Sephardic branch, which developed separately from the Ashkenazim of central and eastern Europe.

They are credited with developing some key religious institutions, such as synagogues and the Babylonian Talmud — the code of religious and civil laws.

Mahlab, an officer in the American Sephardic Federation, estimated

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*Sheena
a Jew raised in Baghdad*

that 4,000 to 5,000 Iraqi-born Jews live in the New York City area, while about 100 settled in New England. Smaller concentrations live in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Kansas City, Chicago and elsewhere.

About 1,000 Jews remain in Iraq, including an estimated 600 in Baghdad. As far as is known, they have not been harassed during the current hostili-

ties. "They seem to be left alone and, in fact, are under the direct protection of Saddam Hussein himself," said Norman Stillman, author of the just-published book, "Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times."

That arrangement is less peculiar than it sounds, said Stillman, a professor at the State University of New York at Binghamton.

"There are so few left they don't really pose much of a problem," he said. In addition, "there is honor among thieves and the idea of protecting this small community has appeal for him."

Historians said Jews have lived in what is now Iraq for more than 2,500 years. They were carried into exile there by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar after he conquered Jerusalem, and survived invasions by

Greece, the Moslems and the Ottoman empire.

Despite being "politically second-class," Jews lived relatively peacefully in Iraq for centuries, Sheena said.

"They were under more enlightened rulers than the Jews in Eastern Europe," he said.

By 1940, their population had swelled to nearly 250,000. Those who lived in Baghdad recall the city on the Tigris River as a blend of 20th century commerce and ancient ways.

After 1948 and more stringent laws, many fled to Israel, the United States or England, often finding their assets frozen as they left Iraq. Up to 120,000 departed in 1950 and 1951 alone, Stillman said.

Recruiters: mixed results since start of war

By The Associated Press

Military recruiters in Nebraska are reporting mixed results since the Jan. 16 outbreak of the Persian Gulf war.

The U.S. Marine Corps Recruiting Station in Omaha brought in 65 active-duty and reserve recruits last month from a four-state area, said Maj. Nick A. Sottler, commander of the station. The recruitment goal was 36.

Sottler summed up many recruits' attitudes this way:

"Doggone it, I want a piece of this war. Let me go over there and take care of it."

14 listed as dead on memorial wall living to see it

WASHINGTON (AP) - Fourteen Americans can visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and find their names carved in black granite among those who died in the war.

"It was kind of scary," said Eugene J. Toni, who lost part of both legs in Vietnam. "It's like seeing your name on a gravestone."

Toni's name is there because a government clerk typed a wrong number into a computer. All 14 computer records have been corrected, but the names can never be erased from the polished granite.

"It's a very sobering thing," said former Spec. 4 Andrew J. Hilden, who found his name in 1987. "But I guess we have been able to laugh about it — that we've got a walking dead man around."

There are 58,175 names of dead and missing carved on the V-shaped wall. The fact that it lists 14 living Army veterans as dead was buried in computerized Defense Department records at the National Archives. Only three of those errors have been publicly acknowledged before — four years ago.

Four of the 14 were located by The Associated Press.

Toni's journey to the wall began on an October morning in 1970 when he tripped a land mine on a reconnaissance patrol for the 101st Airborne in mountainous jungle west of Hue.

Twenty years later, the 41-year-old former Army sergeant said: "I woke up one day and decided I didn't want to be a double amputee any more . . . I felt like a prisoner who wasn't getting any time off for good behavior."

He sought treatment for post-traumatic stress syndrome and "part of the treatment was that I went down to the wall" — just across the Potomac River from his Virginia home.

Standing under a nearly full moon on a mild night last March, he flipped through the paperback directory of names on the wall, looking for friends. He turned to the T's in a long-shot search for an uncle he never met.

Instead, he found his own name.

He and his wife, Nancy, walked down to panel W7, counted to line 121.

"I showed her the name and then we both looked at each other like we couldn't believe it."

Army officials said the number of active duty recruits was down slightly. Recruiters from the Nebraska National Guard said their enlistments were down, especially for the Army Guard.

A recruiter at Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue said Air Force reserve enlistments had increased since the beginning of Operation Desert Storm, the U.S.-led effort to drive Iraq's occupation forces from Kuwait.

"Once we went to Desert Storm, my recruiting went up significantly," said Tech Sgt. Dave Oman.

Nebraska Navy recruiters referred questions to the U.S. Naval Recruiting Force in New Orleans. An official there said that nationally the Navy was hitting its recruitment goals.

Most recruiters provided few numbers on enlistments. They said those who are joining now include high school seniors, recent high school graduates, college students and some former members of the military.

The recruiters said they had not noticed any decline in interest among women considering the military.

"We haven't seen any change in

our demographics as far as the percentage of women that we would normally expect to come in," said Barbara Sorensen, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Army Recruiting Command at Fort Sheridan, Ill.

Nationally, the Army exceeded its recruiting goals by 1,200 from October through December, Sorensen said.

"Our recruiting is down somewhat," although a number of individual recruiting stations are achieving or exceeding their recruitment goals, said Bob Vrana, a spokesman for the Army Recruiting Battalion in Omaha.

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