

Kuwaitis quietly plan for return to devastated h

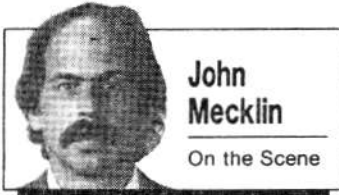
DHAHRAN, Saudi Arabia — While coalition military commanders deal with what is, others here are preparing for what they hope will be.

With most attention focused on an expected ground campaign against Iraqi forces, Kuwaiti exiles and other governments are quietly planning post-war Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti government-in-exile has been active in presenting the case against Iraq since the Aug. 2 invasion of its country. That effort continues. Free Kuwait bumper stickers are omnipresent in eastern Saudi Arabia. Kuwaiti Ministry of Information offices and booths disseminate free of charge a variety of posters and literature condemning the Iraqi invasion.

The literature varies in its subtlety — one bumper sticker simply states: "Hussein??? Insane" — but it all focuses on a theme of return.

At the Kuwaiti Information Office in Dhahran, the displays are meant to tug at heartstrings, and they do:



John Mecklin

On the Scene

□ "Welcome to KIO. Till we meet again in Kuwait."

□ "Kuwait: Small, but not alone."

□ On one poster, a hand giving a V for victory sign thrusts from a map of Kuwait. "Together to Free Kuwait," the poster states.

□ Another poster is dominated by a picture of a small girl, obviously distressed, giving the same sign. "How do you explain. . . . Her country has been invaded, her schoolyard destroyed, her classmates killed and her parents taken away all in one day.

"You don't. You just stop it. SAVE KUWAIT."

This information effort — some might call it propaganda — is now accompanied by planning for the actualities of returning to a devastated Kuwait freed from Iraqi control.

Weed Al-Walaity, a spokesman for the Kuwait Ministry of Information, said a current concern is dealing with massive media interest in visiting Kuwait if or when it is retaken. More than 700 journalists have applied to visit Kuwait City in the immediate aftermath of the war.

"First, our duty is to all the media, to prepare for them the satellites, the phones, the hotels, everything

they need after the liberation of Kuwait," Al-Walaity said.

At the same time, he said, an association of Kuwaiti government ministries has set up offices in the United States, England and Egypt. The various ministries are beginning to explore reconstruction contracts that some published reports suggest could cost \$60 billion or more, depending on the course of the war, Al-Walaity said.

Kuwaiti exiles also are beginning to make preparations to return to their homeland, another Kuwait information spokesman said. Because of the damage done to Kuwait and the number of exiles — there are an estimated 15,000 exiles living in large apartment blocks in this area — those preparations may be premature, the spokesman said.

When it is time to return, there will be little in the way of festivities, Al-Walaity said.

"I don't think it will be a celebration. We didn't get anything new to have a celebration (about). We lost a right, and now we get it back," he said.

U.S. military forces also are preparing to help put Kuwait back on its feet. Army Staff Sgt. Patricia Alston of Chicago said she is part of a civil affairs brigade

assigned to aid the Kuwaiti government, she said. Included in the brigade is a civil affairs officer. "Basically, we're going to move out when the Kuwaiti government returns," Sgt. Alston said. "We're going to do anything else (about) Kuwait." Alston said she will remain in Kuwait, but not in the Kuwaiti presence. "It all depends on what happens into play," she said.

Longer-term efforts to help Kuwait fall to the Kuwaiti government, a spokesman for the Kuwaiti government in Dhahran said his office is not giving specific instructions to the Kuwaiti government to help

rebuild Kuwait. "The whole Arab world is here?" he asked.

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assigned to aid the Kuwaiti government as requested. Included in the brigade are engineers and specialists in government, she said.

"Basically, we've just been preparing ourselves to move out when the time comes," Alston said.

"We're going to be helping them rebuild their government," Sgt. Rose Kirk of Philadelphia said. "Anything else (about it) is going to be classified."

Alston said she cannot tell how long her unit would remain in Kuwait, but she does not expect a lengthy presence. "It all depends on where and how we come into play," she said.

Longer-term efforts to rebuild Kuwait will probably fall to the Kuwaitis themselves and other Arab nations. A spokesman for the Saudi Information Ministry in Dhahran said his attention has been focused on the war, and he and others in the ministry were unable to give specific instances Wednesday of planning by his government to help restore Kuwait.

That help, however, will come, the spokesman said. "The whole Arab world, the whole world, will help rebuild Kuwait. If they did not care, why are they all here?" he asked.