

Faculty Forum Addresses Crisis in the Persian Gulf

Success or failure of U.S. policy in the Middle East crisis hinges on the resolve of the American people, according to former U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

Rusk, now Sibley Professor of International Law, joined Woodruff Professor Louis B. Sohn and Kirbo Professor Gabriel M. Wilner at a faculty forum titled "International Law and the Crisis in the Persian Gulf." The forum, September 5, was sponsored by the Georgia Society of International and Comparative Law.

"Experience has shown, the longer...it takes, the less will be the support of the American people," Rusk told a near-capacity audience of law students, faculty, and university colleagues in the law school auditorium.

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endurance, although it may last quite a while," said Rusk, who presided over U.S. foreign policy during the Vietnam war as secretary of state under presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

Rusk said an ebb in Americans' support for the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia could force President Bush to increase pressure on Iraq beyond the economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations.

"If he (Bush) feels public support is waning, then he may have to decide to do more out there, rather than less. And that could create a danger not only for the American hostages, but for American fighting personnel," Rusk said.

"The president has a judgment to make as to how long public opinion will support the presence of so many American forces in so dangerous a situation," he said.

Rusk said the United Nations should "strengthen more the multilateral



Professors Sohn, Rusk, and Wilner discuss international law and the Persian Gulf crisis.

characteristic" of the forces that now defend the Saudi border from the Iraqi troops occupying Kuwait.

"We need partners," he said. "The American people can do a lot with other people, but there's a limit to what we will do alone."

Rusk said U.N. economic sanctions "would take a long time" to pressure Iraq into removing its troops from Kuwait.

"I don't think the leader in Baghdad will yield quickly and gracefully to the operations of the U.N. Security Council resolutions. He will fight them out to the end," he said.

But he said the sanctions are the most palatable of the options available to world leaders. The crisis with Iraq "is relatively easy to get in,...but getting out is a more difficult problem," he said.

If the crisis escalates and becomes a war, the United States "might possibly be successful from a military point of view, but Baghdad has the potential to maintain hostilities for years on end, as it did in Iran," Rusk said.

Professor Wilner warned the annexation of Kuwait marks the beginning of efforts by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to unify the Arab world. This effort has led him to make peace with Iran and to intimidate the regimes of other Arab nations, creating a "situation

fraught with physical danger, particularly for the United States and its troops," he said.

"A military solution might be one which would avert greater tragedies in the future," Wilner said. "But," he added, "the resource of Iraq is its army. We're left with that even if they withdraw (from Kuwait)."

Professor Sohn, who as a young Harvard Law School professor helped lay the groundwork for the United Nations charter, said the members of

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the U.N. Security Council should present a strong, unified show of military force.

"The only thing to do is test the Iraqis, to do something to scare them," he said.

Sohn said military pressure should be combined with diplomatic assurance to Iraq that it could resolve in an international court its disputes with Kuwait over boundaries and access to seaports.

"That is a concession you probably would have to make to Iraq over Kuwait's objection," he said.