Anti-war protests group protest War in the Gulf

By Brian Rosenberg

The American involvement in the Persian Gulf crisis and subsequent war sparked a series of anti-war protests in Boston and at MIT. The protest activities included a rally in Boston Common on Dec. 1 and a week of anti-war activities at MIT that featured a speech by the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Approximately 40 members of the MIT community responded to a call from the MIT Initiative for Peace in the Middle East to assemble outside Lobby 5 at 12:30 pt. on Dec. 5. According to Pen S. Loh '90, a member of the initiative's steering committee, the MIT group included students, faculty and staff members.

"We got about twice as many as we expected," he said.

The MIT contingent met a swelling crowd at Copley Square in Boston's Back Bay. The rally's organizers said they only expected 4000 to 5000 people to show up, but by the time the group marched to Boston Common, the number had reached 10,000, according to police estimates.

In addition to the protest marchers at the Common was Daniel Ellis Berg, the former Defense and State Department official who released the Pentagon Papers to the world in 1971. Berg said the United States "must be fully prepared for a military option."

The military escalation in the Persian Gulf has been "driven by ego needs and political needs...not national security needs," he said.

Jackson, a former presidential candidate, felt the Bush administration was acting hypocritically in endorsing UN Security Council resolutions against Iraq while ignoring many previous resolutions and failing to pay "back dues," which he said now amount to $600 million.

Jackson's address went beyond the situation in the Persian Gulf. His call for a change in national opinion on war and defense, "MIT," he said, "do the world a favor...stupid war no more."

When there is no hope left, we fight to defend our individuality and lack of vision," he said.

Reminding the crowd that the UN deadline coincided with what would have been the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 62nd birthday, Jackson asked the crowd to re-examine King's message of non-violence and social justice. "Justice and peace are indescribable," he said.

To accommodate the many people who could not fit into Kresge, Jackson's speech was read aloud.

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Introduction

Today marks the beginning of the 111th year of publication of The Tech. We introduce the new volume with a look back at the major issues and events of 1990 in the sixth annual Year in Review Supplement.

Both within and outside the MIT community, the events of 1990 were so vividly defined that it seems impossible to focus on those events and anticipate what will happen in 1991.

The search for a new president dominated much of MIT life in 1990. As President Charles M. Vest begins to make his mark on the Institute, the period of transition continues with the appointment of new deans and administrators.

Early last year, the MIT Coalition Against Apartheid rescinded the issue of divestment from South Africa and sponsored protest efforts throughout the spring semester. But MIT's anti-war activities were protesting the more impending events in the Persian Gulf. America's involvement in the gulf crisis drew fire from activists throughout the country as 1990 drew to a close.

But MIT's anti-war activities led on campus by the MIT Initiative for Peace in the Middle East failed to gain the type of support required to prevent military engagement.

When the Navy disbanded Robert L. Bertker '90 from the Reserve Officers' Training Corps for being gay, members of the MIT community rallied in an attempt to reconsider the Department of Defense policy barring gays from the military and its policy of non-discrimination. Despite MIT's strong ties with the DOD, the response from most quarters was that the Institute should cut its ties with ROTC if the DOD does not reverse its policy.

Across the country in 1990, faculty members and administrators grappled with the issue of sexual and verbal harassment on campus.

The year was not without its startling singular events: A dormitory resident was charged with burning his own suite, one undergraduate died in an LSD-related fall, two reported date rapes, and the national organization of the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity discharged all but 10 members of its MIT chapter.

This supplement examines the issues that shaped life at MIT in the past year and attempts to determine which ones will remain at the forefront of the MIT community in 1991.

Andrea Lamberti