

Letters to the Editor

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The wrong incentive system

by Sarah Gwilliam

The article "Envoys lured to Baghdad with promise of prime spots" (Page 1, Friday) outlines a new State Department policy that is counterproductive to U.S. objectives. The new program offers midlevel diplomats a "prime" job location, mainly in Europe, following a term in Baghdad. Diplomats who work for a year solely for incentive are not what Iraq or the U.S. needs.

This program wastes government training on political officers who do not have the passion or understanding to be effective. It is impossible for anything to be accomplished in Iraq if the "in-and-out" diplomatic men and women we place there simply use our tax dollars to momentarily meet requirements for their own benefit. This creates a group of self-serving diplomats biding their time in Iraq in order to enjoy their time elsewhere. While our troops' combat tours are being extended, diplomats enjoy short and luxurious terms, only to be further rewarded.

Both Iraq and our selfless troops need a stable community of constant and consistent American diplomatic support. In "The Art of War," Sun Tzu emphasizes the importance of knowledgeable leadership, something the State Department is overlooking.

This strategy puts a short-term quick fix over a long-term goal. The need for diplomats does exist, but for optimal success, we need altruistic and understanding officers to match the commitment and determination of our servicemen and -women.

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