

Ham radio buffs keep in touch over war

Often names not exchanged

By Terry Anderson

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Tom Ciha knows the Persian Gulf war is on the minds of Russians, Brazilians and Iranians. They told him so Thursday.

Ciha, a ham radio operator, said war is a hot conversation topic for the thousands of amateur radio buffs talking to each other.

For example, a man in Iran said he worried poison gas could drift over his country if Iraq used it on Saudi Arabia.

"I learned about a bombing in Ecuador from a guy in Brazil," said Ciha. "I came on the air and he was talking about sabotage."

Ciha said foreign operators don't always exchange names and are conscious that too much information can bring government wrath.

"I don't want to ask the guy questions that could get him shot," said Ciha. "The guy has a right to have a radio but there may be someone listening who isn't so supportive."

Rudy Sieloff of Athelstane, a retired Marine sergeant, said he was talking before the war broke out with a Jordanian banker who fretted that Saddam Hussein was a dangerous, unpredictable leader.

"The night of the attack I was listening to Armed Forces Radio. They were making sure the Iraqis knew what we were up to," he said.

Besides talking with other hams, amateur operators can listen to shortwave broadcasts. Among those from the Middle East:

- Radio Baghdad, beginning at 3 p.m. CST on 13660 kilohertz.

- Iraq's Voice of Peace, from about 3 to 5 p.m. CST, 11860 kHz;

- Kol Israel, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. CST, 11605 kHz, 9435 kHz and 7465 kHz

- Radio Damascus, from about 2 to 4 p.m. CST, 12085 and 9950 kHz.

Ciha said he had a lengthy, friendly conversation a Soviet ham operator Vic, who lives in the Sakhalin Islands north of Japan. Ciha was surprised at the unusual friendliness of the man but then remembered that this is the first time in nearly 50 years the United States and Soviets are side by side on an international issue.