



Kurt Ellison

Linda Child, left, and her daughter, Miesje, hug at a candlelight peace vigil at Aromas town square last night, which was attended by about 35 people.

War protesters halt freeway traffic in SC

By BOB SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Thousands of anti-war protesters, outraged at the U.S. bombing of Iraq, shut down Highway 17 last night at the tail-end of the rush-hour commute.

The demonstrators, many of them from the UC-Santa Cruz campus, gathered in downtown Santa Cruz shortly after the first Iraqi targets were bombed last night, finally marching up Ocean Street and onto Highway 17.

This morning, despite calls made last night for another freeway blockade during the morning commute, the streets of Santa Cruz were quiet.

UCSC campus spokesman Tom O'Leary said students were planning a 3:30 p.m. march and rally at the County Governmental Center. That could affect the homeward-bound commute, officials said.

UCSC Chancellor Robert Stevens had asked that classes remain in session today so students could attend them if they wished. A recently formed student group — The Coalition Against War — has called for a shutdown of the campus. Teach-ins on the war as well as civil disobedience training sessions were being held on the campus today.

A campus spokeswoman said the university did not know this morning how many students attended classes.

"The boycott was voluntary and

it is difficult to gauge how successful it was," she said.

Santa Cruz city streets shortly after dawn were nearly empty, with only a few pedestrians there to witness a blood-red sunrise in the east.

The old Ford's Department Store site on Santa Cruz's Pacific Garden Mall, where a rally was held last night, was deserted this morning. Santa Cruz city street crews were sweeping the last of the debris from the previous night's protests.

A half-dozen or more California Highway Patrol and Santa Cruz County sheriff's cars were parked along Highway 17 at the fishhook and on the Pasatiempo overpass, waiting for another demonstration to materialize.

This morning's commute went without incident, Highway Patrol area commander Capt. Steve Ellis said this morning.

Later in the morning, a group of junior high school students marched down Water Street past the County Governmental Center toward downtown Santa Cruz, shouting "peace, not war."

Last night was a different story, however.

Badly outnumbered Highway Patrol officers, Santa Cruz city police officers and other police officers were forced to shut down both Highway 17 and Highway 1 for more than an hour.

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"We got estimates of 3,000 students that came out of UCSC last night," Ellis said. "We had 30 cops. We were outnumbered and they took Highway 17 up to Pasatiempo."

On the whole, Ellis said, the crowd was "pretty reasonable." Only a couple of hundred made it as far north as Pasatiempo, he said. The demonstrators started to dissipate after highway patrol officers brought in a mobile television van so spokesmen could air their views on the war.

Ellis vowed this morning to try to keep the freeways open.

"Americans have a right to demonstrate," he said, "but they also have the right to go to work."

Capitola police this morning were suited up in their riot gear and ready for a demonstration outside the Armed Forces Recruiting Center in an office complex at Capitola Road and 45th Avenue.

Several hundred protesters marched through the Capitola Mall shortly after 11 o'clock this morning, halting traffic on 41st Avenue before moving toward the Highway 1 interchange.

The parking lot serving the Armed Forces center as well as the California State Automobile Association and several other businesses was sealed off this morning.

At 10 a.m., about 50 protesters began gathering a few blocks away at Jade Street Park and told reporters they planned to march to the recruiting office.

The recruiting station was closed, however, with Army recruiters moving their operations to the Salinas recruiting office for the day.

The outside of the redwood-sided office building housing the recruiting station bore obscenities spray-painted there several nights ago, denouncing the U.S. military establishment.

The scene last night on Santa Cruz's Pacific Garden Mall following the freeway blockade was reminiscent of the anti-Vietnam War protests of the late '60s and early '70s.

The crowd, numbering several hundred, was a mixture of high school and university students. Some carried placards calling for President Bush's impeachment and denouncing the war.

Lights from mobile television vans lit the parking lot as reporters prepared for live broadcasts on their 11 p.m. news segments.

Speaker after speaker, drawn to an "open microphone" set up on a stage in the parking lot, called for an end to the bombing.

They ranged from a 14-year-old high school girl who said she tried to organize a protest yesterday morning on Highway 68 outside Monterey to some of Santa Cruz's homeless street people and Vie-

tnam-era protesters.

While they spoke, some of the audience sat or stood quietly, holding burning candles.

Others congregated a dozen yards or so away in a party atmosphere, dancing to rock music. A vendor circulated through the crowd hawking cookies while others passed out leaflets and solicited signatures on anti-war petitions.

Santa Cruz police officers in cars drove through the area frequently and some officers watched the crowd from across the street.

In Watsonville, a group of about 75 anti-war demonstrators gathered at the Plaza yesterday afternoon just after U.S. aircraft attacked Iraq, and many said they will return every day until the war ends.

The demonstrators lined Main Street in front of the Plaza, carrying anti-war signs and holding candles. Many of the cars passing by honked their horns in approval.

A group calling itself the Watsonville Peace Coalition organized the demonstration. Maria Corralejo, a spokeswoman for the group, said the coalition will have people lined up along same strip Monday through Friday between noon and 1 p.m. and between 5 and about 8 p.m. The demonstration will continue on weekends, with people lining the street from 5 to 8 p.m.

Corralejo said the coalition was formed after a prayer vigil Monday night at the Plaza. The vigil attracted about 400 people.

After the vigil, Corralejo and several community leaders met and decided to continue the vigil every day until the fighting stops and a peaceful resolution is reached in the Middle East.

At that meeting, the coalition called for an end to the war, withdrawal of both American and Iraqi troops from Kuwait, immediate negotiations between the two sides, and an international conference on the Middle East crisis.

The group also plans to start a counseling service for draft-eligible men and their families. Corralejo said a committee will be set up to structure classes on the draft for students in high schools.

"They don't have to be afraid to say no to the draft," Corralejo said.

The group is discussing the possibility of staging a demonstration at a local military recruiting office.

A Church Asylum committee will be formed to research possibilities to offer sanctuary to those who consider themselves conscientious objectors.

Corralejo said she expected fighting to break out after the Jan. 15 deadline, but news of the U.S. attack still had an intense emotional effect on her and the rest of coalition members.

"It hit everybody hard," she said. "It was a shock."

Staff writers Lane Wallace and Emilio Alvarado contributed to this report.