

# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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**OPINION**

## An Invitation Out Of Afghanistan?

What are we still doing in Afghanistan? That's not intended to be a statement masked as a rhetorical question. We went into that nation back in 2001 for a reason; we have been waging war there for 13 1/2 years for several reasons; and there are still a few compelling reasons to stay, just as there are compelling reasons to leave.

But at what point do we reach the conclusion our services are no longer wanted — and thus, our presence unneeded?

Recently, President Obama told Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, our sometime-ally who is increasingly becoming a full-time nuisance, that the U.S. is pondering a "zero option" after we are scheduled to pull out the last of our combat troops at the end of this year. That is, Washington's plans to leave a residual security force in Afghanistan once the combat troops have left may be scrapped, leaving Karzai and his nation to their own resources in dealing with the Taliban and survival in general.

The reasons for flirting with the zero option are actually numerous, but the main point now is that Karzai has refused to endorse a security agreement between the two nations. The agreement would provide what *Time* magazine described as "critical protections and authorities" for U.S. personnel who remain behind after the combat forces leave. It would also give the U.S. the ability to ensure that the funds it sends to Afghanistan get to where they are going.

Karzai has grown into a real headache for the U.S., often being openly critical of America's presence and undertaking moves that seem calculated to thumb his nose at Washington. Karzai's recent release of 65 suspected Taliban fighters sent an interesting message, given that it's Karzai's government that replaced the Taliban, which was deposed by the U.S. and NATO more than a decade ago.

So, after so many years of fighting and dying in Afghanistan, perhaps this serves as a real strong hint.

An argument could be made that our reason for even being in Afghanistan anymore has long since left the building. When Osama bin Laden was killed in neighboring Pakistan three years ago, that could have served as the ideal excuse to come home. And few Americans would have argued with it.

Few would argue against it now. Yes, the re-emergence of the Taliban is a concern, but at some point, the Afghanistan government has to take the point on this. It doesn't have to go it alone, certainly, and Washington and the other NATO powers would provide resources to bolster the cause.

But this is where Karzai, a man who was once hailed as a hero in this nation, has become a problem, or perhaps a reckless card player overplaying a suspect hand.

Karzai's actions are not necessarily reflective of the Afghanistan people. The *Washington Post* reported recently that Afghan soldiers are "desperate" for Karzai to sign the security pact that would assure that international forces stay. Afghan military personnel have even taken the rare step of voicing their concerns in that nation's media. Also, an unnamed Pakistani official predicted that a total U.S. withdrawal would lead to 30 percent of the Afghan army deserting and to the nation plunging into civil war.

But Karzai's actions officially speak volumes, and maybe that will be enough for the U.S. to completely cut ties on the longest war in its history.

We will probably come up with answers anyway and maintain a presence of some sort in Afghanistan after all. Afghanistan hold elections in April, after which Karzai will eventually be gone. It appears some of those running for office in April want the security deal signed to ensure America's commitment.

But nothing is certain, and perhaps what we are seeing is an invitation out of a messy little war. It looks more inviting with each passing day.

knh

**ON THIS DATE**

**By The Associated Press**  
Today is Tuesday, March 11, the 70th day of 2014. There are 295 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On March 11, 1954, the U.S. Army charged that Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, R-Wis., and his subcommittee's chief counsel, Roy Cohn, had exerted pressure to obtain favored treatment for Pvt. G. David Schine, a former consultant to the subcommittee. (The confrontation culminated in the famous Senate Army-McCarthy hearings.)

**On this date:** In 1861, the Constitution of the Confederate States of America was adopted by the Confederate Congress in Montgomery, Ala.

In 1864, during the Civil War, the Union Army Ambulance Corps was established by the U.S. Congress. Dr. Mary Edwards Walker was appointed an assistant surgeon of the 52nd Ohio Infantry Regiment, the first woman assigned to such a post.

In 1888, the Blizzard of '88, also known as the "Great White Hurricane," began inundating the northeastern United States, resulting in some 400 deaths.

In 1930, former President and Chief Justice William Howard Taft was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

In 1942, as Japanese forces continued to advance in the Pacific during World War II, Gen. Douglas MacArthur left the Philippines for Australia. (MacArthur, who subsequently vowed, "I shall return," kept that promise more than 2 1/2 years later.)

In 1959, the Lorraine Hansberry drama "A Raisin in the Sun" opened at New York's Ethel Barrymore Theater.

In 1964, at the 21st Golden Globe Awards, "The Cardinal" was named best film drama of 1963 while "Tom Jones" won for best film musical or comedy.

In 1977, more than 130 hostages held in Washington, D.C. by Hanafi Muslims were freed after ambassadors from three Islamic nations joined the negotiations.

In 1989, the reality TV show "COPS" premiered on the Fox Network.

In 1993, Janet Reno was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to be attorney general.

In 2011, a magnitude-9.0 earthquake and resulting tsunami struck Japan's northeastern coast, killing nearly 20,000 people and severely damaging the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station.

In 2012, sixteen Afghan villagers

— mostly women and children — were shot dead as they slept by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales, who later pleaded guilty and was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

**Ten years ago:** Ten bombs exploded in quick succession across the commuter rail network in Madrid, Spain, killing 191 people and wounding more than 2,000 in an attack linked to al-Qaida-inspired militants.

**Five years ago:** President Barack Obama signed a \$410 billion spending package to keep the government running through Sept. 2009, even as he called it "imperfect" because of the number of earmarks it contained. A teenager, Tim Kretschmer, went on a shooting rampage starting at a school in Winnenden, Germany, killing 15 people before committing suicide.

**One year ago:** Former Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, a Democrat, was convicted of a raft of crimes, including racketeering conspiracy (he was later sentenced to 28 years in prison). North Korea said it was no longer bound by the 1953 armistice that ended the Korean War, following days of increased tensions over its latest nuclear test.

**Today's Birthdays:** Media mogul Rupert Murdoch is 83. ABC News correspondent Sam Donaldson is 80. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia is 78. Musician Flaco Jimenez is 75. Actress Tricia O'Neil is 69. Actor Mark Metcalf is 68. Rock singer-musician Mark Stein (Vanilla Fudge) is 67. Singer Bobby McFerrin is 64. Movie director Jerry Zucker is 64. Actress Susan Richardson is 62. Recording executive Jimmy Iovine is 61. Singer Nina Hagen is 59. Country singer Jimmy Fortune (The Statler Brothers) is 59. Singer Cheryl Lynn is 57. Actor Elias Koteas is 53. Actor-director Peter Berg is 52. Actor Jeffrey Nordling is 52. Actress Alex Kingston is 51. Country musician David Talbot is 51. Actor Wallace Langham is 49. Former U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill., is 49. Actor John Barrowman is 47. Singer Lisa Loeb is 46. Singer Pete Dinklage is 45. Actor Terrence Howard is 45. Rock musician Rami Jaffee is 45. Actor Johnny Knoxville is 43. Rock singer-musicians Benji and Joel Madden (Good Charlotte) are 35. Actor David Anders is 33. Singer LeToya is 33. Actress Thora Birch is 32. TV personality Melissa Rycroft is 31. Actor Rob Brown is 30. Actor Anton Yelchin is 25.

**Thought for Today:** "Real success is finding your lifework in the work that you love." — David McCullough, American historian.



THIS WOULD BE EASIER IF OUR "MORAL HIGH GROUND" WASN'T SHAPED LIKE IRAQ...

Pierre Report | Tom Jones

## Action Heats Up As Session Nears End

BY SEN. TOM JONES  
D-District 17 (Viborg)

Monday morning, the Senate Appropriations Committee acted or deferred action on seven bills. These were not many in number, but large in total dollars.

HB 1111 passed 8-0 for the new veteran's home to be constructed in Hot Springs. The total was \$41 million with \$16.3 from our General Fund. The construction of a swine research and teaching facility at SDSU passed 9-0 with \$2 million from General Funds.

Only \$1 was appropriated to purchase a building that is in excellent condition from another entity for Black Hills State University. A "dam" maintenance bill was passed to extend \$500,000 for 2 more years to School and Public Lands. This amount was appropriated last year and not much of it has been spent.

HB 1113 gave property tax refunds to qualified elderly and persons with a disability.

Two other bills were deferred until a later date.

In the afternoon, the full Senate was more active. Sixteen bills were passed and now wait for the governor's signature. Only one bill had any controversy. HB 1069 revised the maximum redemption fee for property tax deeds that counties could charge. The original bill was to change the maximum fee from \$200 to \$500. It was amended to \$300 instead of \$500 and passed narrowly 18-17. I voted against the amendment, but voted for the bill as amended.

Tuesday morning, the Joint Appropriations Committee listened to a presentation from the Lewis and Clark Water System. There are 20 members and currently only 11 members are connected. Centerville and Parker are two of the 11 communities that have joined. The entire project is only 65 percent completed and is 6 years behind schedule. The reason for this delay is the lack of Federal funding that was committed when this project was begun. The commitment percentages are 80 percent from the Feds, 10 percent from each state (South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa), and 10 percent from the 20 members. The total price of the water system is \$573 million; \$370 million has been spent to date.

Seventeen bills were acted upon during Tuesday's Senate session. HB 1123 was an act to allow alcoholic beverages to be sold in certain on-sale licensees 24 hours a day in Deadwood. The bill failed 15-20 and I did vote for it. HB 1078 was to revise the eligibility requirements for the South Dakota Opportunity Scholarship to include certain students who reside in bordering states. This bill had a lot of debate, considering that only nine or so students would be affected this year. The students live at home in another state but attend

**YOUR LETTERS**

**What A Treasure!**

Dagmar Hoxsie, Yankton  
*Banquet Volunteer*

Something new and shiny has appeared at the Yankton Area Banquet. It's a bright red bookcase, well-stocked with children's books. It happened thanks to the United Way and the Literacy Council.

We heard that red book shelves were appearing at different locations in Yankton and now the Banquet has one. Children can pick out a book or two or three to take home and read. They may keep them or return them to exchange for other books. Books do not have to be returned in order for a child to select new ones. The children enjoy picking out what they want to read.

As books are returned, they are placed in a big, red treasure chest. A representative from the Literacy Council regularly services the red book shelf so that returned books are made ready for other children and new books are provided. This is a great way to encourage reading and to make books available for children. Not all youngsters can visit the library regularly and having books available at the Banquet is a splendid idea.

During this winter season with bitter cold and windy days, the red book shelf came like a bright spot to the Banquet. The adults look at it and smile as the children are busy making choices. The cold weather is forgotten. The staff of the Yankton Area Banquet appreciates the United Way and Literacy Council's effort to reach out to our youngsters.



Jones

high school in South Dakota. These students score very high on the ACT and also take the proper curriculum during high school. I voted for the bill, but the bill failed 14-21 after passing in the House, 47-21.

Wednesday morning the Senate Appropriations Committee heard again seven bills that had been deferred earlier. Two bills were deferred once again, four bills were passed and one bill was killed. The bill, HB 1158, which was killed, provided medical care for certain unborn children, pertained primarily to children of illegal aliens. I believe every member of this committee agreed that this issue needed to be addressed. It was sent to the 41st day with the understanding that these children and funding will be addressed in another bill.

The bill, SB 184, to assist the South Dakota Hall of Fame financially for \$75,000 failed in the House Appropriations Committee 5-3. This is a bill I introduced that had passed the Senate Appropriations Committee 9-0 and the full Senate 25-10.

In the full Senate session in the afternoon, 16 bills or resolutions were acted upon. House Joint Resolution 1002 was to lengthen term limits for Senate and House of Representatives from four terms (two years each) to six terms (two years each). It passed the House 54-16 but failed 12-23 in the Senate. I voted against the resolution. If we had passed the bill, it would have been put to you, the voters, on this fall's ballot. A bill to make it illegal to use cameras at intersections on a red light turn passed 26-9.

Thursday morning only one bill was acted upon. We had already heard most of the testimony on HB 1175. This bill for \$1 million to expand the research center in Sioux Falls for the University of South Dakota traveled up and down the financial road. It began with \$1 million down to \$1 and finally back up to \$1 million by the Senate Appropriations Committee. It passed 8-1.

At the end of each of our two-week sessions, we honor our pages that helped us do the business of each day. This past two weeks, Seth Miller from Vermillion was one of our pages. He is truly a remarkable young man. Hopefully one day Seth will step forward and represent us in our Legislature. We all can be proud of him.

If the Governor vetoes any of our passed legislation and you have an opinion concerning a bill, please contact me at: sen.jones@state.sd.us. The day we would return to Pierre to vote on any of the governor's vetoes is March 31.

**Online Opinion**

The results of the most recent internet poll on the *Press & Dakotan's* Web site are as follows:

**LATEST RESULTS:**

Would you support the use of a Tax Increment District (TID) for the proposed Napa junction project?  
No ..... 46%  
Yes ..... 33%  
Not sure/I don't know how a TID works ..... 21%  
**TOTAL VOTES CAST ..... 284**

*The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.*

**CURRENT QUESTION:**

Do you believe terrorism may be involved in the missing Malaysia Airlines flight?  
To vote in the *Press & Dakotan's* Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.

Come, join us at the table. The Banquet is served every Thursday and the first and third Tuesday of every month from 6-7 p.m. in Pilgrim Hall of the United Church of Christ at the corner of Fifth and Walnut. We welcome all guests and offer a healthy meal, prepared and served by our many volunteer groups, as well as friendship at our tables. You will notice some kids eating and reading a good book. Good food and a good book, just what is needed on a wintery day or any day during the year.

**WRITE US**

■ Make your feelings known! Write to the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** on a topic of the day, in response to an editorial or story. Write us at: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to (605) 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

**FROM THE BIBLE**

You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 1 Peter 1:18-19 NKJV. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis