

THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

U.S. Military Eyes On Asian Pacific

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL, Memphis (May 3): Slowly and gingerly, the United States is rebuilding its military presence in the Asian Pacific, and in two cases doing so at the invitation — though cloaked in diplomatic double talk — of the Philippines and Vietnam.

In 2012, the Philippines reopened to the U.S. Navy Subic Bay, a onetime major American naval base dating to the end of the Spanish-American War. That same year Vietnam reopened the huge and largely abandoned naval base at Cam Ranh Bay with the caveat that it was to be used by U.S. noncombat vessels.

The Navy pulled out of Cam Ranh Bay at the end of the Vietnam War and was more or less forced out of Subic Bay by the Philippine government in 1991.

Meanwhile, Japan, undoubtedly with tacit U.S. approval, is abandoning a ban that has stood since the end of World War II on the export of weapons and military materiel.

The related events are, as The Associated Press put it, part of an Obama administration policy of “reasserting the U.S. role as a Pacific power after a decade of war elsewhere.” It is also a clear and growing reaction to the Chinese military buildup and China’s growing aggressiveness in asserting jurisdiction over disputed islands in the South China Sea.

The islands are largely uninhabited, but they give the possessor a claim on fishing rights and what are believed to be extensive oil and gas deposits. They are claimed not only by China but variously by Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea, Japan and Malaysia.

Speaking Monday in Manila, where he signed a 10-year agreement providing U.S. access to Philippine military bases, President Barack Obama said, “Our goal is not to counter China. . . . Our goal is to make sure international rules and norms are respected, and that includes in the area of international disputes.”

Even so, if building up an arc of military treaties and basing-rights agreements around the South China Sea has the presumably unintended consequence of countering China, no one in Washington, Tokyo, Manila, Hanoi or Seoul will be the slightest bit dismayed.

OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.
■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.
■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.
■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.
■ Only signed letters with writer’s full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press
Today is Thursday, May 8, the 128th day of 2014. There are 237 days left in the year.
Today’s Highlight in History: On May 8, 1944, the first “eye bank” designed to preserve corneal tissues for transplants was established at New York Hospital.
On this date: In 1541, Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto reached the Mississippi River.
In 1794, Antoine Lavoisier, the father of modern chemistry, was executed on the guillotine during France’s Reign of Terror.
In 1884, the 33rd president of the United States, Harry S. Truman, was born in Lamar, Mo.
In 1914, Paramount Pictures was incorporated by W.W. Hodkinson.
In 1921, Sweden’s Parliament voted to abolish the death penalty.
In 1945, President Harry S. Truman announced on radio that Nazi Germany’s forces had surrendered, and that “the flags of freedom fly all over Europe.”
In 1958, Vice President Richard Nixon was shoved, stoned, booed and spat upon by anti-American protesters in Lima, Peru.
In 1962, the musical comedy “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum” opened on Broadway.
In 1972, President Richard Nixon announced that he had ordered the mining of Haiphong Harbor during the Vietnam War.
In 1973, militant American Indians who’d held the South Dakota hamlet of Wounded Knee for ten weeks surrendered.
In 1984, the Soviet Union announced it would boycott the upcoming Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles.
In 1999, The Citadel, South Carolina’s formerly all-male military school, graduated its first female cadet, Nancy Ruth Mace. British actor Sir Dirk Bogarde died in London at age 78.
Ten years ago: Former Iraq hostage Thomas Hamill returned home to a chorus of cheering family and friends in Macon, Miss. (Hamill, a truck driver, was wounded and cap-

tured when his convoy was ambushed April 9, 2004; he escaped May 2 from a farmhouse about 50 miles north of Baghdad.)
Five years ago: White House aide Louis Caldera resigned for his role in a \$328,835 photo-op flyover by an Air Force One jet above New York City that sparked panic and flashbacks to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Dominic DiMaggio, the Boston Red Sox center fielder and brother of Joe, died in Marion, Mass., at age 92.
One year ago: A jury in Phoenix convicted Jodi Arias of first-degree murder in the 2008 death of her one-time boyfriend, Travis Alexander. George Karl was named the NBA’s Coach of the Year for leading the Denver Nuggets to a team-record 57-win regular season. An apparent game-tying homer by Oakland’s Adam Rosales was ruled a double by umpires in the ninth inning, and the Cleveland Indians held on to beat the Athletics 4-3. Jeanne Cooper, the enduring soap opera star who’d played grande dame Katherine Chancellor for nearly four decades on “The Young and the Restless,” died in Los Angeles at age 84.
Today’s Birthdays: Comedian Don Rickles is 88. Naturalist Sir David Attenborough is 88. Singer Toni Tennille is 74. Actor James Mitchum is 73. Country singer Jack Blanchard is 72. Jazz musician Keith Jarrett is 69. Singer Philip Bailey (Earth, Wind and Fire) is 63. Rock musician Chris Frantz (Talking Heads) is 63. Rockabilly singer Billy Burnette is 61. Rock musician Alex Van Halen is 61. Actor David Keith is 60. Actor Stephen Furst is 60. Actress Melissa Gilbert is 50. Rock musician Dave Rowntree (Blur) is 50. Country musician Del Gray is 46. Rock singer Darren Hayes is 42. Singer Enrique Iglesias is 39. Actor Matt Davis is 36. Singer Ana Maria Lombo (Eden’s Crush) is 36. Actor Domhnall Gleeson is 31. Actress Julia Whelan is 30.
Thought for Today: “The biggest big business in America is not steel, automobiles, or television. It is the manufacture, refinement and distribution of anxiety.” — Eric Sevareid, American news commentator (1912-1992).

FROM THE BIBLE

Now He is not God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him. Luke 20:38. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

May Day? May Day!

William J. Collen, Yankton
(Note: This letter was originally published in 2012. It is being reprinted at the request of the author.)

On May Day, I went to Yankton’s downtown area and saw American pole flags flying on public property. Why was this? In all my years on this planet I had never seen an American flag flown to honor a socialist, Nazi, communist holiday!

I then went to city hall to log a complaint. The assistant city manager said they VFW or the American Legion had put the flags up. I ask him why and I did not get an answer of any consequence.

Later I received a call from someone with the Lions Club and he said they had put them up for “Loyalty Day.” I ask him who’s loyalty? Socialists, Nazis or communists?

I ask him to take them down or if you want to fly our flag at least fly it “upside down” in the position that indicates distress or being attacked!

On May 4, 2012, I saw an American Legion person selling poppies at Walmart. I asked him if the Legion had put up American flags on May 1.

I could not believe this! What kind of fifth column do we have in the USA?

STAR TRIBUNE
SACK



An American Shrine

BY JIM VAN OSDEL
For the Press & Dakotan

Neil Bowes recently posted to Facebook a video of Norm Hilson of WNAX broadcast fame singing the Star Spangled Banner, most likely at an SDSU basketball game. He gave an excellent rendition. I posted a comment wondering in print if anyone viewing that post had visited Fort McHenry in Baltimore.

While serving as a guinea pig for Putrina Grow Pup or some other concoctions at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore the summer of ‘65, I had the opportunity to visit this military shrine. One of the patients who shared my room for a week of tests asked if I would like to visit some sights and I eagerly took him up on his offer, not knowing he owned a new red Ford Mustang.

Picture for a moment the Visitors Center at Gavin’s Point Dam. Situated high on a bluff, the Center offers a wonderful vista of our Missouri valley. One of our mother’s cousins visiting from California about 20 years ago, stood up there at the railing looking all around and just marveled, saying it was the best sight he had ever seen.

Fort McHenry was built on such a promontory overlooking Baltimore harbor, a finger of the Chesapeake Bay. During those last days of the War of 1812, the defenders of Baltimore, from their vantage point high on the fort, could see that Washington D.C., just 40 miles away to the southwest, was in flames. Well, they could see the smoke, anyway. They may, or may not have known, the White House had been torched by the British.

Then the fleet of British battleships appeared in the Baltimore Harbor bay, ready to take Fort McHenry and sack the city of Baltimore, at long last putting an end to the grand experiment of the Yankees.

History books also tell the tale of civilian defenders of Baltimore, including farmers, businessmen, wives and kids. When seasoned British marines were trying to make their way to attack Baltimore proper, they were ambushed in the sloughs by Americans wielding anything they could use as a weapon, from gun to pitch fork to carefully-honed curved scythes.

These defenders fought like the devil and scared the living daylight out of the British regulars, forcing them back to their ships.

Meanwhile, back at the fort, cannon balls, each weighing 300 pounds, were stacked in triangular piles waiting to be fired at the enemy. The balls were situated on brass triangles, called brass monkey keys, much like racking up the balls on a pool table. On occasion, a cold nor’ easter would blow in. The cold sea air was sufficient to cause the brass bases to contract causing the cannon balls to fail to gravity, rolling about the parapets of the fort,



Jim VAN OSDEL

like bowling balls. Those defenders of Fort McHenry would tell their friends “the weather was cold enough to freeze the . . .” well, you got it. Sorry, I digress — but it is a true story, you know.

As the British battleships lined up ready for battle against Fort McHenry, two man teams rolled cannonballs off the brass monkeys into curved wooden cradles. The 300-pound balls were dumped into cannon and they could be fired up to three miles away, out over the battleships — “bombs bursting in air.”

Meanwhile other defenders had already cut saplings from the sloughs around the Chesapeake. These saplings, 15 to 20-foot in length were laid in troughs of the same length made by nailing two by six inch planks together.

Rags were wrapped around the thin part of the saplings at the top of the trough and the wrappings included a combination of gun powder, fuse and a grenade device at the top. The trough was lifted up and aimed out over the parapets of the fort, the fuse was lit and a weapon invented by the Chinese a thousand years earlier sputtered forward out of the trough, into the air over the battleships. The gunpowder and grenades were set to explode, hoping to tear the sails of the battleships so they could no longer be maneuverable. These, then, provided an author with “the rockets’ red glare.”

All this had a spectacular meaning to a prisoner of war confined on the decks of a British warship. Francis Scott Key was aware his days were numbered. As the cannon of the British battleships battered the walls of Fort McHenry, he kept an eye on the giant red, white and blue banner that remained visible, until darkness, throughout the battle.

“Had the fort held its own during the dark hours of the night?” he wondered. If, indeed, it did fail, many Americans taken as prisoners of war, including Francis Scott Key, would be dealt with severely once and for all as enemies of the British Commonwealth.

He maintained his watch throughout the long night of the battle, and “at dawn’s early light” he saw the “flag was still there.” Fort McHenry and America had survived and beaten the British. And that tattered, wonderful banner is still there, enshrined at Fort McHenry, for all to see, especially British tourists.

Francis Scott Key survived his capture by the British. His notes made during the battle of Baltimore on Sept. 14, 1814 evolved into our national anthem, “The Star Spangled Banner”.

And why, so many years later, in the late 1940s and ‘50s, when the U.S. Department of Defense completed their immense office structure, did they build it in the shape of a five-pointed star, a pentagon.

Why, that is the shape of Fort McHenry.

Dispensing Death Unto Others

BY KATHLEEN PARKER
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WASHINGTON — When Lady Justice takes a court of bleeding hearts outside the execution chamber, she won’t find mine among them.

I am no passionate opponent of the death penalty. I am rather a dispassionate objector to the premise that taking another’s life, no matter how undeserving he or she may be to draw another breath, brings anything resembling justice to a society too in love with revenge.

We’ve Dirty-Harry’d ourselves into believing that one bad act deserves another. Emotionally, this seems inarguable. But the rational mind should struggle with what makes no logical sense. An eye for an eye merely leaves two sockets vacant.

The recent horror show in Oklahoma where convicted murderer and rapist Clayton Lockett’s execution went awry has revived debate about the death penalty. Apparently, one of Lockett’s veins blew and the three-drug cocktail failed to kill him quickly — and humanely. Instead, he convulsed and remained alive for 43 minutes before dying of a heart attack.

Reactions have ranged from “who cares?” to renewed protests from abolitionists. The first group consists mostly of people who knew Lockett’s victim or were members of her community. The latter, often dismissed as elitist intellectuals with no direct experience, has focused primarily on whether the procedure in question was “inhumane.”

Humane death most Americans find acceptable, while death that involves suffering offends our sensibilities as well as the Constitution’s prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. Viewed from the humane perspective, the challenge is to find better ways for the state to kill in its execution of justice. Or, in its prosecution of state-sanctioned revenge, depending on how one sees things.

Either way, no one disagrees that Lockett’s crime falls into the category of heinous and no one would recommend leniency. The question is whether between death and leniency there isn’t some punishment that serves both justice and our own humanity.

With Lockett, it is a challenge to rise above revenge. On June 3, 1999, Lockett, then 23, and two others, including a 17-year-old, went to Bobby Lee Bornt’s home to rob him. After kicking down his front door, Lockett beat Bornt and tied him up. When two female friends of Bornt arrived, one was raped by two of the men. Next, all were taken to a



Kathleen PARKER

rural area where one of the accomplices was ordered to dig a grave. Lockett shot one of the women, Stephanie Neiman, 19, twice, but she failed to die. So Lockett buried her alive, later blithely recalling hearing her breathing and crying.

Oklahoma Republican state Rep. Mike Christian spoke for many of when he said he wasn’t bothered by Lockett’s suffering. Acknowledging his own harshness, he said that as a father and former lawman, “I really don’t care if it’s by lethal injection, by the electric chair, firing squad, hanging, the guillotine, or being fed to the lions.”

In other words, Christian just wanted Lockett dead. Whether he suffered is of little consequence and, besides, his suffering pales in comparison to the suffering he caused his victims. Christian’s words sound less like an argument for justice than a lust for revenge.

No one is immune to these emotions but we should recognize them as such. The emotional urge to kill as an palliative to disconsolate pain is real and not rare. Does it work? I am lucky not to know.

Rationally, there is no redeeming return on a death warrant. Instead, by condoning state executions, especially under such controlled, calculated circumstances, we are passively complicit in the taking of a defenseless life. We don’t inject the cocktail, obviously, but by our consent to murder — even if we call it justifiable — we are part of the lion’s den. This is what concerns me most.

For the more practical minded, there’s ample evidence that the death penalty doesn’t deter criminals. And though I’m amenable to the argument that the death penalty at least deters this particular killer from committing another crime, we are still trading one eye for another.

To my own vengeful eye, life in prison is far more excruciating than a 43-minute execution. Far worse is a confined life without privilege or diversion — except perhaps for books because reading keeps the mind sharp, all the better to remain alert to one’s malignant fate.

Inhumane? Who cares? Though my intentions be cruel, I’d rather not participate in the death of another except as self-defense. The additional specter of executing someone convicted in error further resigns me to the conclusion that our challenge is not in becoming more efficient executioners — but in becoming too civilized to want to be.

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