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OPINION OTHER VIEWS

A Way To Take On Islamic State

LOS ANGELES TIMES (Nov. 24): When President Barack Obama announced an international campaign to “degrade and ultimately destroy” the Islamic State last year, the organization was primarily a regional threat, inflicting its savagery on the people of Iraq and Syria and on hostages from other countries who were captured in the Middle East. But the coordinated attacks in Paris that killed 130 people and the downing of a Russian airliner suggest that the organization has embarked on a campaign of exporting terror globally.

In response to those spasms of wanton killing, the United Nations Security Council approved a resolution last week urging countries around the world to take “all necessary measures” to prevent terrorist acts by the Islamic State, al-Qaida and similar groups.

What should that mean for U.S. policy?

In an editorial after the Paris attacks, we counseled against a sudden lurch in what Obama has called “a steady, relentless effort” against the Islamic State, which so far has consisted of using U.S. air power and relying on local forces to fight the ground battles. We specifically rejected — and still oppose — a proposal by Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., that the U.S. deploy 10,000 troops to the region.

But the U.S. and its allies can and should increase the pressure on the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq in recognition of the group’s expanding agenda, and without committing the U.S. to provide “boots on the ground.” The administration reportedly is considering tripling the 50 special operations forces Obama has said he will dispatch to Syria, and the Pentagon may increase the frequency and severity of U.S. airstrikes, especially those targeting oil facilities, which provide a source of revenue for the Islamic State.

In a thoughtful speech last week on the presidential campaign trail, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called for regional powers such as Jordan and Turkey to play a larger role in combating the Islamic State. But she also suggested a more flexible role for the more than 3,000 U.S. forces now serving in Iraq as trainers and advisors. She would allow U.S. personnel to be embedded with Iraqi units and to help call in airstrikes. Admittedly, such a change in posture would increase the risk that U.S. forces would come under fire, but it also could improve the effectiveness of operations against Islamic State strongholds.

There are two main objections to the U.S. ratcheting up its military involvement. One is that it will be too incremental to make much difference in the war zone. That’s true of any limited use of U.S. power, yet it’s not a persuasive argument for the U.S. waging another ground war in the Middle East. A related concern is that, if these steps do fall short, Obama and his military advisors will eventually be tempted to escalate further. This is the familiar “quagmire” argument, and it can’t be blithely dismissed. But it’s also a rationale for taking no action, ever. A better safeguard against that kind of escalation would be for Congress to belatedly adopt an Authorization for Use of Military Force against the Islamic State that would hold Obama to his promise that he won’t deploy combat troops in the region.

Clinton and many of the Republican presidential candidates have gone further, calling for the creation of no-fly zones to prevent the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad from assaulting civilians and opponents from the air. The problem with this proposal is that it would be difficult to establish such areas safely without the cooperation of Russia, which also is conducting airstrikes in Syria. That underlines the importance of the United States continuing to work with Russia and other countries to bring about a political transition in Syria that preserves government institutions there while giving the Syrian people the opportunity to choose new leadership. Secretary of State John F. Kerry has been pursuing that objective in talks with representatives of Russia, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other countries, although they’ve yet to bear fruit — a reflection of how difficult it will be to persuade Assad’s backers to agree on a timetable for his exit.

Finally, reducing the influence of the Islamic State also will require efforts to stop the flow of foreign fighters to the Middle East, prevent the radicalization of young people and block the funding of terrorist organizations. Military force is an important part of the equation — especially when it comes to depriving the Islamic State of territory from which it can instigate attacks — but it will not, by itself, counter the group’s influence.

Obama has been criticized for comments that seemed to minimize the threat posed by the Islamic State, including his declaration a day before the Paris attacks that the group had been “contained” (a reference to its failure to gain control over additional territory). Whatever fault one may find with his words, Obama has made an increasingly serious effort to counter the Islamic State, even when that involved military action that he once might have opposed. That doesn’t mean, however, that more can’t be done.

IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Nov. 27, the 331st day of 2015. There are 34 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History: On Nov. 27, 1945, General George C. Marshall was named special U.S. envoy to China by President Harry S. Truman to try to end hostilities between the Nationalists and the Communists.

On this date: In 1815, the constitution for the Congress Kingdom of Poland was signed by Russian Czar Alexander I, who was also king of Poland.

In 1901, the U.S. Army War College was established in Washington, D.C.

In 1910, New York’s Pennsylvania Station officially opened.

In 1924, Macy’s first Thanksgiving Day parade — billed as a “Christmas Parade” — took place in New York.

In 1939, the play “Key Largo,” by Maxwell Anderson, opened at the Ethel Barrymore Theater in New York.

In 1942, during World War II, the Vichy French navy scuttled its ships and submarines in Toulon to keep them out of the hands of German troops.

In 1955, Swiss composer Arthur Honegger, 63, died in Paris.

In 1962, the first Boeing 727 was rolled out at the company’s Renton Plant.

In 1973, the Senate voted 92-3 to confirm Gerald R. Ford as vice president, succeeding Spiro T. Agnew, who’d resigned.

In 1978, San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and City Supervisor Harvey Milk, a gay-rights activist, were shot to death inside City Hall by former supervisor Dan White.

In 1983, 181 people were killed when a Colombian Avianca Airlines Boeing 747 crashed near Madrid’s Barajas airport.

In 1989, a bomb blamed on drug traffickers destroyed a Colombian Avianca Boeing 727, killing all 107 people on board and three people on the ground.

Ten years ago: Doctors in France performed the world’s first partial face transplant on a woman disfigured by a dog bite; Isabelle Dinoire received the lips, nose and chin of a brain-dead woman.

an in a 15-hour operation. Actress Jocelyn Brando, older sister of Marlon Brando, died in Santa Monica, California, at age 86. Joe Jones, who sang the 1961 hit “You Talk Too Much,” died in Los Angeles at age 79.

Five years ago: The State Department released a letter from its top lawyer to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, warning that an expected imminent release of classified cables would put “countless” lives at risk, threaten global counterterrorism operations and jeopardize U.S. relations with its allies. Movie director Irvin Kershner (“The Empire Strikes Back”) died in Los Angeles at age 87.

One year ago: Reflecting its lessening oil clout, OPEC decided to keep its output target on hold and sit out falling crude prices. Mystery writer P.D. James, 94, died in Oxford, England. Frank Yablans, 79, a former president of Paramount Pictures who presided over the release of several groundbreaking pictures such as “The Godfather,” died in Los Angeles.

Today’s Birthdays: Author Gail Sheehy is 78. Footwear designer Manolo Blahnik is 73. Academy Award-winning director Kathryn Bigelow (Film: “The Hurt Locker”) is 64. TV host Bill Nye (“Bill Nye, the Science Guy”) is 60. Actor William Fichtner is 59. Caroline Kennedy is 58. Academy Award-winning screenwriter Callie Khouri (Film: “Thelma and Louise”) is 58. Rock musician Charlie Burchill (Simple Minds) is 56. Former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty is 55. Rock musician Charlie Benante (Anthrax) is 53. Rock musician Mike Bordin (Faith No More) is 53. Actor Fisher Stevens is 52. Actress Robin Givens is 51. Actor Michael Vartan is 47. Rapper Scoob (DAS EFX) is 45. Actor Kirk Acevedo is 44. Rapper Twista is 43. Actor Jaleel White is 39. Actor Arjay Smith (TV: “Perception”) is 32. Actress Allison Pill is 30. Actress/singer Aubrey Peeples (TV: “Nashville”; “Sharknado”) is 22.

Thought for Today: “Man’s loneliness is but his fear of life.” — Eugene O’Neill, American playwright (born 1888, died this date in 1953).

FROM THE BIBLE

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. Galatians 4:4-5.

Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

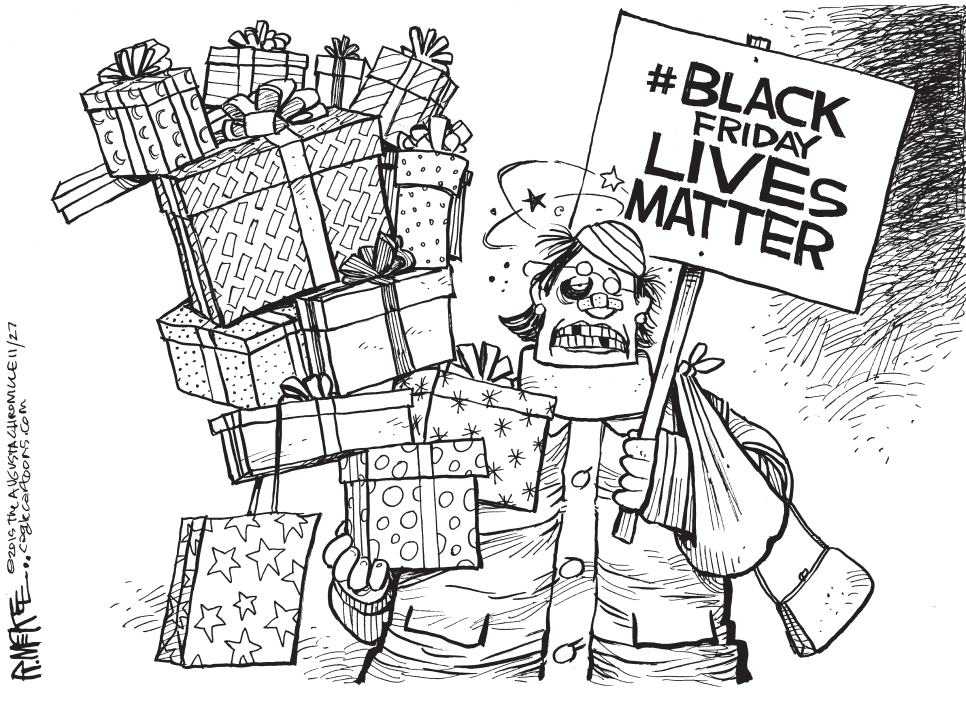
A Great Night

Jim and Karen Carr, Yankton

The Band-Aid Concert has always been a fun night out for my wife, Karen, and me. To see these kids perform what they have worked so hard on for so long, I couldn’t help but notice the smiles and nudges they gave

each other.

Karen and I would like to thank all the donors to this year’s concert, especially Quiltin’ Post, who created and donated the beautiful quilt. The quilt has special meaning to us because our son, Todd, is the director of the band. We want to thank the donors of the movie night basket, too.



Let There Be Light!

BY KELLY HERTZ

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Yankton needs to lighten up — literally.

That was the gist of a letter, published in the *Press & Dakotan* recently, that called on store owners in the community to add some lighting to their store fronts for the holiday season — and perhaps beyond that — in order to generate a more vibrant atmosphere.

And oddly enough, I mostly agree with this notion.

While this community has adequate street lighting in most (but not all) of its business areas, there is overall a general darkness on the storefronts along Broadway and, in particular, in the downtown district. It tends to create a dull, even lifeless vibe that doesn’t say much to visitors — or perhaps it whispers the wrong thing.

So I say, let there be light.

And yes, this is rather odd for me, for I sometimes tend to curse the light and seek out the darkness. As a person who loves exploring the night sky, I’ve noticed during the last several years that there is more light pollution creeping into our rural areas. Like any larger community on these sparse plains, Yankton throws off its share of light already, much of it stemming from the lighting that burns along Broadway. So technically, we aren’t completely dark.

However, that general, ambient glow can’t obscure the fact that many businesses sit mostly in darkness at night, with little to remind passers-by of what’s there.

Here’s an opportunity to illuminate the situation.

This is a good time to bring up the subject, for we are entering what is simultaneously a time of both deep darkness and gratifying light.

Slipping as we are toward the winter solstice and the shortest days of the year, we are now wrapped in many hours of darkness. But the holiday season offers a wondrous remedy, as we also see Christmas lights popping up in the night — festive, flashing beacons or solemn torches that bring a gladdening glow to the darkness. These lights create a feeling of



Kelly
HERTZ

life and hope amid the more frigid realities of the moment. (According to some sources, that symbolism is actually one of the reasons why lighting became attached to the Christmas season.) Holiday lighting has grown into a big business, and the technology used to produce those lights has made them quite efficient and versatile.

Parts of Yankton could use some touches of light — whether they are holiday-style lights or even small, strategic footlights — to create a warmer and more vibrant presentation.

This is particularly true in the downtown district, which has become a dark and uninviting place at night. The lighting is just terrible. While the historical lamps do provide some feeble illumination, the downtown in general is draped in a

dingy glow that does few favors for the area. The only time this is any kind of an advantage is during the Holiday Parade of Lights, when the lights on the vehicles and floats can be seen just fine amid the available lighting, or lack thereof.

This community talks a lot about revitalizing the downtown area; the winning Onward Yankton idea focuses on redefining the downtown, and the Onward group is now conducting a survey on the subject. Also, the City has just approved a program offering grants for facade work on buildings, with the downtown area prominently in mind. A good place to start changing the face of downtown is by getting some light down there. Currently, much of the area looks like a province of lifeless shadows and grim prospects after sunset. That might be an overly harsh assessment, but the area’s lack of lighting tends to convey such an impression. Storefront lighting could inject a few twinkles of life into the area.

In general, adding some dashes of decorative lighting to local businesses is not a major economic priority, but it’s one of those little things that could help create a better atmosphere all around. As such, it’s bright idea, in more ways than one.

Follow @kelly_hertz on Twitter.

Syrian Refugees And The Luxury Of First World Problems

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.

Tribune Content Agency

A red cup.

A few days ago, some people seemed to find that one of the most vexing moral problems of the day. Starbucks unveils a minimalist design for its holiday coffee cups — a red field, a green logo, no snowmen, snowflakes or fir trees — some guy makes a video lambasting the decision, and suddenly the so-called “War on Christmas” is all over the news again and Donald Trump is calling for a boycott.

Over a red cup.

This is what you’d call a First World problem. That is, the kind of thing that seems a problem when your stomach is full and the lights are on.

In Syria, they have not the luxury of First World problems. In Syria, people find themselves trapped in an internecine war, rebel factions fighting the government of strongman Bashar al-Assad. After four years, the death toll stands at about a quarter of a million. One of the victims: a baby killed in a mustard gas attack in August. Estimates vary, but about 10 million people — roughly half the population — have been displaced, including over 3 million who have fled the country. The United States has taken in 1,500 of them, with an additional 10,000 scheduled for entry in 2016.

But that won’t happen if some of us have their way.

In the wake of the recent terrorist attacks in Paris and reports that one of the terrorists managed to sneak into France on a false Syrian passport, 31 governors — all but one a Republican — have declared that they will seek to bar the refugees from their states. Presidential wannabe Ben Carson compared them to rabid dogs and complained that there is no vetting process. The House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to impose harsh new restrictions.

It is not hard to understand where all this is coming from. Fear is a master motivator. But where fear is allowed the last word, terrorism is superfluous.

So it’s worth noting a few things.

One: Governors have no say in whether

this country accepts refugees.

Two: These are human beings, not dogs, rabid or otherwise.

Three: The process for becoming a refugee is already pretty restrictive. Contrary to what Carson says, refugees face a vetting process that can stretch up to two years. They are scrutinized by the United Nations, the State Department, the FBI, the National Counterterrorism Center and the Department of Homeland Security, their stories are checked, they are interviewed in depth, subjected to fingerprinting, and even eye scanning.

Does any of this mean there isn’t at least a minuscule chance of a terrorist getting through? Of course not.

But a terrorist could also get through by posing as a student or tourist. It sure worked for the Sept. 11 hijackers. The only way to be completely safe from foreign terror is to close the borders: No one in or out, ever. Even then, you’d still have domestic terror to contend with.

So we might as well choose to give a d–n about bedraggled people fleeing a war zone. Not only because it’s the moral thing to do, but because it’s the thing most consonant with who and what we are supposed to be.

It’s fitting that we’re having this discussion while preparing to celebrate America’s first refugee crisis. A bunch of boat people — diseased, unable to speak the language, a drain on the economy — washed up on these shores and the first Americans took them in. From that seed grew a mighty nation of refugees, people who now have the luxury of fearing refugees and complaining about the color of a coffee cup.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but that cup is in celebration of Christmas, which is the birth of Jesus. He was, you will recall, born in a barn to Mary and Joseph and laid in a manger.

Because there was no room for them in the inn.

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