



Afghanistan: A Wakeup Call?

BY KELLY HERTZ
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When I read this past week about the death of the 2,000th U.S. soldier in the Afghanistan war, I could tell you that it filled me with something dark and cold, leaving me to wonder — if not to scream — when we were ever going to leave that place on the other side of the world...

Yeah, I COULD tell you that, but it wouldn't be quite true.

Instead, the news merely glanced off me, mostly because I'm numb now to the prospect of our nation at war. I cared, mind you, but I also just brushed it aside. It was almost a matter-of-fact feeling — and for that, I am genuinely ashamed.

In the years that have passed since we first sent troops into Afghanistan — it will be 11 years ago this Sunday — too many of us have grown comfortable with the notion of war. It's normal to us now, just as much as the nightmarish fear of war was normal to us back in the Cold War days, when we were all potentially at ground zero. But now, it's merely business as usual. That's what happens when war has long since become an everyday fact of life — which may be an ironic description, as the ghosts of at least 2,000 of our soldiers might attest if they only could.

And perhaps when it becomes so familiar, we stop expecting answers and exit strategies.

Eleven years ago Sunday, we plowed into Afghanistan in direct response to the 9/11 attacks, targeting the Taliban government that was harboring Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida. We vowed to crush terrorism and, I was told often, defeat the bad guys there so we wouldn't have to fight them here.

Eleven years later, we are still there, I'm now advised, to build up that nation — which we are doing on many levels — and train its troops to defend themselves while dealing with the last fragments of a shattered terrorist organization. We plan to leave by 2014, so there is that vague end in sight.

But reality is not so neatly laid out, even when viewed through the bored haze too many of us have slipped into all these years later.

The 2,000th U.S. casualty in Afghanistan was killed by an Afghan soldier, an incident that may have been a part of an increasing wave of "inside attacks" in which Afghan militiamen are turning on NATO troops. There have been 52 such deaths this year. Our presence, it seems, is beginning to negatively impact some of those we are supposedly protecting and training.

Meanwhile, the U.S. drone program that has been used to decapitate several key al-Qaida targets, particularly in Pakistan, is coming under increased criticism be-

cause of allegations that the attacks are also killing civilians. A report issued last week by human rights activists at Stanford and New York University said the drone strikes are stirring anti-American sentiments while only killing a small number of high-level targets. Pakistan's foreign minister, Hina Rabbani Khar'd, said last week during a speech in New York (which was sparsely reported here; I had to find it via a French news agency) that the drone strikes are the chief reason for the soaring anti-Americanism in her country. "As the drones fly over the territory of Pakistan, it becomes an American war (to us) and the whole logic of this being our fight, in our own interest, is immediately put aside and again it is a war imposed on us." But for America, the drones are embraced as an ideal tool in this modern war: They are unmanned, the victims are faceless and we can be far, far away when the dirty work is done.



Kelly HERTZ

So, if you bother to pay attention to the Afghanistan theater of war today, you will see this: The violence in that country is rising, our allies are slowly turning into our enemies, and our very presence may now be breeding resentment and regenerating the terrorist specters we have been chasing through the deserts and mountains.

So, what ARE we still doing there? The U.S. could genuinely claim that it won the Afghanistan war, at least by the definitions set out by President George W. Bush back in 2001. We brought the perpetrators of 9/11 to justice, bin Laden is now dead and al-Qaida has been decimated. By those standards, we could have left with a sense of clearly defined finality after bin Laden's death last year.

But we didn't, because there were other matters to attend to in this mission and other reasons for making the longest war in U.S. history even longer.

History suggests that the longer a nation stays at war, the more reasons it finds to remain at war. We saw this somewhat in Iraq: Our reasons for being there kept changing as the years wore on and the facts on the ground shifted, until finally there was no clear sense of finality and no point left to pursue. (We did at last leave, but there are those who insist we should still be there.)

I'm having an increasingly difficult time seeing a clear sense of finality taking shape anymore in the dust of Afghanistan.

Perhaps that 2,000th death can serve as our overdue wakeup call. We must at some point ask ourselves — genuinely, not rhetorically: Why ARE we still in Afghanistan? In the process, we might even realize that we could be in danger of losing a war that we had already won.

You can follow Kelly Hertz on Twitter at twitter.com/kelly_hertz

Akin's Pre-Enlightened Thinking

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Media Services

"Ladylike?" It is a telling choice of word. Hearing it used unironically, as would-be Missouri senator Todd Akin did last week, one almost feels as if Amelia Earhart never flew a plane and Sally Ride never rode a space shuttle. As if Madame C.J. Walker never made millions and Meg Whitman never made CEO. As if Lisa Leslie never dunked, Pat Benatar never rocked, Oprah Winfrey never reigned and Hillary Clinton never ran.



Leonard PITTS

But that is, indeed, what the man said. In an interview last week, he complained that his opponent, Sen. Claire McCaskill, was very aggressive in debating him, unlike her 2006 race, when she was "much more ladylike." Akin, last heard revealing the existence of a previously unknown mechanism in the female body that shuts down contraception in the event of "legitimate rape," might want to pen himself a reminder to not talk about women again, ever.

This latest gaffe is somewhat reminiscent of when Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid was quoted as saying candidate Barack Obama had the ability to switch off and on his "Negro dialect." While the observation was true enough, we were still left to grapple that bizarre choice of word. The term "Negro" fell out of usage in the late '60s. How is it Reid failed, for 40 years, to get the memo?

One wonders the same about Akin. The issue is not dated terminology, per se, but rather, the suspicion that it reflects a dated worldview — particularly with Akin, given his belief in a rape-resistant uterus.

But though he is the latest, he is hardly the only man who has sought recently to police the decorum of female lawmakers. Consider the 2011 email Rep. Allen West sent Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz telling her, "you are not a lady" and "shall not be accorded due respect from me." And then there's then-Sen. Arlen Specter's 2010 shot at Rep. Michele Bachmann during a radio interview: "I'm going to treat you like a lady. So act like one."

One struggles to imagine a male lawmaker being chided to behave in a gentlemanly fashion. The person doing the chiding would be laughed into oblivion and deservedly so — the complaint belongs to the era of handlebar moustaches and high-wheeled bikes.

This is not to say that a man ought not strive to behave in ways that reflect class, refinement and manners. He should. A woman should, too. In a nation so rude that a member of Congress hectors the president during a televised speech, many of us could stand to act as if we'd had the benefit of home training.

But this is not about that. It is, rather, about an arrogant, condescending and paternalistic mindset that says a woman cannot be tough, aggressive, competitive, smart or feisty, that if she embodies those traits, so prized in men, she does so at the cost of her own femininity.

In this construction, being a "lady" has nothing to do with good home training, and everything to do with being properly deferential and submissive in the presence of testosterone. And yes, you may just want to chalk all

this up to a difference of values, to say that Akin, West and Specter are just old-fashioned guys having trouble finding their way in a newfangled world. But to do that is give them a pass they do not deserve. It is to tell a little girl she must truncate the sprawl and adventure of her personality, prune it back until it fits into a small, dainty box marked "ladylike."

That would be a tragedy. And a betrayal. There is, frankly, a point at which being "old-fashioned" becomes being stubborn, denying unwelcome, unsettling and self-evident change. These fellows are well past that point and our message to them ought to be simply this:

If you want to govern in this century, try living in it first.

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OPINION | WE SAY

Seeing The Light



THUMBS UP to the new street lights that run along 31st St. west from the intersection with Broadway. The lights, which go out to the railroad crossing west of West City Limits Road, provide very helpful and much needed illumination in what was formerly a very dark and, thus, perilous stretch of busy road. With continued development in the area, the need for better lighting was essential. The project was completed a few weeks ago and makes an immediate and welcome difference.

Early Discussion



THUMBS UP to the Yankton County Farmers Union for hosting its District 18 candidate forum Monday at the Technical Education Center. It's always a good thing when candidates address the issues posed to them by the public, and it's always good for the public to sit in on such discussions. What we also liked about this week's debate was that it was this week, about five weeks before the election. There will be other forums coming up, and they all seem to gather like a flock in the last two weeks of the campaign, which makes for some busy days for the candidates, the media and members of the public who follow these things. This gives the process a little breathing room which is nice.

Coming Home



THUMBS UP to Dakota Days at the University of South Dakota, including Saturday's parade with Yankton natives and USD alumni Tom and Meredith (Auld) Brokaw as marshals. A number of activities have been held this week on and around the Vermillion campus, leading up to Saturday's coronation of royalty and the 2 p.m. game at the DakotaDome with Western Illinois. Not only are Yankton natives Alissa VanMeeteren and Collin Michels candidates for Miss Dakota, VanMeeteren also serves as the Student Government Association (SGA) president as the university celebrates its 150th birthday. (And Michels is a past president.) Welcome back alumni, and Go 'Yotes!

Unfortunate Finding



THUMBS DOWN to the findings of a new colon cancer study from the University of Minnesota that shows rural residents are more likely to die of the disease than urban residents. The study looked at 123,000 patients who were diagnosed with colon cancer between 1996 and 2008. Overall, those who lived in rural areas had a 5 percent higher risk of death from colon cancer when compared to those living in urban areas. Contributing factors were that rural patients were more likely to receive a late-stage diagnosis, less likely to receive chemotherapy and had a lower chance of getting an adequate number of lymph nodes removed during operations. The lead author of the study said this doesn't mean people diagnosed with colon cancer should move, but rather that doctors need to target rural patients and make sure they receive equitable care.

ONLINE OPINION

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

LATEST RESULTS:

Who do you support in the South Dakota U.S. House race between Kristi Noem and Matt Varilek?

Varilek	57%
Noem	39%
Not sure/neither	4%
TOTAL VOTES CAST	877

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:

Should Yankton adopt its own ban on texting while driving?

To vote in the *Press & Dakotan's* Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Friday, Oct. 5, the 279th day of 2012. There are 87 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History: On Oct. 5, 1962, The Beatles' first hit recording, "Love Me Do," was released in the United Kingdom by Parlophone Records. The first James Bond theatrical feature, "Dr. No" starring Sean Connery as Agent 007, premiered in London.

On this date: In 1829, the 21st president of the United States, Chester Alan Arthur, was born in Fairfield, Vt. (Some sources list 1830.)

In 1892, the Dalton Gang, notorious for its train robberies, was practically wiped out while attempting to rob a pair of banks in Coffeyville, Kan.

In 1910, Portugal was proclaimed a republic following the abdication of King Manuel II in the face of a coup d'etat.

In 1921, the World Series was covered on radio for the first time as Newark, N.J., station WJZ relayed reports from the Polo Grounds, where the New York Giants were facing the New York Yankees. (Although the Yankees won the opener, 3-0, the Giants won the series, 5 games to 3.)

In 1931, Clyde Pangborn and Hugh Herndon completed the first non-stop flight across the Pacific Ocean, arriving in Washington state some 41 hours after leaving Japan.

In 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, speaking in Chicago, called for a "quarantine" of aggressor nations.

In 1941, former Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis — the first Jewish member of the nation's highest court — died in Washington at age 84.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman delivered the first televised White House address as he spoke on the world food crisis.

In 1953, Earl Warren was sworn in as the 14th chief justice of the United States, succeeding Fred M. Vinson.

In 1970, British trade commissioner James Richard Cross was kidnapped in Canada by militant Quebec separatists; he was released the following December.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan signed a resolution granting honorary American citizenship to Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, credited with saving thousands of Hungarians, most of them Jews, from the Nazis during World War II.

In 1988, Democrat Lloyd Bentsen lambasted Republican Dan Quayle during their vice-presidential debate, telling Quayle, "Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy."

Ten years ago: Addressing police and National Guardsmen in New Hampshire, President George W. Bush warned that

Saddam Hussein could strike without notice and inflict "massive and sudden horror" on America. Bosnia's three nationalist parties beat moderates in the country's first self-organized elections since the 1992-1995 war.

Five years ago: President George W. Bush defended his administration's methods of detaining and questioning terrorism suspects, saying both were successful and lawful. Topps Meat Co. said it was closing its business, six days after it was forced to issue a massive beef recall. Track star Marion Jones pleaded guilty in White Plains, N.Y., to lying to federal investigators when she denied using performance-enhancing drugs, and announced her retirement after the hearing.

One year ago: Steve Jobs, 56, the Apple founder and former chief executive who invented and master-marketed ever sleeker gadgets that transformed everyday technology from the personal computer to the iPod and iPhone, died in Palo Alto, Calif. Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth, 89, a civil rights activist who endured arrests, beatings and injuries from fire hoses while fighting for racial equality in the segregated South of the 1960s, died in Birmingham, Ala.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Glynis Johns is 89. Comedian Bill Dana is 88. College Football Hall of Fame coach Barry Switzer is 75. Rhythm-and-blues singer Arlene Smith (The Chantels) is 71. Singer Richard Street is 70. Singer-musician Steve Miller is 69. Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin, D-Md., is 69. Rock singer Brian Johnson (AC/DC) is 65. Actress Karen Allen is 61. Writer-producer-director Clive Barker is 60. Rock musician David Bryson (Counting Crows) is 58. Rock singer and famine-relief organizer Bob Geldof is 58. Architect Maya Lin is 53. Actor Daniel Baldwin is 52. Rock singer-musician Dave Dederer is 48. Hockey Hall of Famer Mario Lemieux is 47. Actor Guy Pearce is 45. Actress Josie Bissett is 42. Singer-actress Heather Headley is 38. Pop-rock singer Colin Meloy (The Decemberists) is 38. Rock musician Brian Ashburn (Save Ferris) is 37. Actress Parminder Nagra is 37. Actor Scott Weinger is 37. Actress Kate Winslet is 37. Rock musician James Valentine (Maroon 5) is 34. Rock musician Paul Thomas (Good Charlotte) is 32. Actor Jesse Eisenberg is 29. TV personality Nicky Hilton is 29. Rhythm-and-blues singer Brooke Valentine is 27. Actor Joshua Logan Moore is 18.

Thought for Today: "My friends are my 'estate.' Forgive me then the avarice to hoard them." — Emily Dickinson, American poet (1830-1886).

FROM THE BIBLE

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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YOUR LETTERS

Big Choice

Fran Johnson, Yankton

Life is all about choices that we make. Where we live, where we shop, who we're friends with, what we eat, what we do for entertainment, etc., etc.

The people of South Dakota have a big choice to make soon. The schools need more money. The state

needs more money for roads, etc. Where is it to come from?

Do we want more taxes (sales tax referendum) or amend the smoking law to allow bar owners, casinos, etc. to regulate smoking and allow gambling to grow back to where it used to be and provide money for the state and schools, etc.

No new taxes — the choice is yours.