

# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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## OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

# Obama Haunted By Post-Iraq Uncertainty

**THE AUSTRALIAN (Sept. 11):** A dozen years after 9/11, Barack Obama's address on Syria provided a sobering insight into US strategic hesitancy. It underlined the extent to which prevarication and weakness have become the hallmarks of the President's administration in dealing with the challenges of jihadist extremism and global terrorism.

As a reluctant belligerent, he has clutched, understandably, at Russia's proposal to place Syria's chemical weapons under international control. He has used this to delay the congressional vote on a retaliatory strike against the Assad regime. No one can reasonably criticize Obama for that: a diplomatic way out would be better than military action. But what he could not disguise is the extent to which Syria, like so many current security and strategic issues, is bedeviled by Obama's penchant for leading from behind.

His case for a retaliatory military strike against Syria is well made. It was indeed the "worst chemical weapons attack of the 21st century". But the case against Bashar al-Assad has been compelling for two years (long before the Syrian rebels were infiltrated by al-Qaida-linked militants). In that time, 100,000 Syrians have been slaughtered. Yet Washington has allowed itself to be outmaneuvered by Russian President Vladimir Putin. Now Obama is beholden to Mr. Putin to get him off the hook.

Apart from giving the orders that led to the killing of Osama bin Laden, Obama has failed to provide the firm leadership the post-9/11 world needs. During his re-election campaign, Obama pronounced al-Qaida "decimated" and "on the path to defeat". ...

Obama has sometimes bordered on apologetic about America's global role, sending all the wrong signals to the likes of Iran and North Korea. No wonder governments from Riyadh to Seoul are worried about their reliance on the US. There should be no shame in wisely asserting American power. Libya's Muammar Gaddafi rapidly surrendered his WMDs when he saw what happened to Saddam Hussein.

Military force must always be a last option, but we need more decisive leadership from Washington. Former president George W. Bush had to work assiduously to muster backing from allies and in-still fear into enemies after 9/11. Yet, in deriding the legitimacy and success of the US in Iraq, Obama increased his challenges on Syria.

# Wrestling: IOC Gets It Right

**OMAHA WORLD-HERALD (Sept. 10):** After making a mess of things, the International Olympic Committee finally got it right. Wrestling is back.

In an inexplicable move earlier this year, the IOC's executive board cut wrestling from the list of Summer Games sports, explaining that it wanted to look for new sports that would sell more tickets and be more television-friendly.

Wrestlers worldwide, and those in the Midlands, rightly protested. After all, their sport was part of the original games in ancient Greece and has been included in every modern Olympics except 1900.

The ill-conceived move even brought together some unlikely allies. The United States, Iran and Russia all threw their weight behind the campaign to reinstate wrestling.

On Sunday, the Olympic committee admitted its mistake and voted to include wrestling in the 2020 and 2024 games. Although it stopped short of re-instating wrestling as a "core" Olympic summer sport, IOC President Jacques Rogge acknowledged that "wrestling has shown great passion and resilience in the last few months."

In the fight to remain in the Olympics, wrestling's international governing body reworked the sport's structure, added weight classes for women and adopted rules changes designed to make the sport easier for spectators to understand and more fun to watch. In the long run, those changes could be a real positive for the athletes....

Olympics officials axed wrestling because they said they wanted new, more popular sports. It was a dumb idea, and the vote to bring wrestling back shows they seem to understand that now.

Going back to its roots is a good move for the Olympics and for the athletes of the future.

## ON THIS DATE

### By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, Sept. 12, the 255th day of 2013. There are 110 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On September 12, 1943, during World War II, German paratroopers took Benito Mussolini from the hotel where he was being held by the Italian government.

**On this date:** In 1846, Elizabeth Barrett secretly married Robert Browning at St. Marylebone Church in London.

In 1888, entertainer Maurice Chevalier was born in Paris.

In 1913, Olympic legend Jesse Owens was born in Oakville, Ala.

In 1938, Adolf Hitler demanded the right of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia.

In 1942, during World War II, a German U-boat off West Africa torpedoed the RMS Laconia, which was carrying Italian prisoners of war, British soldiers and civilians.

In 1953, Massachusetts Sen. John F. Kennedy married Jacqueline Lee Bouvier in Newport, R.I.

In 1960, Democratic presidential candidate John F. Kennedy addressed questions about his Roman Catholic faith, telling a Southern Baptist group, "I do not speak for my church on public matters, and the church does not speak for me."

In 1962, in a speech at Rice University in Houston, President John F. Kennedy reaffirmed his support for the manned space program, declaring: "We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

In 1963, "The Spy Who Came in from the Cold," a novel by John le Carre, went on sale in Britain.

In 1977, South African black student leader Steve Biko died while in police custody, triggering an international outcry.

In 1986, Joseph Cicippio, the acting comptroller at the American University in Beirut, was kidnapped (he was released in December 1991).

In 1992, the space shuttle Endeavour blasted off, carrying with it Mark Lee and Jan Davis, the first married couple in space; Mae Jemison, the first black woman in space; and Mamoru Mohri, the first Japanese national to fly on a U.S. spaceship.

**Ten years ago:** In the Iraqi city of Fallujah, U.S. forces mistakenly opened fire on vehicles carrying police, killing eight of them. The U.N. Security Council ended 11 years of sanctions against Libya. Typhoon Maemi slammed into South Korea, killing at least 117 people. Music legend Johnny Cash died in Nashville, Tenn., at age 71.

**Five years ago:** A Metrolink commuter train struck a freight train head-on in Los Angeles, killing 25 people. (Federal investigators said the Metrolink engineer, Robert Sanchez, who was among those who died, had been text-messaging on his cell phone and ran a red light shortly before the crash.) Hurricane Ike began battering the Texas coast. Grand Ole Opry star Charlie Walker died in Hendersonville, Tenn. at age 81.

**One year ago:** The U.S. dispatched an elite group of Marines to Tripoli, Libya, after the mob attack that killed the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans. President Barack Obama strongly condemned the violence, and vowed to bring the killers to justice; Republican challenger Mitt Romney accused the administration of showing weakness in the face of tumultuous events in the Middle East.

**Today's Birthdays:** Actor Dickie Moore ("Our Gang") is 88. Actor Freddie Jones is 86. Actor Ian Holm is 82. Actress Linda Gray is 73. Singer Maria Muldaur is 71. Actor Joe Pantoliano is 62. Singer-musician Gerry Beckley (America) is 61. Original MTV VJ Nina Blackwood is 61. Rock musician Neil Pearl (Rush) is 61. Actor Peter Scolar is 58. Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback is 57. Actress Rachel Ward is 56. Actress Amy Yasbeck is 51. Rock musician Norwood Fisher (Fishbone) is 48. Actor Darren E. Burrows is 47. Rock singer-musician Ben Folds (Ben Folds Five) is 47. Actor-comedian Louis C.K. is 46. Rock musician Larry LaLonde (Primus) is 45. Actor Josh Hopkins is 43. Actor Paul Walker is 40. Country singer Jennifer Nettles (Sugarland) is 39. Actor Ben McKenzie is 35. Singer Ruben Studdard is 35. Basketball player Yao Ming is 33. Singer-actress Jennifer Hudson is 32. Actress Emmy Rossum is 27. Actor Colin Ford is 17.

**Thought for Today:** "Find the good. It's all around you. Find it, showcase it and you'll start believing it." — Jesse Owens (1913-1980).

## FROM THE BIBLE

*But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion. Luke 15:20.* Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



# Talking Ourselves Out Of A War?

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — Rarely, if ever, has so much talk preceded a proposed military strike.

Most administrations contemplating military action worry about an exit strategy. The Obama administration seems to be in search of an entrance strategy.

Or is it that we're trying to talk ourselves out of this mess?

As war goes, a war of words seems a better option. Less blood and death if, at times, more ennui and head-clutching frustration. In that vein, the past several weeks have provided an embarrassment of riches.

Just this week, we've heard from the president and his many minions, surrogates and converts, including national security adviser Susan Rice, former Secretary of State and likely 2016 presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, current Secretary of State John Kerry, as well as White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough, who hit the Sunday news shows.

Despite all best efforts, public consensus for cruise missile strikes against Syria has not taken shape. The reason may be partly war weariness, but surely much of the problem lies in the odd formulations leading up to this non-war.

With shock-and-awe barely in our rearview mirror, pre-war chitchat is not a modus operandi to which we are accustomed.

There is certainly merit to discussing military action carefully in advance of deployment, but such lengthy, often confusing, verbal perambulations as we've witnessed the past several weeks — stressing the urgency of taking action while repeatedly postponing action pending fill-in-the-blank — do create fresh sets of problems.

The debate of late has most closely resembled a busy mom's calendaring challenge: Let's see, we can't vote to strike until after Labor Day vacation — and the president's speech can't be on Monday because the Redskins are playing and, no, not Wednesday either because 9/11 is too fraught.

Meanwhile, we've all but sent engraved announcements to Bashar al-Assad giving the time and place of our proposed engagement. *Repondez s'il vous plait.*

The sense created by so much clearing of throats has been that one is not quite certain of one's intentions, and, therefore, one's rationale for war. President Obama's reticence is understandable but also disconcerting. Creating and then moving a red line is inherently problematic and otherwise lacking in, shall we say, clarity.

## YOUR LETTERS

### Guns In Schools

Jamie Purzol, Yankton

This is a response to letters by V.E.

Rossiter Jr. (*Press & Dakotan*, Sept. 4) and Dennis Heine letters (*Press & Dakotan*, Aug. 8).

I am a mother of three children. I happen to also be a gun owner, and my children are well acquainted with our firearms. They all can shoot every caliber that I own, and are excellent marksmen. Each has also taken safety courses regarding their weapons. And make no mistake, they are WELL aware that they ARE weapons, and are aware of the damage that their firearms can and will do.

And at the same time I will not buy my children TOY guns or promote video games that use them, as they have been taught that weapons are not toys and should not be treated so lightly. They have been taught the value of a life, be it human or animal.

I am obviously a supporter of my Second Amendment right to bear arms; however I am not fanatical in any way, shape, or form. I am not opposed to arming teachers or school administrators, with proper training.

If someone is going into a school to harm

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my or ANY child, I want all options available to STOP that person, because OBVIOUSLY the lessons that person had been taught about the value of life had not stuck.

And where my children will not be going around with six-shooters strapped to their waists, fear not if trouble abounds and my children were there, you would be safe. Feel free to thank their mother.

## A Generous Act!

Amber Johnson, Spearfish

On Friday, Sept. 6, Yankton traveled to Spearfish for a JV/varsity soccer game. The Spartan Booster Club has a 50/50 drawing at each home game and a Yankton player purchased tickets.

A Yankton boys player won the 50/50 drawing — and rather than keep the money, he graciously donated it back to the Spearfish Soccer Association.

I was unable to get a name for this player, but wanted to take a moment to let you all know how impressed the Spearfish crew is with the young man's gratitude.