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Talking To Tehran Makes Sense

LOS ANGELES TIMES (Sept. 24): In his speech to the U.N. General Assembly, President Obama on Tuesday promised to engage Iran's new leadership in negotiations to prevent the development of nuclear weapons in that country as part of a broader normalization of relations. The president was right to say that "the diplomatic path must be tested" despite concerns in this country and Israel that Iran will never abandon its ambitions to be a nuclear power.

An Iran that possessed nuclear weapons would be a deeply destabilizing development. The most commonly cited concern is that Iran might launch a nuclear attack on Israel — an operation that would be suicidal in light of Israel's own (if unacknowledged) nuclear arsenal. But a more likely danger is that a nuclear-armed Iran would seek to maximize its political influence in the region, inspiring other states to seek nuclear weapons of their own. Although Iran insists that its nuclear program is designed only for

Although Iran insists that its nuclear program is designed only for civilian uses, the International Atomic Energy Agency has been consistently skeptical. The U.N. Security Council has approved multiple resolutions calling on Iran to stop the enrichment of uranium. Negotiations between Iran and the so-called P5-plus-1 — the five permanent members of the Security Council and Germany — have failed to produce a breakthrough.

Yet economic sanctions have taken their toll, and in June, Iranians elected as their president Hassan Rouhani, a former nuclear negotiator who ran as a reformist. Rouhani has suggested that he would be open to creative negotiations to resolve the nuclear issue. For now, at least, he seems to have the support of Iran's religious establishment.

Skeptics in the U.S. and Israel are warning that this is trickery designed to soften sanctions while the nuclear program quietly progresses. But Obama is wise to engage the new Iranian leader, especially given the alternative. ...

Obama noted that mistrust between the United States and Iran has "deep roots." The difficulty of forging a better relationship was symbolized by the fact that the U.S. officials were unable to arrange even a casual meeting between Obama and Rouhani at the United Nations. But the absence of a presidential photo-op will be forgotten if lowerlevel officials are able to make progress on the nuclear issue.

Kenya: A Wake-Up Call

THE AUSTRALIAN (Sept. 24): The slaughter of innocent men, women and children perpetrated by Islamic militants at the Westgate Shopping Mall in Kenya, a country that is a longstanding and important Western ally, should leave the international community in no doubt about the dire consequences when failed states are allowed to become breeding grounds for terrorism.

Somalia, the wreck of a country on the Horn of Africa from which the evil, al-Qaida-affiliated al-Shabab thugs responsible for the massacre emanate, has lacked stability since the regime of General Siad Barre, a Soviet toady, lost power in 1991.

In the ensuing anarchy — with the international community unable and unwilling to do much — the worst forms of malevolent Islamic extremism have spawned and thrived, leading to the attack by the al-Shabab terrorists that claimed the lives of scores of people, including Tasmanian-born architect Ross Langdon and his pregnant wife, Elif Yavuz. Another 200 people were wounded. ...

Recently, perceptions had grown that al-Shabab was losing ground. Senior US officials claimed the Islamist group was on the run after staging a tactical retreat from Mogadishu, the Somali capital, and losing control of the port of Kismayo from which they launched their piracy and kidnapping attacks on the east African coast. The horror perpetrated in Nairobi shows the optimism was misplaced.

Such atrocities cannot be tolerated and the international community cannot turn a blind eye. It is to the credit of the African Union that it is leading the way in seeking to deal with al-Shabab, but far more than Africa's interests are at stake in the battle. As the death toll in the Nairobi massacre again shows, Islamic terrorism threatens us all, and the international community must do all it can to confront it. Somalia's chaos and the terrorism it has spawned as a failed state was allowed to fester for far too long.

Five years ago: Hollywood screen

legend and philanthropist Paul Newman

died in Westport, Conn. at age 83. In

their first debate of the presidential cam-

paign, held at the University of Mississippi, Republican John McCain

portrayed himself as a battle-tested elder

running against a naive rookie, while De-

mocrat Barack Obama suggested Mc-Cain was a hothead who'd made the

wrong choices on the Iraq war, corporate

taxes and more. Swiss pilot Yves Rossy leapt from a plane over Calais, France, and crossed the English Channel on a

homemade jet-propelled wing in 13 min-

One year ago: President Barack Obama and Mitt Romney both cam-

paigned in Ohio, where Romney said his

Massachusetts health care law was

proof that he cared about ordinary Amer-

cans. A judge in Pennsylvania upheld

perjury charges against two Penn State administrators in the Jerry Sandusky

case. Rebels in Syria set off two car bombs in Damascus that engulfed the

All-Star Bobby Shantz is 88. Actor Philip Bosco is 83. Actress Donna Douglas is

81. Actor Richard Herd is 81. South African nationalist Winnie Madikizela-

Mandela is 77. Country singer David Frizzell is 72. Actor Kent McCord is 71.

Television host Anne Robinson is 69.

Singer Bryan Ferry is 68. Actress Mary

Beth Hurt is 67. Singer Lynn Anderson is 66. Singer Olivia Newton-John is 65.

Actor James Keane is 61. Rock singermusician Cesar Rosas (Los Lobos) is

59. Country singer Carlene Carter is 58. Actress Linda Hamilton is 57. Country

singer Doug Supernaw is 53. Rhythm-

and-blues singer Cindy Herron (En

Vogue) is 52. Actress Melissa Sue Anderson is 51. Actor Patrick Bristow is 51

Rock musician Al Pitrelli is 51. Singer

Tracey Thorn (Everything But The Girl) is

51. TV personality Jillian Barberie is 47. Contemporary Christian guitarist Jody

Davis (Newsboys) is 46. Actor Jim Caviezel is 45. Actor Ben Shenkman is

45. Singer Shawn Stockman (Boyz II Men) is 41. Jazz musician Nicholas Pay-

ton is 40. Actor Mark Famiglietti is 34.

Singer-actress Christina Milian is 32.

Tennis player Serena Williams is 32. Thought for Today: "Whatever you

think, be sure it is what you think; whatever you want, be sure that is what you

want; whatever you feel, be sure that is what you feel." — T.S. Eliot, American-

Anglo poet, born on this date in 1888, died 1965.

Today's Birthdays: Retired baseball

army headquarters in flames.

utes.



The Pontiff Who Doesn't Pontificate

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — Pope Francis continues to delight and surprise as he pursues his radical pilgrimage across the global psyche — inspiring with his humility while also sending shock waves with his subversive spirit.

Yes, make no mistake, this humble man from Argentina who describes himself first as a sinner and prefers simplicity to the opulence afforded by his station is, like Jesus Christ himself, a radical.

He washes the feet of the poor while eschewing the ruby papal slippers for his own holy feet. He lives in humble quarters among colleagues rather than in the isolation of the Vatican suites where his predecessors have slept. He immerses himself in humanity while urging a greater pastoral role for the church and a de-emphasis on the harsh judgments of institutional authority.

In a world where greed and pride hold hands in the dark, Francis appears like a brilliant apparition of, say it, brother — hope and change. He is a paradoxical mix of friend and foe wrapped in a happy package of tough love: friend of the poor, downtrodden and marginalized; foe of the purveyors of a status quo that worships money and throws away the young and old. He is, in other words, a problem for the world and poses special anxiety for pious politicians both inside and outside the church walls.

As such, he has a unique, transformative opportunity unseen in our time, not only for the Catholic Church, which could use a good purgative, but also for the larger world.

The anti-politician, he is fearless, provocative and willing to call out the weasels — not so much by their names but by their actions. He has special criticism for globalization, which, he says, has created a culture in which the weakest suffer most and those on the fringes, the elderly and the young, "fall away." In such a money culture, "we throw away grandparents and we throw away young people."

In other, less orderly times, Francis would be hustled out of town on a donkey. In today's In a recent interview for the Jesuit publication *America*, the Vicar of Christ implored the church to not overemphasize those issues that social conservatives hold so dear. He didn't go so far as to suggest that the church change its core beliefs on subjects such as

abortion and traditional marriage, but he urged a reordering of priorities and a less harsh approach. The hungry need food before they can hear a lecture about nutrition.

More love, less judgment is the seed he is planting, a worthy bumper sticker these days. In a judgmental era that sometimes rivals darker ages, Francis' words tumble into the human conversation like an uninvited guest. This humble, radiant man doesn't sprinkle rose petals and platitudes to amuse and beguile. He drops daisy cutters of truth and social justice smack into the punch bowl.

Talk about a splash. And all the while, he smiles.

But Francis says he doesn't wish to be known as the smiling "cordial manager of the church" who "comes here and says to you "have courage," as he recently told a crowd of unemployed workers in Italy. Rather, he wants to be the brave one, the man who reaches deep inside his own well of humanness with all its frailties and limitations and finds the will "to do everything I can as a pastor and a man."

Telling the crowd to "fight for work," he said the economic system that created the "idol which is called money" is not a local problem but a "world choice."

In his short time at the Vatican, Francis also has tackled one of the worst scourges on the planet — the explosion in human trafficking, including child labor, forced domestic work and prostitution. Not content to bemoan this sorry state of affairs, he has called on the Vatican to study the problem and, during a conference he has scheduled for November, develop an action plan.

In the parlance of the street that Francis seems to know better than most, he walks the walk. It is not his style to, if you'll pardon the expression, pontificate. His soul may be aimed for heaven, but his heart and feet are firmly planted in the earth.



Kathleen **PARKER**

Cathy Sudbeck Sally Whiting Brenda Willcuts Jackie Williams

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ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press Today is Thursday, Sept. 26, the 269th day of 2013. There are 96 days left in the year. Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, injuring more than 750 people. British rock singer Robert Palmer died in Paris at age 54.

Today's Highlight in History: On Sept. 26, 1789, Thomas Jefferson was confirmed by the Senate to be the first United States secretary of state; John Jay, the first chief justice; Edmund Randolph, the first attorney general.

dolph, the first attorney general. On this date: In 1777, British troops occupied Philadelphia during the American Revolution.

In 1892, John Philip Sousa and his newly formed band performed publicly for the first time, at the Stillman Music Hall in Plainfield, N.J.

In 1914, the Federal Trade Commission was established. In 1918, the Meuse-Argonne offen-

sive, resulting in an Allied victory against the Germans, began during World War I.

In 1937, the radio drama "The Shadow," starring Orson Welles, premiered on the Mutual Broadcasting System.

In 1952, philosopher George Santayana died in Rome at age 88.

In 1955, following word that President Dwight D. Eisenhower had suffered a heart attack, the New York Stock Exchange saw its worst price decline since 1929.

In 1960, the first debate between presidential nominees took place in Chicago as Democrat John F. Kennedy and Republican Richard M. Nixon faced off before a national TV audience.

In 1962, Maury Wills of the Los Angeles Dodgers stole his 100th base during a 13-1 victory over the Houston Colt .45s. "The Beverly Hillbillies" premiered on CBS. The cult film "Carnival of Souls" premiered in Lawrence, Kan., where parts of it had been filmed.

In 1969, the family comedy series "The Brady Bunch" premiered on ABC-TV.

In 1986, William H. Rehnquist was sworn in as the 16th chief justice of the United States, while Antonin Scalia joined the Supreme Court as its 103rd member.

In 1990, the Motion Picture Association of America announced it had created a new rating, NC-17, to replace the X rating. In 1991, four men and four women

In 1991, four men and four women began a two-year stay inside a sealedoff structure in Oracle, Ariz., called Biosphere 2. They emerged from the structure on this date in 1993.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin opened a two-day summit at Camp David. The government issued a recall for Segway scooters, citing instances in which riders fell off when the batteries ran low. A magnitude 8 quake rocked

FROM THE BIBLE

Woe to you ... hypocrites! Matthew 23:13. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis universal media world, word gets around and there's no hushing a brave man with a message millions long to hear. "Truth will out," goes the saying, but Francis gives truth a nudge at the door.

YOUR LETTERS

Was it Suicide?

Leann Johnson, Yankton Was it really suicide?

Thirteen months ago, on Aug. 12, 2012, the body of Elizabeth Smith, 54, was found approximately 7.5 miles east of Yankton on the South Dakota side of the Missouri River after being spotted by a fisherman. No foul play was suspected, as a coat and purse belonging to her were found on the bridge the night before. The cause of death was listed as suicide. End of story or maybe not?

The human body is slightly heavier than fresh water. Consequently, when unconsciousness takes place, the body sinks. When a drowning occurs in a river, the most common mistake is to search for the body too far downstream. Sinking takes place almost immediately, which results in the victim reaching the bottom close to the point it was last seen on the surface. The supposition is that the current will carry a body along before it strikes the bottom or encounters an obstruction. The fact is that there is little current on the bottom. It is rare that a victim is found downstream more than a few hundred vards from where it disappeared, and more often than not the body is recovered close to where it disappeared. How is it possible, that Ms. Smith's body was found 7.5 miles downstream around noon the following day?

An eye witness reported to the Sheriff's office, that two people were seen around 6:30 p.m. on August 11th, at/or near the location the body was found. A coincidence?

My question is, does who you are, make a determination of how much time is put into an investigation of one's death? My understanding is that Ms. Smith had lived in Yankton only a couple years. There was no obituary. Was Ms. Smith's death truly a suicide, or was it perhaps at the hands of others? I didn't know Elizabeth Smith, but I truly believe that justice was not served in her case.

This is a response from Yankton County Sheriff Jim Vlahakis:

It's clear from the content of this letter that the writer doesn't have the facts concerning this case. Under normal circumstances, I wouldn't respond out of respect for those affected in this unfortunate incident.

The allegation has been made that "who you are" determines how much time is put in by law enforcement in a death investigation. I take issue with that statement. Investigators rely on facts, evidence, forensic science and their experience, as was done in this case.

Here are some of the unfortunate facts. The victim had recently talked of suicide to others.

May his roots bear fruit.

Kathleen Parker's email address is kathleenparker@washpost.com.

On Aug. 11, 2012, the day she jumped from the bridge, she obtained a prescription for a codeine-containing medication. An empty prescription bottle of this medication was found with her personal belongings on the bridge. Toxicology from the forensic autopsy indicates the victim's blood tested positive for a "toxic level of codeine" along with therapeutic levels of acetaminophen, Temazepam, Bupropion, Naproxen, Citalopram, Diazepam, Oxazepam and Tramadol.

The autopsy also revealed that the injuries found on the body were consistent with a fall from a bridge.

The writer is correct that, in many instances of drowning, the body is found in close proximity to where they entered the water, but not in all instances. Rivers are shallower than other bodies of water and can have currents at all levels. On Aug. 11, 2012, the releases from Gavins Point Dam were at 38,000 cubic feet per second. Three incidents of drowning have occurred at or near Riverside Park in the recent past: (1) in 2011 where the body was found 5 miles downstream; (2) in 2012, one was found two miles downstream from the park; and, in this case, the body was recovered approximately seven miles downstream.

The writer states she believes "justice was not served." I agree there is no justice in one taking their own life. Incidents such as these are sad tragedies that law enforcement deals with much too often.

Military Pay

Bryant Jackson, Yankton

I find it appalling that the pay of our men and women serving in the United States Armed Forces is in question.

While Congress may not be able pass a budget for FY14, a budget should be passed to keep the military operating and ensuring that all service men and women will get paid. In the event the service men and women do not get paid they will receive back pay at a later date, but a large portion of the military lives paycheck to paycheck.

As a young Marine platoon sergeant, I had to experience this situation first-hand. I had to tell forward deployed marines that they needed to prepare to not receive their next paycheck or two. My fellow noncommissioned officers and I ensured our junior marines were taken care of, and that their families would have food on their table. If only our elected government had the resolve to ensure business was taken care of.

No military service member should be placed in this position. I strongly urge you to contact your elected officials.