

Opinion

Free Press Viewpoint

Iraq jail treatment not American way

Let's put this whole Iraqi-jail-fun-and-games thing in some sort of perspective:

The jail incidents, and the Army trials that will keep them in the news into next year, are news because in this country, we care.

Some armies would laugh at the things American prison guards were caught doing. In some armies, it's perfectly acceptable to shoot civilians or humiliate, rape and pillage.

Ours is not one of them. We have rules. We expect our soldiers to abide by them, and most of them do. So it's news when a few don't.

Many countries would try to sweep the whole thing under the rug. The government would deny it happened, reporters would be shooed off or arrested, the guilty would either be transferred or just disappear.

The whole thing would go away.

Not in America. We are free and open. We put the culprits on public trial, and then have to listen to defense charges that somehow the Pentagon and President Bush planned the whole thing. The guilty parties were "only following orders."

Sure, that's likely. The president and Donald Rumsfeld are sitting around the Oval Office, and Mr. Bush says, "Say, Rummy, let's have some of our prison guards sexually harass some Iraqi prisoners, raise an uproar in world opinion, and lose me thousands of votes at the same time.

"Oh, and be sure they are dumb enough to record the whole thing on video tape."

"Yes, Mr. President. Do you want us to send them a selection of sex toys for the show?"

Right.

No, the point is, Americans won't put up with this kind of thing.

In World War II, we prosecuted prison guards for smashing the mouths of Japanese prisoners to steal their gold fillings. In Vietnam, we prosecuted soldiers for everything from theft to drug charges to murder.

In our own country, we've managed over the last 50 years to do away with a great deal of police violence and abuse through better training and public pressure. Rodney King may have taken a beating, but in the end, he won the war.

But it's because we believe in the rules and take great pride in our Bill of Rights and our sense of decency that we have the specter of public trials in the Iraq jail abuse scandal.

Some would say that what the prison guards did was not that big a deal. They posed the prisoners in sexually embarrassing positions and made them do things most of us would not want to do. As far as we can tell, no one was injured, but the treatment was psychologically brutal. It was done for no good reason but the entertainment of bored guards.

So it's not a murder case? Still, the guards need to be punished, so do any higher ups who knew about and either condoned the treatment or looked the other way.

There's no doubt, the way the army works, that some careers will be ruined. Some guards will go to jail. That is as it should be.

This week, it's Pfc. Lynndie England, a West Virginia reservist, who is in the dock. An army investigator said he thought combat stress and a jail riot a few days before had contributed to the lack of discipline among the guards, all reservists called to active duty.

But Pvt. England, he said, she just seemed to be bored and looking for some fun.

Some fun, indeed.

This is not our way. This is not how we expect our army to behave. And it's American to do something about it, openly, before the world.

That is a good thing.

Steve Haynes
Nor'West Newspapers



Those poor, whiny Democrats

Al Gore has struck me as the true successor to the party of Andrew Jackson in his recent appearances. Democrats like to call themselves the party of Jefferson and Jackson, thereby invoking those great names in our early history, but those who've taken a look at Jackson might wonder why.

You see, Jackson lost the election of 1824 to John Quincy Adams, but made such a fuss about the "corrupt bargain" between Adams and then-Speaker of the House Henry Clay, who was Adams' Secretary of State that he won the next two elections and got his second vice-president, Martin Van Buren elected in the third.

Of course, poetic justice had to triumph and Van Buren presided over a depression brought on by Jackson's idiotic and tyrannical economic policy. Come to think of it, just about everything Jackson did was tyrannical. He threatened to shoot his first vice-president, John C. Calhoun, because he dared disagree with him. Calhoun had to flee to his home in South Carolina!

Getting back to the corrupt bargain, in those days, it was quite common for the House of Representatives to be forced to decide an election because no one had won the necessary electoral votes and that had occurred in 1824. Clay was running, but did not finish well enough to be in contention. Instead, the three candidates were Adams, Jackson and William Crawford.

Since Crawford had suffered a debilitating stroke during the campaign, which was not common knowledge, and Clay feared Jackson would be discovered a tyrant (he was right,) he determined to use his considerable power as Speaker



Jay Kelley
• Speaking MyMind

of the House to put Adams in the White House. It is interesting that Adams and Clay did not much like each other, but each respected the other man's ability.

Clay, however, was also extremely ambitious (one of the reasons Adams did not like him) and decided to help his own cause by getting Adams to name him Secretary of State, which was, and is, considered a stepping stone to the presidency even greater than the office of vice-president.

Jackson howled in dismay, claiming he had won the popular vote and the will of the people had been thwarted. If his conduct while in office is any measure, Jackson actually could have cared less about the will of the people. As far as he was concerned, he was the people.

Jackson had won the most votes, but not all the states had voted for all candidates. In those days, elections and parties were not quite so organized as today. A few northern states didn't have Jackson on the ballot and many southern states didn't put the Yankee Adams on their ballot.

Adding to the confusion were the states where there was no popular election. In a few states,

the legislature still picked the electors directly, which is still a constitutional option today.

Jackson had also received the most electoral votes, but not enough to win the race outright and so it left up to the House of Representatives to elect the president with each state getting one vote.

Jackson gambled, however, that the common man would not understand the constitution and that America would always rally around the underdog and he was right three times.

What does that have to do with Al Gore? Gore claims the Supreme Court decided the presidency in 2000. That is about as true as Jackson's Corrupt Bargain charge, which is to say it is a lie.

Oh, the Supreme Court got involved, but only after a state court usurped its powers and essentially held the government at a standstill because some people were not smart enough to fill out a ballot.

In other words, when Gore tells us "we don't want the Supreme Court to decide the next election" he is saying he doesn't want the system to work the way it was designed. He is depending on the American people to be both ignorant of our constitution and emotionally attached to the underdog so that he can get a position in John Kerry's cabinet and get back in the game.

With leadership like that, it's no wonder the Democrats are desperate.

Jay Kelley is a local minister and writer who speaks his mind from time to time. His e-mail is jkelley@nwkans.com.

County containment critical

September 11, 2001 changed our lives forever. Americans suffered the tragic loss of thousands of lives. Not only did the terrorists destroy buildings symbolic of our national wealth and military might, they carried out these despicable deeds using our own airplanes — turning them into fuel-filled guided missiles that burned hot enough to weaken the steel holding the twin towers of the World Trade Center high above the New York City streets.

Certainly, terrorism has been a constant threat since the attacks of 9/11. The threat of a terrorist attack on this nation's food supply continues to surface in the back of our minds with every alert issued from the office of Homeland Security.

One potential target that may be more vulnerable is this state's multi-million dollar livestock industry. During the last two years, the Kansas Animal Health Department (KAHD) has been working to develop a state response to a possible foreign animal disease outbreak, most notably Foot and Mouth disease.

While this plan is well organized, researched and has been tested, such a statewide plan is only as good as what's happening in the county. Should a livestock disease occur in a specific county, it will be up to that individual county or group of counties to act during the outbreak. How that county reacts during the initial 24-48 hour period will dictate how quickly the outbreak is contained.

All 105 counties are being asked to develop such a plan in the event of an animal disease outbreak. It will be an addendum to the County Emergency Plan.

To help counties develop a response plan, KAHD has developed a template that can be used as the framework. It's a lengthy document and cannot be completed in one or two days. This is a long-term process that will require each

John Schlageck

• Weekly Insight

county to assess what they have, where it's located, what they need and how to go about acquiring it.

While it goes without saying that county management personnel are extremely knowledgeable when it comes to handling disasters like tornadoes, floods and fires, when it comes to an animal disease outbreak, this is uncharted territory.

To date 16 counties across Kansas have completed such a plan. These plans take a great deal of time, energy and community input. All those who have a vested interest in their county should participate in putting such a plan together.

Those involved would include law enforcement officers, extension agents, veterinarians, school district representatives, the local sale barn owner, feed store operators, implement dealers, city and county government officials and livestock producers.

There is no track record on a terrorist animal disease outbreak. Such events have never happened in Kansas. Let's pray they never do and that's why it is critical for counties to devise their own plan.

That said, who knows the assets of a county as it relates to agriculture? Who knows better than the farmers and ranchers who work and live on the land? Who knows better than such producers who are active participants in their county farm and commodity organizations?

Ag producers have extensive knowledge of livestock locations in a county. Producers know of locations that will hold livestock — pasture, corrals and the county fairgrounds. Livestock producers know where to find feed, water and handling equipment. T

They know where the resources are and how to put their hands on them. Farmers and ranchers have the expertise necessary to help draw up a successful animal disease outbreak plan.

This nation and the world have always looked to the Kansas farmer and rancher and their counterparts across the United States to feed the world. Agricultural producers remain one of this nation's undeniable assets — one of this nation's great strengths.

Throughout our state in each and every county, farmers and ranchers have always stepped forward to participate and lead in civic and community events and activities. Drawing up the blueprints for an animal disease outbreak plan provides yet another opportunity for agricultural producers to play a key role.

Farmers and ranchers are the best at what they do whether it's feeding millions of hungry people or helping safeguard this land and our livestock from terrorist acts.

Step forward and play a part in developing a sensible, workable plan that will ultimately allow for the containment and eradication of livestock should that fateful day arrive.

The task awaiting livestock producers in this state must be done.

Farmers and ranchers will do it and they will do it right.

John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

About those letters . . .

The Free Press encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. These are used for verification of the writer only. If, however, you want your address and telephone number to appear with your letter, please ask us to do so when you submit your letter, or include a note with your letter. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous. You can expect your letter to appear in print within 24-48 hours of receipt. Letters to the Free Press allow readers to become engaged in public debate on topics they deem important. Please consider sharing your thoughts with the family of Colby Free Press readers. Thank you.

COLBY FREE PRESS
155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701
freepress@nwkans.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Tom (TD) Dreiling - Publisher
td@nwkans.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor
pdecker@nwkans.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment
tcox@nwkans.com

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director
crystal@nwkans.com

Jeremy Blackwill - Advertising Sales
jblackwill@nwkans.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building
japplegate@nwkans.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkans.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday.

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$32, 8 months \$47, 12 months \$64. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$44, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$72. Other Kansas counties and surrounding states: 4 months \$51, 8 months \$61, 12 months \$75. All other states, \$75, 12 months.

Nor'West Newspapers
Haynes Publishing Company