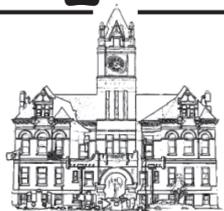


Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

What will happen to Guantanamo?

The new president will have to decide what happens to the hundreds of alleged terrorist prisoners being held at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The U.S. government can't keep the prisoners on the base, which is Cuban territory under a long-term lease to the U.S. that dates back to the Spanish American War.

Guantanamo survives as a capitalist enclave in communist Cuba because we simply refused to leave when Fidel Castro took over more than 50 years ago. It's nearly total isolation — there are no gates that allow commerce with Cuba and on sea approaches to the heavily guarded base — made it a perfect site to hold terrorists. Or so it seemed.

The Bush Administration wanted the prisoners outside the U.S. court system, where lawyers could have tied the cases up for years. The foreign site kept the prisoners out of the courts and out of the public eye at first.

However, scandals involving treatment and alleged religious abuse managed to lead out. Prisoners began to file court cases on the U.S. mainland. And many around the world objected to the extralegal way they were being treated.

The radicals among the crowd refuse to bow at all to U.S. authority. A former chief of public relations for Al-Qaida, Ali Hamza al-Bahlul, was found guilty of 35 counts of conspiracy, solicitation to commit murder and providing material support to terrorism this week.

He ordered his lawyers to stand silent, making no plea or case, and vowed to continue the fight against America. It's hard to see how we can release someone like that.

Others, such as a group of Chinese Muslims captured in Afghanistan, have no place to go. The U.S. no longer sees them as a threat, but cannot send them home to China, where the government would arrest them. The Bush Administration, for many reasons, does not want them here, either.

Still, that leaves al-Bahlul and others like him, real terrorists. But where to put them, and others convicted in special military courts on the Navy base?

No state wants them. Kansas' senators, usually eager to grab any jobs offered by the government, both wrote to reject the idea of building cells at a military prison in Leavenworth.

Wherever they might be held, these political prisoners — we call them war criminals, but their own people do not — would be a target for escape and retribution. Releases, they would only return to their crimes.

Keeping them forever in Cuba is not an option. The president-elect, Barack Obama, already has vowed to close the prison. Nor does it seem likely that another location could be found on foreign soil.

The only real alternative would be to build a special camp somewhere in the U.S., but in an open society, opposition would be strong.

It is a dilemma. No one wants to see the prisoners released, the terrorists at least, and no one wants to have them near. It's no wonder Guantanamo looked so good at the start.

Perhaps, in hindsight, taking these people into the regular courts and regular federal prisons would have been the smart thing to do, but it may be too late for that.

There is no easy solution here, just tough questions.

— Steve Haynes

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The VOTE NOT TAKEN

TWO POLS DIVERGED IN a BOOTH OF WOOD AND SORRY I COULD NOT VOTE FOR BOTH AND BE ONE VOTER, LONG I STOOD AND STUDIED ONE, I MEAN, BUT GOOD, "I'LL HELP YOU OUT," HE MADE AN OATH.

THEN I LOOKED AT the OTHER - JUST AS FAIR... HE HAD, PERHAPS, a BIT MORE FAME AND MAYBE, JUST a TAD MORE HAIR, MY FEELING WAS HE SEEMED TO CARE, SO WERE THEY NOT ABOUT the SAME?

AND BOTH THAT MORNING EQUALLY VIED FOR MY BALLOT - I WAS IN a BIND. MY HEART WAS TORN, MY BRAIN WAS FRIED... I HAD TO CHOOSE, TO PICK, DECIDE - I JUST COULD NOT MAKE UP MY MIND.

WOLF BUTZER SHALL BE TELLING THIS WITH a SIGH ON CNN HOURS and HOURS HENCE: TWO POLS DIVERGED IN a BOOTH, and I FLIPPED a COIN TO VOTE FOR THAT ONE GUY, NOT SMART ENOUGH TO TELL the DIFFERENCE.



Growing season ends with optimism

I snipped the torn pieces of sheet, removed the fence and pulled up the stakes Sunday afternoon.

Garden season is over, and it was time to clean up the mess that Mother Nature had left in my little patch.

First, she gave us lots of sunshine and plenty of rain, and the tomato vines grew. Then there was hail and replanting. Then more sunshine and rain, and it was time to put in the stakes and bind the plants to the wooden slats with strips torn from old white (and blue) bed sheets. Before we knew it, it was time to tie them again, and again and again as they grew, until the vines topped the six-foot stakes and their weight pulled some of the stakes over.

I got a metal pole, planning to put up bird feeders this winter. It went into service right away, standing in the middle of four tomato plants like the only sober person at a party.

While the tomato vines were taking off in the main garden, the zucchini vines were working their way through the fence on the side yard



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

and snaking across the yard. This required me to hold the vines up each week as Steve mowed. He muttered about the vines killing his grass, but he likes my zucchini bread too much to complain all that much.

Then the weather forecast called for the temperatures to maybe fall into the low 30s. I grabbed all the old sheets I keep for that purpose and covered every tomato vine, pepper plant and squash vine in both gardens. My back yard looked like a convention of colorful ghosts. I did this three nights before just going out and stripping the vines of all their fruit, which I stored in the refrigerator and the

basement.

Then I let the freeze do its worst, and one morning the leaves were all black and crumpled and the vines dead. That was more than a week ago. I gave them a while to dry, and then pulled and pushed until the vines were in garbage bags, the stakes and fencing in the garage and the hoses stacked for the winter.

This is always a tough time of the year. It took so much work and was so much fun to raise the crops of lettuce, spinach, peas, beans, tomatoes, green peppers and zucchini. By next month, I'll have forgotten the work and be drooling over seed catalogs for spring. Like all my brethren who work the soil all across this great state, I'm an eternal optimist.

Some of us just work smaller areas than others.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of NorWest Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Advance ballots negate late advertising

Over the weekend, I drove to Lamar, Colo., to visit my wife, Ava, and pack some more boxes and tubs, as she will be retiring at the end of the year and moving to Kansas.

Colorado is one of the big battleground states in the presidential game this year, and it was enlightening to see how that was going.

Her living and being involved in politics in Colorado this year has been interesting and entertaining at times.

My wife and I are both Democrats, but she was a Barack Obama fan long before I was. She campaigned for Obama in southeast Colorado and was a delegate at the county assembly.

Saturday, we went to a craft fair at Lamar Community College. A lot of people know us, and we got to talking about the election, and especially what might happen on the local scene in Prowers County.

In Colorado, the county commissioners live in districts, but are voted on by everyone in the county. Over the years, the Republicans have usually had two commissioners while the Democrats have had one. When I lived there in the '90s, the Democrats had two commissioners to one Republican, but since the three men got along well, it was hard to tell which was which at times.

The expectation is that one of the Republicans might get beat this year, and an open seat might go to a Democrat.

The last time Prowers County voted for a Democratic president was for Lyndon Johnson in 1964. In 1976, the 3rd Congressional District, the southern half of the state, voted for Jimmy Carter, but the electoral votes went to Gerald Ford.

While we were sitting in Ava's apartment Saturday night, the phone rang several times. When she answered, she listened and kept answering "Yes" and sometimes "No."

About five minutes later, she hung up and said she had been talking with Michelle Obama. Actually it was a recorded call asking if she was supporting Obama and attached was the taped message from the candidate's wife.

"I've had calls from Sarah Palin and John



Tom Betz

• Mountain Time

McCain," she added. "I hung up on one from Rudi Giuliani."

She finds the attention being given the state sort of fun, but is certainly glad it is winding down and will be over.

She cancelled her cable television last month, and the only political ads she has seen in the past month have been those on the DVDs I bring down with programs recorded from the Denver channels.

She got to see the difference with some of the programs we like that are on Kansas channels, where the number of political ads has been much lower.

Both of us were chatting with one of our daughters on-line Sunday morning when the phone rang. I answered it, and found myself answering questions in a "political survey."

The recorded message asked if I was going to support McCain or Obama. I had voted for Obama already, and that is how I answered.

As the recorded message went along, it became obvious the purpose of the call was to get Democratic voters to change and vote for McCain. The questions were designed to elicit answers that would favor the conservative agenda and brand Obama's ideas as being liberal and therefore bad.

At the end of the call, the sponsoring organization was identified as Let Freedom Ring, and a phone number was given in a whisper.

The organization has a web site at www.let-freedomringusa.com.

"Let Freedom Ring was formed to counter the attacks of anti-conservative groups on patriotic candidates, as well as attacks on the important issues of our day — those that affect the core of our society: the family, marriage, the economy, energy, abortion, health care and

foreign policy, to name just a few. We also work to keep our constituents and the media informed about what our founding fathers' intentions were and how history shapes laws and our culture today," the site says.

I later read that the call I answered was one of thousands of "push-poll" calls the group had used in several states, including Colorado, over the last 72 hours of the campaign to try to pull out a win for McCain.

One media expert said the Let Freedom Ring effort was costing about \$5 million.

Most of Kansas has not seen or heard many of the ads that were running almost constantly on Colorado radio and television stations as both parties tried to win not just at the national level, but in contested state and local races.

I think some of the last-minute money will have been ill spent, because the reports from Denver are that more than half of the voters — like my wife and I — have already voted by advance ballot.

Tom Betz is editor of The Goodland Star-News and a longtime editor and publisher. He formerly was editor and publisher of the old Lamar Daily News in Colorado.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Room 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

