

Free Press Viewpoint

Government puts the media on notice

The secret seizure of Associated Press phone records by the Justice Department investigating an alleged leak of top-secret information represents a dangerous abuse of government power.

In effect, the AP has been put on notice that if it persists in reporting stories the administration doesn't like, the government can destroy its credibility and scare off its sources.

The results could be a near end to investigative reporting in Washington, where almost everything the government does is secret, especially the bad stuff.

Who, after all, is going to call an AP reporter and give him or her background information on a story — any story — when the feds might be listening?

Tips from second-level sources are the way most Washington stories come out because only the top guys in any agency are "authorized" to speak to the press. And they only recite the administration line.

This is not about politics. Administrations of both parties have been guilty of abusing the Constitution. Remember Dick Nixon and his enemies list? The whole Watergate coverup?

But the Obama administration has been deep into repression of the press. Despite the fact that the president himself last week renewed his support of a reporters' shield law which could have prevented this fiasco, his administration still defends the subpoena used to get AP reporters' phone records.

This act has a particularly chilling effect on news gathering because just the thought that the FBI might be listening will keep a lot of mid-level bureaucrats from blowing the whistle on their bosses. And that's how the public finds out about a lot of government misbehavior.

Worse yet, the fear will dry up calls to other reporters. Who knows how many phones might be tapped in Washington, how many offices might be bugged?

It's not just that, of course. This is the same administration that allowed the Internal Revenue Service to hold up tax-exempt status for tea party-related groups that otherwise qualified just because they were conservative.

It's an administration, and a Justice Department, grounded in the Chicago-style tactics its leader learned at the knee of the Dailey family, who helped him get where he is and shared in federal appointments, influence and other spoils after his election.

There's nothing special about this bunch. No dreamers, no Camelot. Just politics, not as usual, but the worst kind.

Tracing the calls on hundreds of phone lines, checking on everyone a reporter might have talked within a slew of AP offices, the government showed it can flex its muscle at will.

This intrusion surely underlines the need for a strong federal shield law, one that will protect reporters' sources, allow courts to ferret out true danger to national security and keep government goons at bay.

It's not that the Obama gang is the enemy. They're just playing the game, even though they should know better. A growing and powerful security apparatus that wants ever tighter control over every aspect of American life is to blame. Politicians in both parties play the game.

We all need laws to defend us, and reporters in particular, because we depend on them to tell us what our government is up to. We need them to be free and unfettered in that quest.

— Steve Haynes



Blood donations get paid back

The blood flowing in the tubing across your arm feels real weird when you are donating during the local bloodmobile. It's warm, body temperature. Weird.

It feels even stranger when it's coming out of a bag on a pole and flowing back into your system. It's cool, refrigerated. Odd.

I've been donating blood for more than 40 years. I started in college when my roommate was in charge of the Bloodmobile drive.

In Kansas City, I was on their list of willing donors, people the blood bank could call on whenever they needed my type. And since my type is O positive. I got a lot of calls.

It was also something I could do for others that cost me almost nothing, and since I had little money, that was good.

I donated less frequently when we lived in Colorado, as the bloodmobile didn't come to our little town in the mountains very often, and it was a long way to the next town, especially when you have three little kids.

Back in Kansas in the early 1990s, I was able to start giving more often, and I always felt it was one of the things you do to help out your fellow man and your community. And I was never alone in those chairs. There were lots of other willing donors stretching their arms out. You could always tell when high school got out and the seniors arrived to donate.

Of course, we all smiled when a football player keeled over and the 115-pound grand-



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

mother took it all in stride. But, we all came. We all gave.

I really never thought of it as paying something forward. But, that's how it turned out for me.

I got a bad stomach bug while I was in Georgia. So bad I didn't go near my daughter and her new baby for most of the week. Apparently that lit the fuse on a long-standing problem, which really took off. I was losing blood, at first a little at a time, then faster and faster.

By the time I got home, I was really tired. I couldn't walk up the stairs without resting, and I had an almost constant pounding in my head, like an overhead fan with a bad bearing.

I knew I was anemic, and decided it was time to see the doctor. Although I had been taking iron pills, I figured a stronger dose might be in order. I had things to do, and I was having a hard time getting them done.

My doctor ordered a blood test and after checking the results, announced that I was the most anemic person he had seen in more than a

year. He had me wheeled over to the hospital, where they put me on an IV while cross matching my blood. Over the next 15 hours, I got six pints. Since my research tells me that the human body holds about 10, I think that means I was really low.

They told me that my hemoglobin, the cells that carry oxygen to the body, was at 4.8 grams per deciliter of blood. The average, healthy female has a count of 12 to 15. In fact, one of the nurses told me that under five is considered inconsistent with life. Well, I'm glad I didn't know that beforehand.

Steve keeps saying that I was three quarts low and my son noted that it looked like I'd had an oil change.

Whichever it was, I'm back to work and feeling fine despite a few jokes about becoming a vampire or a zombie. Or a vampire zombie.

They're still going to make me do some really unfun tests, but I want to personally thank all those grandmothers, football players, farmers and high school teachers who trotted down to the blood drive last week to give blood.

I wasn't with them this time. You never know when it'll be payback time.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Soldiers at risk need defense from suicide

Coast Guard Adm. William "Dean" Lee is always ready to save lives. He should be.

He's a high-ranking officer in an organization that has long been described as "the Lifesavers." National Public Radio commended the Coast Guard in a story several years ago about the one million lives this doughty little service had saved since its founding in 1790. The Coast Guard motto — Semper Paratus — means "always ready."

Adm. Lee recently spoke in Washington about his readiness to save lives, even when at risk. The admiral is one of a special few in our all-volunteer military who are daily putting their lives on the line. By comparison, in World War II, one in every 11 Americans was in uniform; today, that number is only one in 200. Our lives and our liberty are defended today by a small group of dedicated Americans, most of them young.

The admiral spoke at a National Day of Prayer ceremony recently. He pointed to the serious problem of suicide in the military. Every day, Adm. Lee pointed out with evident compassion, a member of the military takes his or her own life. We are constantly reminded of our need to help them.

I was especially moved by Adm. Lee's plea. For several years in the Reagan administration, I had the task in the U.S. Education Department of researching suicide among youth. I began my work by studying a manual prepared by the federal Centers for Disease Control. Their manual gave me suicide rates for virtually every U.S. demographic. I became familiar with the suicide rates for almost every group, from Ashkenazi Jews to Zuni Indians.

Quickly, I noticed that black females had an almost nonexistent suicide rate. Could that be accurate? I quickly called the centers and the desk officer there assured me it was correct:

Other Opinions

• Robert Morrison Family Research Coun.

"We call it the BFPF." What's that, I pressed. "The Black Female Protective Factor — black women are very religious."

Our government knows that faith in God is a protection against suicide and yet that same government not only does not encourage people in their practice of their religion, the government actually discourages it? How strange!

Columnist Todd Starnes has helped put into focus the recent controversy over attempts by the Obama administration to stigmatize and suppress Christianity in our armed forces.

Starnes' investigative work shows a pattern of suppression under this administration.

Adm. Lee told a striking story of meeting a young serviceman who had attempted suicide.

"When I looked at that young man and heard his story — the rules say — 'send him to the chaplain,' my heart said, give this man a Bible."

He continued, "The lawyers tell me that if I do that, I'm crossing the line; I'm so glad I've crossed that line so many times."

Advisors to President Obama's Defense Department, some of them militant atheizers, like the Military Religious Freedom Foundation's Mikey Weinstein, want men like Adm. Lee to be court-martialed for treason and sedition if they dare to share.

But Adm. Lee is in good company sharing that Good News. In World War II, we had a

commander-in-chief who actually endorsed Bible reading by the troops. He offered these words of hope in an introduction to Bibles carried by our soldiers to such places as the Omaha Beach and Okinawa.

"As Commander-in-Chief I take pleasure in commending the reading of the Bible to all who serve in the armed forces of the United States. Throughout the centuries men of many faiths and diverse origins have found in the Sacred Book words of wisdom, counsel and inspiration. It is a fountain of strength and now, as always, an aid in attaining the highest aspirations of the human soul."

Franklin D. Roosevelt was not accused of anti-Semitism. He ordered U.S. soldiers carrying those Bibles in their pockets to liberate the Nazi concentration camps at Dachau and Buchenwald in 1945. No one then complained of proselytization or suggested he was bigoted. It was the life-saving ideals those soldiers read in that little book that helped them cope with the horrors of Nazi inhumanity.

Adm. Lee is an American hero. He commanded Coast Guard units that conducted some 20,000 search and rescue missions. But in being "always ready" to give reasons for the hope that is within him, and daring to share that hope under threat of censure, this brave Coastie may have performed his greatest service to our country and our God.

Robert Morrison is a Senior Fellow at the Family Research Council. He served in the U.S. Coast Guard.

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Sharon Friedlander - Publisher
friedlander@nwkansas.com

NEWS

R.B. Headley - Sports Editor
colby.sports@nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard@nwkansas.com

Sam Dieter - News Reporter
colby.editor@nwkansas.com

Heather Alwin - Society Editor
colby.society@nwkansas.com

ADVERTISING

colby.ads@nwkansas.com

Kathryn Ballard - Advertising Representative
kballard@nwkansas.com

Kylee Hunter - Graphic Design
khunter@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Office Manager

Melissa Edmondson - Office Manager
medmondson@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Richard Westfahl - General Manager
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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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