

Other Viewpoints

Terrorism threat real and present

The threat of domestic terrorism became uncomfortably real for south-central Kansas last Friday, with the announcement about a foiled suicide bombing that morning at Wichita Mid-Continent Airport.

Congratulations and gratitude are due the federal, state and local authorities whose work and collaboration enabled the incident to end with an arrest rather than a deadly blast. The agencies involved in the case include the Wichita FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, drawn from the FBI, Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office and Kansas Highway Patrol, with assistance from the FBI's Kansas City division, the Transportation Security Administration, the Wichita Airport Authority and the Wichita Police Department.

The 21-page criminal complaint leaves one to imagine what might have been had Terry Lee Loewen, a 58-year-old avionics technician in Wichita, succeeded in his alleged goal of blowing up an explosives-filled van at the terminal in an act of violent jihad on behalf of al-Qaida. According to authorities, during the months when Loewen apparently thought he was in communication with others assisting him in such a terrorist operation, he was actually dealing with undercover FBI employees. And the explosive material he'd meant to kill himself and others was inert.

But his motives sound alarmingly genuine, judging from his excerpted writings and their talk of "maximum carnage" and death. Authorities say he studied the airport's layout, took photos and researched flight schedules as the plot went along. He was taken into custody as he tried to use his security badge to open a gate and drive onto the tarmac, according to the complaint.

It's breathtaking to think that as the construction of the new airport terminal has been underway this fall – and as Wichitans were engaging in a spirited debate about whether to rename the finished project to honor President Eisenhower – a home-grown wannabe terrorist was working on a plan to kill himself and others at the existing terminal, according to authorities.

In announcing Loewen's arrest, U.S. Attorney Barry Grissom and FBI Special Agent in Charge Mike Kaste made the important point that Loewen's alleged actions in no way should reflect on any religious group. Too many continue to forget that those who plan or carry out terrorist acts in the name of Islam have twisted that faith to unrecognizable extremes.

The arrest was a sobering reminder that a dozen years after the Sept. 11 attacks, people out there want to kill and maim Americans, and not only in coastal urban centers. It offers south-central Kansans a new frame of reference for the ongoing debates about electronic surveillance of Americans, as well as something else to ponder as they remove their shoes and file through airport security.

The vigilance needs to keep pace with the threat, which clearly can come from within our country and our communities as well as from abroad.

– *The Wichita Eagle, via the Associated Press*

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Nation can't define personal morality

In a recent article on this page, John Richard Schrock wrote about diplomatic ability and wisdom. George Kennan, for Schrock, was a good example of a true statesman with diplomatic ability and wisdom.

History and political buffs know about the political failures of our national and world efforts to address social and economic conditions. Could World War II have been avoided if these issues were addressed differently?

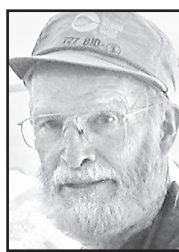
Our national political leaders and, frankly, our church leaders need to think about Kennan's advice published in 1952. "Let us not attempt to constitute ourselves the guardian of everyone else's virtue; we have enough trouble to guard our own."

We invade other nations under the auspices of "democracy." We interfere in the internal affairs of other nations in an attempt to influence favorable advantages for ourselves.

We question the ability of common folks to know right from wrong in their personal lives. We don't want Uncle Sam telling us what is acceptable business practice, but we want Uncle Sam to determine our rights to personal matters of sexual and spiritual relations and to tell other nations what they can and can't do.

A democracy is not the most efficient form of government. An absolute dictatorship is the most proficient and efficient form of rule, without guaranteeing equity in society. Neither does all society aspire to equity for everyone.

Ours is not a true democratic form of government. We have a representative govern-



Ken Poland

• Ken's World

ment elected through a modified democracy.

I have to hand it to those that crafted the guidelines for our constitutional government. With only a few amendments it has worked extremely well. It has been challenged by society and our courts, but it still stands.

Those men didn't just walk in and craft the system on their limited and recently acquired knowledge and experience. They knew history and evaluated cause and effect. They put their experience and knowledge together, and compromised at times. They put together the guidelines for an experiment to establish a new nation and system different from anything in recorded history. When they inserted the guidelines for amending their work, they left it open for further experiment and tweaking.

Why were they so successful when we haven't been able to establish a similar government for other nations? Was it because they represented the interests of their constituency?

We hear their success was because they were God-fearing and acted from direct inspiration. That may well be, but I'm not sure not a one of them could join just any church of today.

That cherished caveat of freedom of religion has allowed many groups of worshipers with adamant and distinct differences of interpretation of "God's" laws.

"Let us not attempt to constitute ourselves the guardian of everyone else's virtue; we have enough trouble to guard our own." That is pretty good advice for every individual. And it is certainly good advice for government. Government should not attempt to pass laws to keep us from sinning.

As Christians we have God's laws to tell us what is sin, what we should avoid, and the consequences or rewards for our decisions and actions. Our Bible indicates that God allows us freedom on earth to choose who, what or where we worship. Most other religions also have their own canon of law.

Government is responsible for the welfare of its citizens here on earth. Government is not responsible for protecting us from whatever we may face after death. The authors of our constitution had their own idea of God and what they believed as individuals, but they did not declare a national theology.

Government should pass laws to protect us from one another, not the wrath of whatever God or gods that government may recognize.

Ken Poland describes himself as a semi-retired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rcwinc@cheerful.com.

Brother Rat's face has changed

"In his campaign for the Democratic Party's presidential ticket, Barack Obama famously praised Ronald Reagan, saying Reagan was a transformational president in a way Nixon and Clinton never were.

That remark, predictably, provoked cold fury from the Clinton camp; it was intended to. Obama was seeking the support of those Reagan Democrats who had bolted the party of FDR for the magnetic appeal of the Gipper.

No small part of Reagan's appeal was his movie career. Reagan had been a star of the "B" movies. Highbrows looked down their noses, but they were popular. Millions of Americans trooped out to the movies weekly in the 1930s, '40s and '50s to see these movies that affirmed basic American values.

One of Reagan's most popular movies was "Brother Rat." The story was simple: First-year students at the famed Virginia Military Institute were called "rats," and the movie was about the clashes and close bonds formed among those "Brother Rats." Now, even Reagan wasn't overwhelmed by the deeper meaning of his movies. "They don't want it good," he would joke, "they want it Thursday."

So, when Barack Obama wrote another autobiographical book, he knew he was on solid ground in associating himself with a winner like Reagan. Here's what Obama said about Reagan in "The Audacity of Hope."

"Pride in our country, respect for our armed services, a healthy appreciation for the dangers beyond our borders, and insistence that there was no easy equivalence between East and West – in all this I had no quarrel with Reagan," Obama wrote. "And when the Berlin Wall came tumbling down, I had to give the old man his due, even if I never gave him my vote."

Other Opinions

• Robert Morrison Family Research Council

Nor did he give Reagan's world view a serious thought. Obama seems never to have thought about what it was in those countries trapped on the other side of the Berlin Wall that made Reagan so determined to prevail over communism.

Obama acknowledged that when he was a student, he sought out the Marxist professors. And we know his earliest mentor was Frank Marshall Davis, a lifelong Communist. Young Barack was unlikely to learn from these committed leftists what made the Evil Empire evil.

You can get a taste today of the "empire built on bones" that was the USSR by watching "The Way Home" or "Katyn." These are two serious foreign films that give a taste of life under the red tsars.

You can also sense the soul-deadening suspicion of everyone by everyone that was life in East Germany under the never-blinking eye of the Stasi by watching "The Lives of Others" (Parental notice: There's a dispiriting sex scene with a prostitute in this important movie. In East Germany, socialism ruined everything, including sex.)

If foreign movies are not your thing, however, you might just visit the Air Force Academy.

In Colorado Springs, we have a new version of "Brother Rat" being played out in living color. The Air Force brass is not satisfied with

dropping "So help me God" from the cadet oath. They have taken to recruiting cadets to rat on each other. They say this is a useful way to solve crimes and root out harassment.

And doubtless they will use these new rats to determine who among the Corps of Cadets is "homophobic" or inclined still to think of America as "one nation under God." Clearly, these last would be a threat to the new model Obama military.

We all cheered when the Berlin Wall came down. But we failed to learn the lesson that should have been taught at that time. There was a why to that ugly, brutal Wall. The people of East Germany lost their liberty long before the Wall went up. They lost their freedom when they traded constitutional government for a full dinner pail.

We need to stand up to the Air Force Academy brass and their Stasi-style snooping. We need to call a halt to this odious form of betrayal. "Unit cohesion" is the cold and technical term for what Shakespeare taught in "Henry V."

Our all-volunteer ranks should be warm-hearted and filled with trust. They should be "a band of brothers." And, yes, of sisters, too. And among such honorable young officers, there is no place for a spy, an informer, a brother rat.

Robert Morrison is a senior fellow at the Family Research Council. He graduated from the University of Virginia, worked as a high school and college history and political science teacher, and served at the U.S. Department of Education. He formerly served as executive director of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Office of Government Information.

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COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth St. (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701 fax (785) 462-7749

Send news to: colby.editor@nwkansan.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout, Columns, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography. Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

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THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the days observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Nor'West Newspaper, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701.

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

THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 6 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 herein. Member Kansas Press Association and National Newspaper Association.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby, Thomas County and Oakley: three months \$35, one year \$85. By mail to ZIP Codes beginning with 676 and 677: three months \$39, one year \$95. Elsewhere in the U.S., mailed once per week: three months \$39, one year \$95. Student rate, nine months, in Colby, Thomas County and Oakley, \$64; mailed once per week elsewhere in the U.S. \$72.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

