commentary

from other pens...

Many barriers to victory on ground in Afghanistan By Tom Raum

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON - The road to Kabul is lined with obstacles, both political and military ones.

Ragtag northern alliance rebels may be unable to seize and hold the Afghan capital even with U.S. help, Pakistani allies want the city declared a neutral zone and anti-American sentiment is building.

Time and weather could be problems, too: A long religious holiday and winter snows are approaching.

The United States has entered a new stage of the fighting in Afghanistan, bombing Taliban forces to help rebels capture the northern crossroads city of Mazar-e-Sharif and then push on toward Kabul.

More nighttime commando raids on Taliban sites like the one staged over the weekend are expected. The new strategy may be designed to produce a military victory — but it is fraught with danger.

Slow-flying American helicopters that carry special forces are easy targets for shoulder-launched missiles. The commandos, lightly armed to increase their mobility, are vulnerable to ambushes on the ground.

A helicopter during the weekend commando raid had its wheels torn off. And two other U.S. helicopters came under fire in Pakistan.

Taliban leaders give no sign they're ready to yield to U.S. demands they turn over Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida lieutenants.

Taliban soldiers are known for fading into Afghanistan's mountains and villages. Pentagon officials say up to 15,000 appear to be entrenched in a labyrinth-like complex of caves, trenches and bunkers just north of Kabul.

Even if the Taliban is driven from the capital, occupying Kabul will be hazardous, with snipers and booby-traps likely to be left behind.

"There are a lot of risks here," said military analyst Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "You really have no way of knowing whether the northern alliance can be made into an effective military force. It's weak, divided, and poorly equipped and supplied."

Earlier, the United States did not want the northern alliance to enter the capital before a broader-based government could be established. But feeling pressure for a military victory of some sorts before the onset of winter and the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, it is not waiting for diplomats to decide on the makeup of a post-Taliban government.

"Our efforts from the air are to assist forces on the ground in being able to occupy more ground," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said.

Muslim allies want the United States to score a major victory before the Islamic holy month of Ramadan begins around Nov. 17 — or agree to a lengthy delay in the Afghan operation.

Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf, a key supporter of the U.S. attacks, warned of a Muslim backlash if intense fighting continues during Ramadan. He also has proposed Kabul be declared a "neutral zone" rather than be allowed to fall under the control of the northern alliance.

Musharraf has been struggling to contain Muslim anger in his own country over the U.S. campaign as well as his decision to allow the United States to use three military bases in Pakistan.

Beyond having a common enemy in the Taliban, the northern alliance is a loose coalition with little organization, made up of rival factions with a long record of violence, human-rights abuses and mutual mistrust.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar warned a proxy or puppet regime would not be tolerated in Kabul. "Those who tried to do so in the past had to pay a heavy price for such blunders," Sattar said recently.

"One of the challenges right now is for the military operation not to get ahead of the diplomatic operation," said former Defense Department strategist Michele Flournov.

The administration has called upon the U.N. to form a new government from representatives of a half-dozen factions and ethnic groups. Secretary of State Colin Powell has suggested it include members of the Taliban.

Many in the international community are promoting Afghanistan's former king, Mohammed Zaher Shah, who was deposed in 1973, as a pos-



Being the 'spud express' weighs heavy on my car

I'm a fruit and vegetable junkie, and all the folks at the office know it.

Every summer, we raise more produce than we can eat, and we take the excess to the office. The front desk usually has a sack of tomatoes, squash or lettuce on it. In really good years, we don't allow people to pick up a newspaper or buy a classified without taking a zucchini.

"That'll be 75 cents," we say, "and here's your zucchini.

"But, I just want a newspaper. I don't want a zucchini."

"Tough. No zucchini, no newspaper."

At the other times of the year, I have to import the produce.

Each spring and fall, I take a trek to Texas to deliver my mother for the winter and bring her home in the spring. I also pick up oranges, and in the fall, I pick the grapefruit from her tree.

For several years now, I have taken an extra suitcase to bring back the citrus.

First the grapefruit, each wrapped in newspaper, go into the bag. Then the oranges, also wrapped, go in. Lastly comes the key limes. These are little limes about the size of walnuts. They are very popular in



Mexico and Texas, mostly for their juice.

in the bag, I zip it up and try to pick it up. If I can carry it without getting a hernia, I'll go out and buy another 30-pound bag of oranges. The suitcase gets little red car. checked and the oranges get slung over my shoulder.

In the fall, I head for my old home in the mountains of Colorado. The San Luis Valley, where Steve the tires. They were fine but the car was riding about and I raised our family, has very sandy soil and is a foot lower than usual. It was a strange feeling to be known for its potatoes. Over the years, we've become potato snobs and won't eat anything but Val- fill the gas tank. ley potatoes. Maybe they just taste better when you know who grew them.

A couple times a year, we head for Center, Colo., baked, boiled, mashed, fried, diced, sliced and raw the heart of potato country. There we visit Cañon potatoes this winter. Potato warehouse, one of the biggest shippers in the country, and get our supply.

In the spring, we just get enough to last us through the summer. In the fall, right after the harvest, we get enough for the everybody at the office - all five of them.

This year, I took my little Ford Probe to the warehouse and ordered the potatoes for everyone - 600 pounds or about \$90 worth - at the office.

Then I drove around the semis and up to the load-When it is almost impossible to get another thing ing dock. The loaders brought out my produce on a fork lift that seemed to have almost nothing on it. But 600 pounds of potatoes made a big difference to my

While a Safeway truck driver patiently awaited his turn, I slowly drove away.

As soon as I was free of the dock, I stopped to check able to look over my car and to have to bend down to

I'll keep 100 pounds of the spuds and the rest will go to the crew. They're already looking forward to

Come to think of it, so am I. And the car is just looking forward to getting those durn spuds out of there.

Reporter's questions to Bush embarassed me

Did you watch the president's news conference the other night?

Was I the only one who was a little embarrassed by the questions?

If this is the best we have, I thought, the cream of the Washington press corps, isn't the Fourth Estate in trouble?

When Helen Thomas asks a question about Iraq, luted, her question so tortured, he hardly has to, but Some are so far off the mark they are embarrass-



I am sure the reporters would say they have to the president winces. Her sentence is so convo- ask tough questions, but who are they kidding?

times have to ask the hard questions, and demand some answers, we do not try to trick them. We don't make up compound sentences posing multi-part questions that can't be answered without committing perjury.

Neither do reporters in most major cities. Ever at the occasional press conference, we have a dialog with the briefer. We're there to get information to have someone explain a story. We don't need trick questions; we just need answers.

sible unifying figure for Afghanistan. EDITOR'S NOTE: Tom Raum has covered national and international affairs for The Associated Press since 1973.

The Goodland Daily News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562) Member: Kansas Press Association The Associated Press Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association e-mail: daily@nwkansas.com



Steve Haynes, President Tom Betz, Editor/Editorial Page Rachel Miscall, Managing Editor Society Editor/Reporter

Sharon Corcoran, Sports Editor Doug Jackson, Eric Yonkey, Bill Wagoner, Advertising Sales James Schiefen, Adv. Production Sheila Smith, Office Manager Pat Schiefen Bookkeeping

Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager Ron VanLoenen Judy McKnight Richard Westfahl Lana Westfahl Betty Morris Helen Dilts

nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services (nbetz@nwkansas.com) Evan Barnum, Systems Admin.(support@nwkansas.com)

Published daily except Saturday and Sunday and the day observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: daily@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: gdnadv@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Daily News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$22; six months, \$38; 12 months, \$72. By mail in Kansas, Colorado: three months, \$ 28; six months, \$50; 12 months, \$95. (All tax included.) Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$25; six months, \$40; 12 months, \$75.

Incorporating:

The Sherman *County Herald* Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989



Nor'West Newspapers Haynes Publishing Company

his double take is refreshing. There is no way he can answer, and they both know it.

Thomas, the senior reporter at the White House, has outlived at least a couple of news agencies and eight administrations. She knows how the game is played.

And that may be the problem.

Like many things in the Beyond-the-Looking-Glass world of Washington, the questions and the replies are played for effect.

Notice, I said replies. Presidents seldom answer questions. Most are so contrived, they can't be answered honestly.

ing. Others are just plain ignorant, like the reporter who asked about the "virus" that causes anthrax (it's a bacterium, a very different type of organism). To be fair, I heard a couple of high government officials call it a virus as well. Our learning curve in this country is steep some days.

Now, out here in the sticks, we talk with news sources all the time. So do reporters in your average city. Few of us ever go to a press conference, which is not an ordinary occurrence in American life

We interview sources, we talk with them, we have a conversation with them. While we some-

But that is not the way the game is played in Washington. There, everyone seems to be obsessed with tripping someone up, forcing some admission that can be pointed out for days later as a major gaffe.

But I wonder, when the nation watches these sideshows, just who people think is the fool?

Are White House reporters trying to get answers or just showing off? Are they interested in a story. or just in how they look on television?

And dean of the Washington Press corps or not shouldn't Helen Thomas get a new hair color?

And why didn't anyone say, "Thank you, Mr President?"

Democrats stay 'unilateralist' on trade policy

Just as President Bush is adopting the multilateralist foreign policy they urged upon him, Democrats are getting ready to torpedo a key piece of it — his power to negotiate trade agreements.

Democrats accused Bush of isolating the United States when he dumped the Kyoto Protocol on global warming and threatened to abandon the antiballistic missile treaty.

But now, as Bush works with an international coalition to fight terrorism, it's the Democrats who are intent on isolating America in the global economy by inhibiting the president's power to negotiate a new worldwide free-trade agreement.

Democrats are doing so partly out of distrust for Bush's willingness to promote labor and environmental standards and partly in fealty to their protectionist labor union base.

In the process, they are undercutting the spirit of bipartisanship that has prevailed in Washington since Sept. 11 — while accusing Bush of doing the same by bringing up such a divisive issue.

With a House vote expected next week or the week after, Bush made his first big push for TPA in meetings with fence-sitting Republicans and Democrats on Tuesday. Vote counters of both parties say he is short of the votes required to pass it.

One lobbyist said he could count at most 15 Democrats as favoring the TPA measure passed last week by the House Ways and Means Committee, plus 185 Republicans, leaving Bush 20 votes short.

A Democratic trade expert said he knows of only 12 or 13 Democrats who have pledged to support TPA, with perhaps 10 to 12 more on the fence.

The measure was worked out between Chairman Bill Thomas, R-Calif., and three Democrats: Reps. Cal Dooley of California, William Jefferson of



commentary

ing member Charlie Rangel of New York.

However, Rangel now declares Democrats were inadequately consulted. He has teamed up with Rep. Sander Levin, D-Mich., to propose an alternative bill that will give Democrats a way of saying they are pro-trade while killing fast-track authority.

The Thomas bill includes labor and environmental objectives as part of fast-track legislation for the first time, requires trading partners to enforce their own laws, creates assistance programs to help them do so, and imposes sanctions if they don't.

Levin contends labor and environmental protections in the Thomas bill are inadequate and that Congress wouldn't be given enough opportunities to participate in trade negotiations.

The Levin bill would impose 70 pages of specific labor and environmental objectives for administration trade negotiators to secure in trade agreements, then give an 18-member Congressional panel veto power over the treaties after they were negotiated.

As Dooley observed, no doubt correctly, "Labor would oppose the Levin bill if it were the only one standing. They're in the Dark Ages on this issue." Philosophically, labor and mainstream Demo-

crats believe improved labor standards should be imposed on other countries at the price of reduced access to U.S. markets.

The Republican business view — supported by Democratic presidents in the past — is that coun-Louisiana, and John Tanner of Tennessee, who were tries improve their labor standards and environauthorized to negotiate by Ways and Means rank- ments as they get richer by selling their products to the newspaper of Capitol Hill.

the world through freer trade.

Besides loyalty to labor, some of the Democrats hardline opposition is based on pure partisanship. When Democrat Bill Clinton was in the Oval Office, 73 members of his party voted with him to support permanent normal trade status for China.

In 1997, about 43 Democrats were committed to fast track before it was pulled from the floor, and in 1998, when Republicans brought it up to embarrass Clinton with a defeat, 29 Democrats voted for it.

Some Democrats may be motivated as well by loyalty to Minority Leader Richard Gephardt, D-Mo., widely viewed as labor's candidate in the 2004 presidential election.

Others are miffed at Thomas for the arbitrary way he runs Ways and Means, especially on tax matters.

One surprising convert to the "dark side" on fast track is Rep. Bob Matsui, D-Calif. He has a longstanding record as a trade supporter, and the administration ought to to address his concerns, which are based on the Congressional oversight issue.

"Trade has changed," Matsui said. "When we vote up or down on a trade agreement, we can change U.S. antitrust law, intellectual property protections, or food-safety law.

"Pat Buchanan was premature in saying it, but he was right about the fact American sovereignty is affected by trade agreements. Congress has to have more of a say in this (issue). Under fast track we have just 20 hours of debate and then have to vote up or down on a complicated, detailed agreement."

Bush should try to increase Congressional participation in trade negotiations. But in the end, he has to spend some of the political capital he's accumulated fighting terrorism to beat the Democrats and labor - in the name of international engagement.

Morton Kondracke is executive editor of Roll Call,