

commentary

from other pens...

Drawbacks to effort to kill Iraq's Saddam

It's called "regime change" — the administration's deceptively polite term for deposing Saddam Hussein.

Among options being discussed are support for a local insurgency, fostering a coup by the Iraqi leader's closest lieutenants and an outright U.S.-led invasion.

Much less is heard about what could be the swiftest avenue to the post-Saddam era: taking him out with a well-placed military strike.

Anthony Cordesman, a military analyst for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, notes that the killing Saddam is the "the ideal minimalist solution" if a way were found to track him and there were high assurances of success.

But when it comes to blowing away foreign enemies, the U.S. record is poor.

During the U.S.-led Gulf War 11 years ago, there were repeated, unsuccessful efforts to kill Saddam. Laurie Mylroie, an Iraq analyst and regime change supporter, recalls that U.S. "deep penetration" bombs were used against suspected underground hideouts but Saddam proved too elusive.

Having learned from that experience, Saddam probably has refined his detection-avoidance capabilities, says Mylroie.

Saddam is not the first foreign leader to survive being in America's cross hairs.

A 1975 Senate committee report uncovered eight failed U.S. attempts on the life of Cuban President Fidel Castro over the years. (Castro has said the figure was much higher.)

There also was an unacknowledged attempt to kill Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi in April 1986 after U.S. officials linked his government to a terrorist incident in Germany that left two U.S. soldiers dead.

Richard Murphy, who then headed the State Department's Middle East bureau, said there was never any discussion of going after Gadhafi personally, but that the target selection included Gadhafi's compound. The Libyan leader was unharmed but an adopted infant daughter was killed.

In theory, assassination attempts are a violation of an executive order signed by President Reagan in 1981. "No person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in, assassination," the order states.

The directive does not seem to have been a deterrent, as demonstrated by the attempts on Gadhafi and Saddam and by the cruise missile attacks President Clinton ordered in 1998 against supposed terrorist camps operated by Osama bin Laden.

Former CIA Director Robert Gates has said Reagan's executive order should not be interpreted too literally.

"I make a distinction between military operations and the CIA going out and targeting someone for assassination. In military operations, people usually get killed," Gates says.

As for Saddam and his perceived "axis of evil" regime, Mylroie says if President Bush sees the executive order as an impediment, he could simply revoke it.

Cordesman believes there are formidable reasons for not going after Saddam personally. If the operation is successful, it might not make much difference if Saddam succeeded by his like-minded sons.

Also, he says, there should be a moral constraint on the United States, a victim of international terrorism, in the way it acts against perpetrators of terrorism.

The downside of an attack on Saddam is that it "may convince people that you have just committed an act of terrorism," he says.

The notion of eliminating Saddam in a single stroke may look nice on the surface, he says, adding that "it is far from clear that the people who are advocating that have thought out the consequences."

EDITOR'S NOTE: George Gedda has covered foreign affairs for The Associated Press since 1968.

TOO MUCH OLYMPICS...



Patriotism: Do people know what it means?

Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, many people have flown flags on their cars, have flags hung in the windows of their homes and businesses, even wear flags on their lapels. And with the Olympic games in progress, patriotism has another impetus fueling the fire.

People stand for the National Anthem and for the flag salute, but how many really think about what they are doing? What does it mean to "pledge allegiance to the flag?"

For one thing, it is to pledge allegiance to the United States government. If one pledges allegiance to a government, such loyalty would require obeying the laws and requirements of that government. If one were to pledge allegiance and then do something illegal or cheat on his taxes, would that be true allegiance?

Could it really be considered allegiance when it is shown only when it is convenient to do so?

Another thing involved in pledging allegiance to the flag is religion. Why religion? Because saluting the flag, putting your hand over your heart while pledging allegiance and singing to the flag are all forms of worship.

Not that this is against the beliefs of many reli-



sharon corcoran

• use it or lose it

gious groups. A lot of churches have flags displayed at the front of the church with other religious symbols, such as crosses and statues of Jesus and Mary.

Many religious groups have supported the leaders of nations in wars. Leaders of Protestant and Catholic churches blessed troops fighting in World War II. Religious leaders blessed soldiers participating in the "ethnic cleansing" in Rwanda and Burundi. Church leaders have often seen no conflict in getting involved in political debates and providing support to candidates for political office.

Patriotism, nationalism and religion have become intertwined. But this is in direct conflict with Bible principles.

Exodus 20:4, 5 says, "You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth un-

derneath or that is in the waters under the earth. You must not bow down to them nor be induced to serve them, because I Jehovah your God am a God exacting exclusive devotion."

Jesus refused to be made a king and said his followers would remain neutral in politics as well. At John 17:16, he said, "They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world."

As for nationalism, which encourages the superiority of one race or nation over another, Acts 17:26 says, "And he (God) made out of one man every nation of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth."

If all of mankind descended from one man, how could any one race be superior to another? If everyone on earth was created by God, how could one deserve better treatment than another?

Many people who participate in patriotic ceremonies do not realize they are encouraging racial superiority and hatred and are giving worship to a government rather than to God.

Each individual has a right to decide for himself whether or not to participate in such ceremonies, and each person should be make an informed choice.

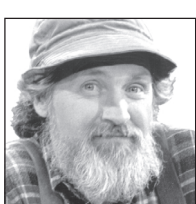
The smart solution

I've been married a long, long, long, long time. My wife and I are well into our 36th year of controlled bliss. And it occurs to me that there has been an evolution in the content of the hidden messages that are just under the surface, every time she talks to me or even looks my way. In the early years, the message said, "You are the perfect man for me." Soon it became, "If you changed a couple of things, you would be the perfect man for me." Reality began to sink in when the message became, "I think you're an idiot." And it got worse. In our darkest period, the message became, "I know you're an idiot." Now for any of you out there going through this phase, I urge you to find a way to hang on and keep it together. Because the next phase is the best. That's the one my wife and I are in now, where the message becomes, "We both know you're an idiot."

This is a good place. We're back on the same side again. I don't get blamed. My stupidity does. It's an enemy my wife and I have in common, and she believes that it hurts me more than it hurts her. She still calls me names but with extreme sympathy and even affection. It's a wonderful thing when a husband's idiocy can bring a couple closer together.

THE HEADLESS HOGMAN

I spend quite a bit of time in Florida because I'm allergic to snow shovels. And one thing I notice here is that motorcyclists don't need to wear helmets. It's an unfamiliar sight to see men on Harleys doing about 80 with no head protection, weaving



red green

• north of forty

through a parade of tractor-trailers on I-75. Back home, they'd be pulled over in a flash, their bikes confiscated, and they'd get a ticket for reckless endangerment or something. But when I think about it, the helmet law doesn't make much sense. The fact that these guys hit the open road on a motorcycle means that they like to live on the edge. And when somebody living on the edge comes into my life, I don't want them wearing anything like a helmet that would make it harder to identify them in a police line-up. Why does everyone have to wear a helmet? Maybe some people don't have a brain worth protecting. And let's be serious, if a motorcycle has a 75 mile-an-hour head-on collision with a transport, what good is a helmet? Other than to keep the head intact which makes it easier to identify the body.

THE CHOSEN ONES

Life is about making choices. We all do it every day. Here are a few signs to watch for that indicate you have made some poor choices in your life:

- Your lunch comes with a free action figure.
- No shirt ever made goes with the pants you just bought.

- Your lawn is too small for all of your ornaments.
- Your retirement plan relies on a lottery win.
- Your family can only visit with you in the presence of an armed guard.
- Your household garbage has more bottles than food wrappers.

THE PERPETUAL PROBLEM

If there's one thing I've learned (which is debatable), it's that a person will never be completely happy. There will always be something in your life that leaves you unsatisfied or frustrated. The idea that money eliminates dissatisfaction is a fantasy. No matter how much money you spend, you will always have some product or service that disappoints you. If you can accept this simple truth, it can be very comforting. When you drive by the huge mansion with the exotic cars parked out front, you know that that poor guy has something that cost him a fortune, and he doesn't like it. Whereas your biggest financial mistake was the \$30 bowling shoes that pinch. Keep them and smile when you wear them. They are saving you a fortune, my friend.

QUOTE OF THE DAY: "Forgettable cars are usually recalled." - Red Green

Red Green is the star of "The Red Green Show," a television series seen in the U.S. on PBS and in Canada on the CBC Network, and the author of "The Red Green Book" and "Red Green Talks Cars: A Love Story."

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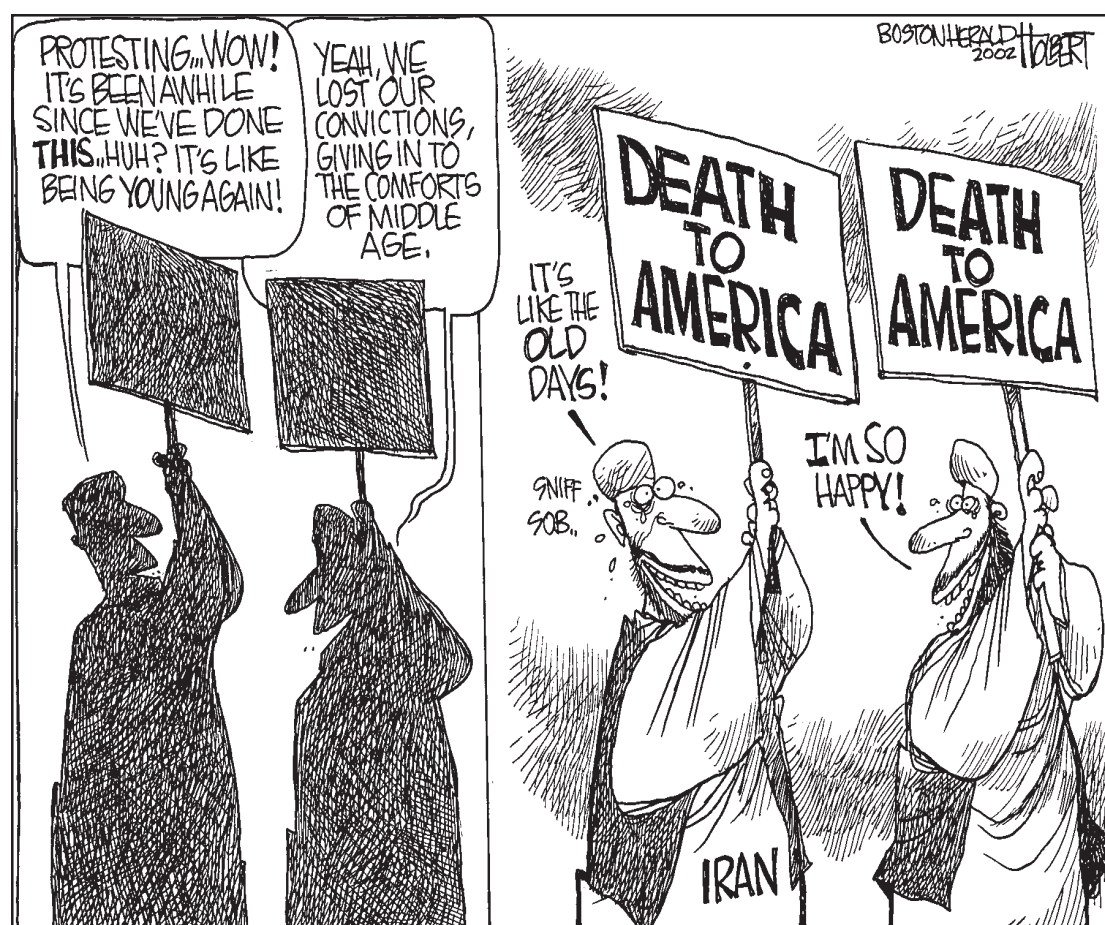
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