

commentary

from other pens...

Bush sounds optimistic on war despite portents

President Bush has been sounding optimistic about how American will and determination will prevail in the war on terrorism, yet given the headlines over the past month, rosy predictions of victory seem to some hard to justify.

His optimism was on display during political campaign stops in five states over the past few days in the run-up to next week's midterm elections.

"We're making progress at dismantling the terrorist organization. We've hauled in a couple of thousand. One by one we're finding them and bringing them to justice," Bush said Monday in Denver.

But the president's confidence is difficult to square with alarmist predictions of the intelligence community and a decided uptick in the number of terrorist incidents.

"They are coming after us," CIA Director George Tenet told Congress two weeks ago, contending that al-Qaida is now "reconstituted" despite efforts by the United States and others to "root them out."

Last Thursday, the FBI warned about possible terrorist attacks on the U.S. transportation network, especially railroads. The warning was based on debriefings by al-Qaida prisoners.

Terrorists have been increasingly active elsewhere. Between Oct. 6 and Oct. 23, a French oil tanker was bombed in Yemen, two Americans were shot in Kuwait, a suicide bomber in Indonesia left almost 200 dead and Chechen rebels seized hundreds in a Moscow theater. In all cases, al-Qaida or affiliates of the terror organization are believed to have been responsible.

In between the events came word that North Korea had started a uranium enrichment program to develop nuclear weapons. Pyongyang may already have a bomb or two stashed away from an earlier plutonium-based program, the CIA says.

All this is unrelated to what the administration believes is the most imminent threat of terrorism with weapons of mass destruction threat, Iraq. Bush vows to disarm Iraq with or without U.N. Security Council support.

And if Bush's we're-going-to-be-all-right optimism is contagious, Republicans should do well next Tuesday.

He acknowledged to his Denver audience on Monday that the struggle against terrorists "is not an easy lift. It's going to take a while. This isn't one of these instant gratification deals.

"The best way to make sure we defend our freedoms and fulfill our obligations to our children is to hunt these killers down one at a time and bring them to justice, which is exactly what we're going to do."

Bush recognizes that events have conspired to make the world smaller, and in so doing, have made America more vulnerable.

"We used to think two oceans could protect us from harm," Bush told a political rally last Thursday in Alabama. "For a long time, our country felt like oceans could keep us immune from personal attack. We learned a horrible lesson."

The lesson is not exactly new. Since the advent of ICBMs and long-range bombers during the Cold War, neighboring oceans have been less of a security buffer than before. Now they count for even less.

Indeed, terrorist groups pose a greater threat to the American homeland than the German Luftwaffe did in 1940, a time when oceans on either side really did provide a measure of security.

Not to worry, Bush says. "You got to know the manhunt is on and it doesn't matter how long it takes. I like our chances better than theirs," he says of the terrorists.

"We got a fabulous military. And we got a great resolve. I can't imagine what was going through their minds. They must have thought our religion was materialism. They must have thought we were so self-centered, so absorbed with our ... shallow materialism that all we would do after September the 11th was file a lawsuit.

"They just didn't understand. And they're going to pay a dear price for doing what they did to America."

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



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BOSTON HERALD 2002

Cures not campaigns

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Bulletin to organizers: We are aware. We know what the pink ribbon means. We know that breast cancer kills tens of thousands of women each year. You have done a wonderful job.

Now it's time to shift our energies from marketing to medicine.

As lovely as it was, did we really need to bathe the Washington, D.C., Nieman Marcus store in pink light, as one breast cancer group did earlier this month, then usher guests down a pink carpet for pink hors d'oeuvres and pink cocktails? Do we need Avon marketing breast cancer lipsticks in shades of Brave Brocade, Courageous Coral and Determined Red, as if breast cancer were a plucky undertaking, like skydiving or marching on city hall?

Everywhere you turn, there's another corporation draping itself in pink. We can Cook for the Cure with KitchenAid. Sip for the Cure with Republic of Tea's Pink Grapefruit Green Tea blend. Clean for the Cure with the Electrolux Whirlwind LiteSpeed vacuum.

I hesitate to criticize any corporation that takes on a good cause. But these product promotions are as much about green as pink. Which is why the San Francisco-based advocacy group, Breast Cancer Action, has launched its own awareness campaign



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this month called "Think Before You Pink."

"Breast cancer today is big business," says Barbara Brenner, BCA executive director. "More and more companies are using breast cancer as a marketing ploy to sell products while donating very little to the cause.

"We're urging consumers to 'think before they pink' because as long as we believe we're doing something meaningful about breast cancer by buying into these corporate marketing schemes, the real work that needs to be done around treatment, prevention and access to care will continue to be underfunded and ignored."

Too much of the money raised by the corporations goes to education rather than research and treatment. For example, the Susan G. Komen Foundation, the recipient of much corporate fund raising, last year spent \$26 million on research, \$6 million on treatment — and \$33 million on public health education.

Education often means teaching women about the importance of self-exams and mammograms. But a recent study found that self-examination did not prevent deaths. And there is a growing debate on the effectiveness of mammograms, too.

Clearly, our methods for detection, prevention and cures have not stemmed the spread of the disease, despite all the money raised. Between 1973 and 1980, the incidence of breast cancer for women over 40 was essentially constant. But since 1980, the rate has been rising steadily.

On Wednesday in San Francisco, the California Senate and Assembly Health committees are holding a joint hearing (10 a.m. at City Hall) to consider setting up a pilot "bio-monitoring" program that would measure toxins in women's bodies through their breast milk. Though few scientists are ready to blame breast cancer on the environment, the link hasn't been ruled out. A bio-monitoring program, in any case, is a better use of our donations than more posters for self-exams.

Next year, let's have Breast Cancer Eradication Month. The slogan: Less campaigning, more curing.

Joan Ryan is a columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Send comments to her e-mail at joanryan@sfgchronicle.com.

John Ashcroft defines patriotism

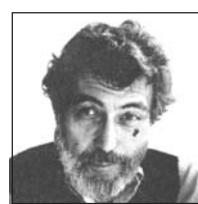
At the national United States Attorneys' conference on Oct. 1, John Ashcroft accused his critics of "capitulation before freedom's enemies ... the terrorists." Ashcroft added that those of us who question his methods of fighting terrorism use "disdain and ridicule."

I wonder if Ashcroft had in mind Republican House Majority Leader Dick Army, who told George Washington University law professor Jeffrey Rosen — in the Oct. 21 *New Republic* — that "the Justice Department ... more than any federal agency, seems to be running amok and out of control. ... This agency right now is the biggest threat to personal liberty in the country."

Or was Ashcroft thinking of Republican conservative Bob Barr, who has also criticized the Justice Department's attacks on civil liberties. Barr told Rosen that, with regard to the USA Patriot Act, "the administration has been resisting any effort to provide information to the judiciary committee detailing how its work is being implemented." The chief obstacle to releasing that information: John Ashcroft.

The attorney general must be relieved that Army is retiring and libertarian Barr was defeated this year in his campaign for re-election in Georgia. Ashcroft gets much more respectful reactions from Democratic Congressional leaders Tom Daschle and Dick Gephardt, who have been silent on the Justice Department's revisions of the Bill of Rights.

Or maybe the attorney general was thinking of such "capitulationists" as New York University law professor Stephen Schulhofer who — in the Century Foundation's report, "The Enemy Within, Intelligence Gathering, Law Enforcement and Civil Liberties in the wake of September 11" — wrote that some of Ashcroft's security measures "compromise important freedoms in ways that previous presidents never attempted, even in the midst of formally declared wars. ... Important individual freedoms have been sacrificed — often needlessly and unjustifiably."



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Among such sacrifices Schulhofer cites are "new powers to conduct undercover infiltration and surveillance of political and religious groups, and increased wiretapping, electronic eavesdropping, and covert acquisition of Internet and e-mail communications, including increased powers to conduct these kinds of surveillance without probable cause or a judicial warrant."

And on National Public Radio, retired Army Gen. Wesley Clark — former commander of Allied forces in Kosovo — emphasized that this "prolonged struggle against terrorism ... is the kind of war that demands we pay MORE attention to our rights as citizens." Is that "capitulation" to our enemies — or rather, an endorsement of what the president said on Sept. 12, 2001: "We will not allow this enemy to win the war by changing our way of life or restricting our freedoms."

Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall never capitulated to attempts to diminish the Bill of Rights. In his 1989 dissent, *Skinner v. Railway Labor Executives' Association*, Marshall, without disdain or ridicule, stated this basic truth of the American experience:

"History teaches us that grave threats to liberty often come in times of urgency, when constitutional rights seem too extravagant to endure. The World War II relocation-camp cases (of Japanese-Americans) ... and the Red Scare and McCarthy-era internal subversion cases ... are only the most extreme reminders that when we allow fundamental freedoms to be sacrificed in the name of real or perceived exigency, we invariably come to regret it."

I recently spoke at the annual Connecticut Library Leadership Conference and relayed some

advice to the librarians from a reader of *Free Inquiry* magazine. He suggested that librarians and bookstore owners post this notice to customers and library users:

"Section 215 of the USA Patriot Act ... gives the FBI the right to obtain a court order demanding ... any records we have of your transactions at this location. We will be required to give them the requested information, AND WILL BE FORBIDDEN from TELLING YOU OR ANYONE ELSE ABOUT IT."

Most of the sessions at that librarians' conference were about Ashcroft's legislation commanding librarians to provide the FBI with the names of the books that certain borrowers under loose suspicion — but without probable cause — of involvement with terrorism asked for. As for the gag order preventing the librarians from telling the press or anyone else of these Orwellian visits or the names of the books, the librarians were still wondering how this could happen in the United States.

Does the attorney general regard librarians voicing such concerns as evidence of "capitulating" to the terrorists? We do have enemies within — terrorist "sleepers" — but those of us who dissent from Ashcroft's practices are doing so in the very tradition of the Americanism we are fighting to preserve.

Nat Hentoff is a nationally renowned authority on the *First Amendment* and the *Bill of Rights*.

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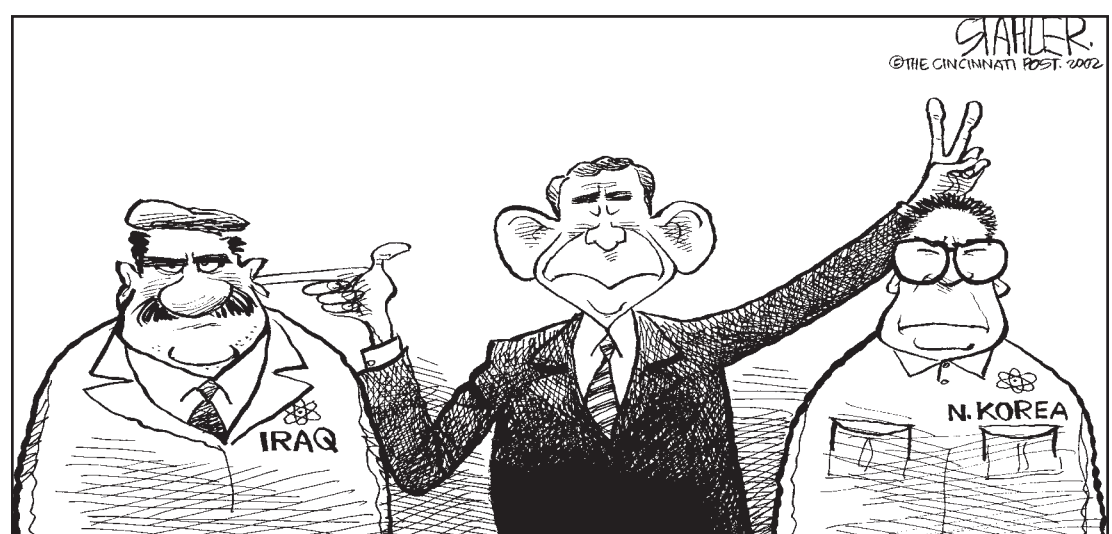
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