

commentary

from our viewpoint...

Looming war raises tensions, rhetoric

Today there are over 200,000 American servicemen and women being staged in Turkey, Kuwait and other countries around the Persian Gulf for an impending invasion of Iraq.

As we contemplate the flying of bombs and bullets there is an uneasy feeling in our stomach at what the conflict may cost in lives.

There have been wars since the beginning of man, and some political scientists argue that is the natural state of man at the lowest level. The horrors of war have become more visible as the ability to communicate the sounds and images with the invention of the radio and television. We have heard the sounds of war since the one we fought 60 years ago, and watched nightly as we struggled through the jungles of Vietnam.

Twelve years ago we watched the war from both sides when we massed forces to throw Iraq out of Kuwait. We watched as the missiles and bombs fell on Baghdad and the Scuds flew into Saudi Arabia and Israel. The war was one of the shortest on record, and the loss of American lives extremely small compared to the total involved.

Face it, we got lucky, and part of that is we made our own luck by pounding the Iraqi military and their leaders for weeks before we sent the troops into battle.

Now we look back and hope the impending war will be another quick one, and not cost a large number of lives. We will watch and listen as the story continues to unfold, but the feeling in our stomach won't cease until the final decision is made to charge into battle.

Once committed to a course of action the American warrior is a fearsome fighting force, and with a clear mission of the elimination of Saddam Hussein we will undoubtedly prevail.

We have sterilized the art of war over the last 40 years, but there are going to be casualties, and an unknown many will come home injured and dead. Part of that feeling in our stomach is the fear we will know some of those who are killed.

Watching the events moving relentlessly toward war, we should remember that the prelude to war is sort of a dance ritual full of rhetoric, saber rattling and flag waving. Focusing the attention on "the enemy" is important to be sure the servicemen are prepared to kill. At the same time there is a need to convince the people of the country that this action is necessary and the right thing to do.

In modern wars we have tried to narrow the focus to those who are holding the guns and pointing them at us, but in any war people will be killed because they are in the wrong place at the wrong time.

We know when the war begins there will be a swelling of support for our men and women in the front lines, and that is a good thing for they need our prayers and support. At the same time let's be clear the focus of this war is specifically aimed at the head of one man who we have branded as evil incarnate.

We need to keep our immigrant past in mind as we judge those who are citizens of Iraq because they were born there, and those who have sought to embrace freedom by fleeing to our country. Bashing the enemy is part of the rhetoric of war, but let's not allow it to become a rallying cry to cover prejudice of people for their religious or cultural beliefs.

As Americans we have a proud history, but at the same time we should not cast stones at others lest they hit our glass house first.

— Tom Betz

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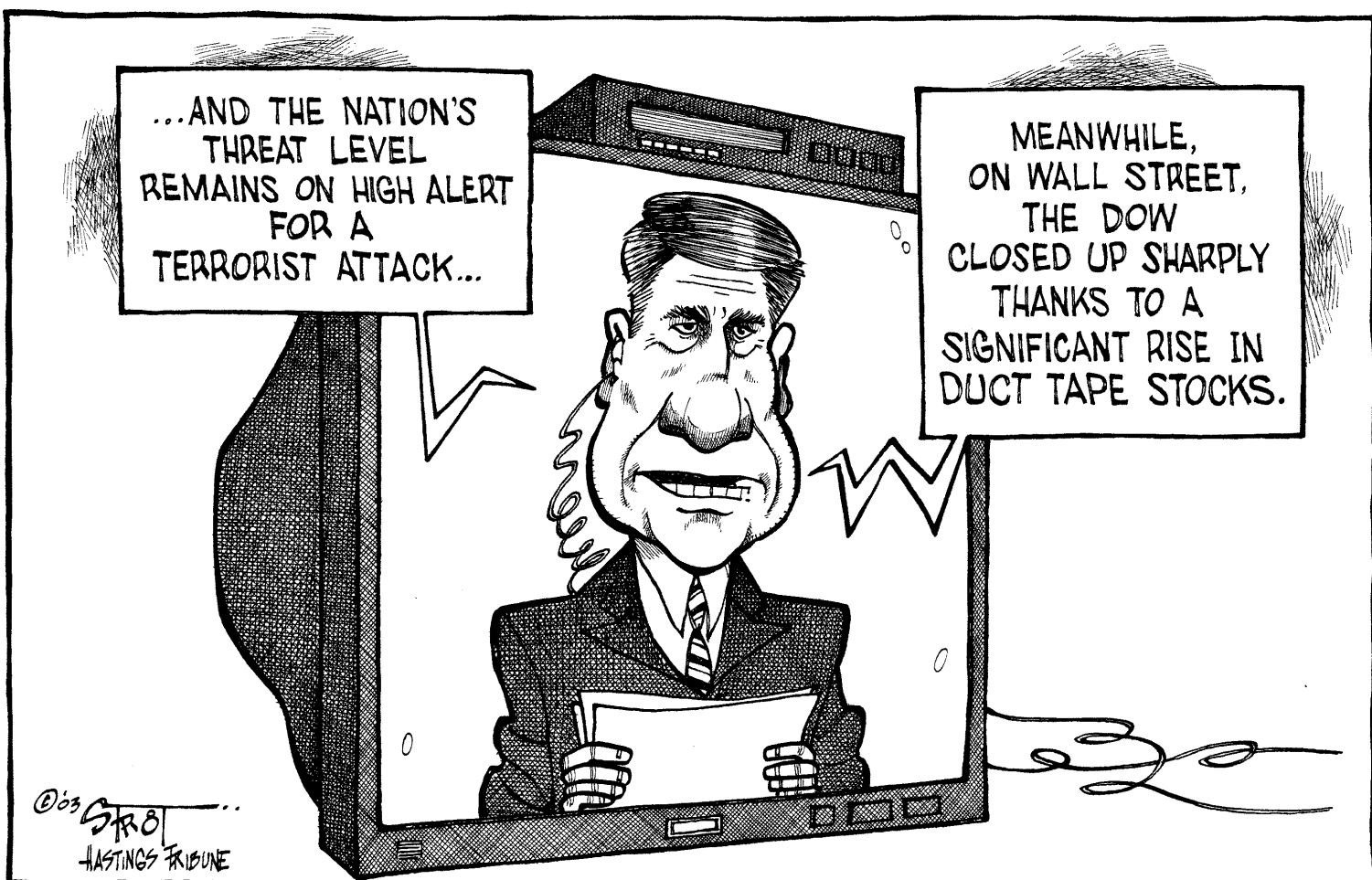
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Watching snow fall, thinking about spring

I don't know about you, but I'm sitting here looking out at a beautiful 12-inch snowfall.

However my thoughts are definitely turning toward spring.

I'm ready to enjoy flowers in the yard, spring rains, warmer weather, etc.

I never used to think about things like the weather when I was a kid. We either went outside or we didn't. School was never dismissed pending bad weather. There were no radio alerts because we didn't have the sophisticated predictions we do today.

Once in awhile we would get to go home early—usually after the storm had already hit.

Teachers didn't have to wonder if the students would be okay because most of us lived within easy walking distance of the school and most of our moms were there waiting for us.

Only a couple of times do I remember being held at the school until an adult picked me up.

That wasn't always easy; few families had more than one car which dad had at work, and not everyone had telephones.



lorna

g. t.

• commentary

Storms were truly worse then too; they'd last for days and snow enough in Kansas/Nebraska to cover cars. (Yes, I know that sounds like exaggeration, but I swear it's true!)

How many times lately have you changed your mind about going somewhere—let's say, to church, because you heard the wind chill factor made the temperature about 8 degrees above zero?

Why should that matter if you aren't going out on the highways for a long trip?

We get in our heated cars and drive less than a mile, park almost next to the door and rush in. So it's cold!

Our grandparents didn't let that bother them. They just piled more heavy comforters in the

‘Misleading’ bill would release drug offenders

To the Editor:

The Senate special committee on judiciary recently endorsed and passed SB 123 that would allow release of nearly 300 prisoners from our prison system. The Kansas Sentencing Commission and the supporters of this bill claim that these drug offenders have no history of drug trafficking or manufacture and that they are nonviolent offenders and, therefore, do not represent a danger to Kansas communities.

Claiming these offenders are nonviolent and have no history of trafficking or manufacturing is intentionally misleading. This bill's intent is to solely ease the overcrowding in state prisons and avoid the necessity of building more prison beds.

What the supporters and the committee ignore, in spite of testimony by prosecutors and law enforcement to the contrary, is that these offenders have been arrested for trafficking and manufacturing and pleaded to lesser charges to avoid stiffer sentences for drug trafficking and manufacturing.

These offenders are dangerous to our communities; they are the ones who have been dealing drugs and operating the methamphetamine labs that expose our residents to the dangerous and toxic chemicals. Releasing these drug offenders back to their communities would only result in law enforcement agencies having to expend limited resources to identify, investigate and arrest them again.

Additionally, under the provisions of this bill, these offenders would be released to community-based treatment programs. Most of them have already been through treatment programs at taxpayer expense. How often do we keep sending them to treatment or paying for treatment? If treatment is such a viable option, why has it been all but eliminated from the prison system?

These offenders would be required to pay for treatment. However, if they cannot afford to pay, taxpayers will and, maybe, at some point, the offender will reimburse the state/taxpayer.

If the offender fails to participate in treatment or they violate the conditions of their release, they can be sent to county jails for up to 60 days



**from our
readers**

• to the editor

for a shock effect. This amounts to nothing more than an unfunded mandate on the already over-burdened counties and county jails.

It is the state's responsibility to maintain and operate prisons for people who endanger our communities. Releasing these people back to our communities is in direct conflict with this responsibility.

Sen. Derek Schmidt offered a proposal to downgrade the status of these offenders so they could be held at minimum security facilities, which are cheaper to build and operate. Sen. John Vratil, the committee chairman, dismissed Schmidt's proposal out-of-hand and said it would not be considered with the bill's passage. This is yet another example of the committee's failing to listen to opposing testimony or alternative solutions.

The people of Kansas need to contact their senators and representatives and let them know that you do not want these drug dealers and manufacturers released back into your communities.

Douglas S. Murphy
drug enforcement coordinator
Quad County Drug Task Force
Colby

To the Editor:

I was extremely disappointed in your decision to sensationalize the recent meth lab discovery by headlining the individuals as college students. Your reporter additionally felt it necessary to mention twice in the contents of the article that the accused were technical college students.

Please get your facts before you write. None of the individuals mentioned is currently enrolled at Northwest Kansas Technical College or affiliated with the current classes conducted at the college.

My issue with the headline and article within the Feb. 25 issue of *The Goodland Star-News*,

buggy and headed out. What has happened to our American hardiness?

Spring snows are always nicer. When it snows without being too cold, without an accompanying blast of frigid wind, it is easier to enjoy.

Spring snows are almost pleasant— if they don't come so late that the trees are budded, the garden is blooming, etc. Then... well, there are drawbacks to everything I guess.

Maybe we should just skip spring and go right to summer. Or maybe we should just go fishing.

You know what someone said about fishing: "What I do is called 'fishing.' If it was easy, we would refer to it as 'catching,' and there would be a lot more people doing it."— Linda Greenlaw (The Hungry Ocean (Hyperion)).

Frankly I'd rather continue to call it fishing; it's more relaxing. Catching brings on a whole new set of problems.

Hold on! Spring's coming!

is the newspaper's negative and defamatory reflection towards the technical college and the 500-plus students enrolled at the college. As president of the college, I think this was a poor decision and portrays a poor image of our college and the students enrolled.

The college does not for a second sanction or tolerate drug use, or the manufacturing, or possession of drugs. It is just as disappointing to me that these young men are involved in such an illegality. Such a situation has a negative reflection on college students and youth in general. Anyone that chooses such actions deserves to face the consequences.

I challenge you and your staff to print the facts and leave the derogatory comments toward the college and college students out of your reports. When reporting on other recent drug findings, I do not recall your staff stating the accused individuals places of work, etc. This would be a good practice to adhere to.

My challenge extends further and I ask you to find ways to report on positive activities such as the student leaders who have spent weeks attending West school to help teachers and elementary students, or the engineering students who spent an afternoon moving our Chamber of Commerce office, or the electrical students who helped Rotary set up and disassemble the Christmas scene around Goodland Regional Medical Center, or the community blood drive that collected 149 pints of blood from college students, or the Hal-loween haunted house, open to the public that collected approximately 500 items of food and \$100 cash for Genesis, or the Student Senate food drive in November that collected an additional 1,000 items of food for Genesis.

I could continue, but hopefully I have made my point that the students at the technical college are positive individuals and most of the time contribute to the betterment of our community. Our community is fortunate to have our college and the students who attend. I would appreciate your consideration in the future and our community will be better for it.

Kenneth A. Clouse, president
Northwest Kansas Technical College
Goodland

garfield

