

Congress should be able to solve intelligence crisis

It seems hard to believe, in the wake of the Sept. 11 commission report and the intelligence fiasco leading up to the Iraq war, that Congress can't pass a bill to reorganize our national intelligence agencies.

Fighting over control of military intelligence has kept the bill from a floor vote in the House, though it passed the Senate with almost no opposition.

But the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Duncan Hunter, wants it changed to guarantee that information from military sources and satellites goes directly to battlefield commanders.

The bill, following recommendations of the Sept. 11 commission, would create a new national director to oversee all intelligence activities.

Of course, that's the same reason Congress gave us a director of Central Intelligence in the 1950s. Since then, though, the information-gathering business has fragmented, split among operations people and analysts at the CIA, the Pentagon and the individual services, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the electronic snoops at the National Security Agency.

With so many spies, it's hard for them to keep track of what they are doing, let alone what future and current enemies are up to.

Our guess is that Congress will pass the bill this week before it goes home for good, because something has got to be done. It's simply unacceptable that our entire intelligence network could have been so wrong about something so basic as Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction."

What happens will have to be more than just

a reorganization, though. The new intelligence chief will have to pick people to run his agencies who will focus on the job, and not on their jobs.

Nothing is more critical to national policy than knowing what is going on out in the real world. Electronic snooping is great, but most of what it brings in is confusing chatter. Reports from spies and observers in the field are vital, but someone has to comb them for the thread of the truth.

Intelligence just can't be filtered through political vision. That's dangerous.

This is no easy job. We consolidated the field once, and it didn't take. But we have to do better.

The toll we paid for being unprepared for the Sept. 11 attacks was heavy. The price we've paid in Iraq is less, but the obvious danger of being so wrong about such a critical issue is undeniable.

There's no doubt our intelligence system is broken. But it will take not just a new law, but bold new leadership to fix it. Victory in Congress will be half the battle.

Somewhere, President Bush has got to find a top spy who knows how to run operations around the globe, read their reports and figure out what they all mean.

He and his people will have to navigate the slippery political slopes of Washington, deal with the Pentagon, its generals and admirals, and foster trust in Congress.

And they'll have to be right more than they're wrong.

It's no small task, but it's vital to our future as a nation. — Steve Haynes



Soldier writes home about war

(The following is a letter from Master Sgt. Jerry Chambers in Iraq to his family, dated Nov. 17.)

Things are still fine here in Iraq. We still get mortared daily, although they are less frequent and somewhat sporadic here lately.

On the evening of Thursday, Nov. 11, we had an insurgent rush from down south due to the NATO forces attacking and trying to stabilize Fallujah. Guess they figured they would come up here and try to raise hell since this area has been, overall, somewhat peaceful in comparison to the rest of the country throughout the whole war. They tried to overtake our base perimeter about 20 meters northeast of my barracks and were met with overwhelming firepower.

We were shooting back at their AK-47s with 50-caliber machine guns, M-249 SAW light machine guns, M-16 rifles, AT4 rocket launchers and fragmentation grenades. It sounded like World War III going off right behind my building. It lasted for about a half-hour, then the Kiowa attack helicopters came in and used their 30 mm cannons to obliterate the area.

It got fairly quiet in our area after that. I had about six soldiers who wanted to go outside and try to videotape the whole thing (in the dark), and they made it just outside the front door when I caught them and really had to lay down the law about real bullets and real combat. They came in fairly quick when a couple of rounds hit the building and trees out front.

That was the most that really happened, other than occasional little skirmishes here and there, but the little Iraqis still find time to mortar and shoot every day somewhere near the base.

The Kurds from up north sent about 800 troops in this past week and they have orders to kill on sight anyone with a weapon who is not a

Letters to the Editor

NATO soldier, Iraqi National Guard or Iraqi Police. I understand the Kurds terminate with extreme prejudice and that Mosul "will be the most peaceful city in Iraq, before long."

We try to stay busy during the day. We have a laundry mission with two laundry units set up here on the base, and do about 40 bundles per day average, which is not really that much (kinda like our house when I haven't done laundry in a week). It takes four soldiers for that mission.

We also have to man the Sustainer Library, which in and of itself is a joke, because nobody seems to care about using it, so we have to tie up one soldier with that daily. In addition, we have a clothing repair shop which takes one more soldier each day, and business there is really slow.

Our main missions consist of manning a Fire Point tower on the perimeter, which takes six soldiers working in shifts from 5 p.m. to about 6-6:30 a.m., and the convoy missions 95 miles north of us on the Turkey border, and it takes seven soldiers.

The remaining five soldiers are kept busy filling in on standby for the other missions if someone gets sick, etc.

Then that leaves me. I do all the daily, weekly and monthly reports to the battalion, attend the battalion meetings three times per week, handle all the personnel issues, create the work rotation schedules, and anything else that keeps the soldiers doing their jobs and occupied.

On our down time, the younger kids usually play X-box until the wee hours, some watch movies, and recently I have taken up reading again. I have read two fiction nov-

els in the past week and a half, totaling about 1,000 pages. I forgot how I could get into a book, and sometimes I read until 1 a.m.

We also play Texas Hold-em for chips, and Monopoly, etc. They have a movie theatre here, but they mostly do something like a "Wesley Snipes day," where they play a whole bunch of his movies. Once in a blue moon they have something that looks interesting, and a few go check it out. Other than that, it is mostly boring.

I have made a good friend in Staff Sgt. Bryan Brown, an active duty soldier stationed in Hawaii, who is originally from Texas. He is the operations NCO with the 540th QM CO, who we are replacing. We work in the same office all day, and trade Richard Pryor standup comedy bits, of which we are both big fans. He is a funny guy, 30 years old, black, and listens to music like ABBA, the Beach Boys, etc. He has some hip-hop, but says that he can't stand most of it.

The rest of the 540th have been really helpful in getting us settled in and making contacts on the base. Their commander, Capt. Donahue, is shorter than Capt. Mitchell, if you can believe that. What he lacks in height, he makes up for in common sense, though.

Well, can't think of a lot else to tell you at this point, so I better get busy doing some master sergeant stuff.

I think of you all every few minutes, and love you all very much. Hopefully I can get home for leave here in the next six months sometime. We'll just have to see how it pans out.

Master Sgt. Jerry Chambers
17th CSB/3-1013th QM Co.
APO-AE 09334

Social Services acts on problem

Here's proof that bad news can turn into good news, that bureaucrats do care, that bureaucracies can move quickly and decisively when motivated, and that the state Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services is not always secretive and sluggish.

Last week, *The Oberlin Herald* carried a story reporting that few families had signed up for the Jaycees' Angel Tree, which allows people to buy Christmas gifts for kids who otherwise might not have much.

The Jaycees usually get quite a few kids signed up. Names come from private referrals, churches and other sources, but the Oberlin office of Social Services was a key link. Workers there passed on information about the tree to their clients, who then could choose to have their kids on the Jaycees' list.

This year, though, the office is closed, its workers transferred or looking for jobs elsewhere, as part of a major reorganization of the agency. Rural Kansas counties have complained about the loss of state jobs, but top management at the agency says the consolidation was necessary for efficiency.

Whatever the merits of the closing, we noted in an editorial that it meant that Social Services employees were no longer a part of our communities and apparently neither knew nor cared about what goes on here.

Friday we got a call from Rovena



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
schaynes@nwkansas.com

Farrell in Hays, new regional director for the department, who said that she cares, and she had done something about the problem.

Ms. Farrell said she had talked with Abby Hissong with the Jaycees, who told her the group had contacted the Norton office, which now covers Oberlin and Decatur County, and told workers there about the Angel Tree.

The director did not seem to be too pleased that apparently the request had fallen through the cracks. She said by the end of the day Friday, letters had gone out to all family cases in Decatur County about the tree.

You can argue the merits of closing county offices. Ms. Farrell says the agency needs to concentrate workers where the caseload is, and that's not in Decatur or many of the state's small counties. There are only about 20 families receiving state help here, she said, including those drawing food stamps, temporary assistance and child care.

But it's pretty clear that the new regional boss wants her agency to respond to people's needs and keep

in touch with their communities.

We'll reserve further judgment on the office closing. It can't be good for Oberlin, but it doesn't mean that the people who work for Social and Rehabilitation Services no longer care about us.

Especially their new boss.

Here's hoping that buyers come in to get names off the Angel Tree and that the kids get lots of presents. Stop by Fredrickson Insurance if you're interested in helping out. Call Mrs. Hissong at 475-3883 if you know a family that might benefit from the tree.

From the Bible

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest. . . . Luke 30,31, 32a

THE OBERLIN HERALD

Serving Oberlin and Decatur County since 1879

USPS 401-600

Phone: (785) 475-2206 Fax (785) 475-2800

170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243

E-mail: obherald@nwkansas.com

Published each Wednesday by Haynes Publishing Co., 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749. Periodicals mail postage paid at Oberlin, Kan. 67749.

Nor'West Newspapers

STAFF

Steve Haynes editor
Kimberly Davis managing editor
Mary Lou Olson society editor
Judy Jordan proofreader
Carolyn Kelley-Plotts columnist
Cynthia Haynes business manager
David Bergling advertising manager
Pat Cozad want ads/circulation
Karla Jones, Doris Miller advertising production
Joan Betts historian
Marsha Morford mailing
Whitney Beinke page makeup

Subscriptions: One year, \$30 (tax included) in Decatur, Norton, Rawlins, Sheridan, Thomas and Red Willow counties; \$34 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$37 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$20 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan. 67749-2243.

Office hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Mon.-Fri. (Also open most Saturdays when someone is in.)



Woman wants sidewalk for safety

To the Editor:

I just wanted to discuss the recent article about the sidewalks at the kindergarten building in Oberlin.

There is a big safety concern for the children, parents and teachers in my opinion. Walking the morning kindergarten class around and about has helped the traffic at 11:30 a.m. However, there are still concerns about the safety of the children when the entire kindergarten through sixth-grade classes are dis-

missed. Does anyone realize that the white-painted curb for the kindergarten drop-off area is the only one in the dirt (or mud)?

Building a sidewalk on Cass Avenue would direct the vehicles north to the water tower and away from any crosswalk congestion. Picking up the kindergarten children on Rodehaver points the traffic flow south into two intersections that have three or four crosswalks each, not to mention the morning buses

are also pulling out onto Rodehaver at the same time from the bus pass.

I don't like to see the children over on Rodehaver waiting for pickup without any protection from the weather. Between the rain, snow and cold wind, sometimes it's nasty standing over there.

I hope the school board re-evaluates their decision and builds the sidewalk for our children's safety.

Jacque Elwood
Oberlin

Upright is the best way to be

Vertical gives you a much better perspective on the world than does horizontal.

I'm sure anybody who has ever been flat on their back for any length of time will agree: Upright is best. After my fall the Saturday before Thanksgiving, I am glad to report that I am on the mend.

I am almost ready to declare myself 100 per cent. A few nagging aches, when I sit too long, are the only things preventing such a bold statement, considering the condition I was in a week ago.

A good thing came out of this, though.

I will never take my mobility for granted again. And, as much as I hate to admit it, I have not been a very good steward of this body given me to use during my earthly stay. I have made a vow to become a little wiser about my general health and to start taking better care of myself.

I have been given incredibly good natural health. Jim nor I, neither one, takes a single prescription. But, on the other hand, I haven't been very good about taking a daily vitamin or any supplements. If we ate a perfect diet, there would be no need for additional vitamins or minerals. But,



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
cplotts@nwkansas.com

alas, there is no such thing, anymore, as a perfectly balanced diet. So as part of my new awareness campaign, I am taking a good, daily multi-vitamin plus an extra dose of calcium and magnesium.

Now, I don't want to hear from you health "nuts" about the virtues of B-12, B-6 or B-47. I know my limits and three pills a day will be my max. In addition to the supplements, I am incorporating more water; lots more water.

I like water, but have realized sometimes, at the end of the day, that the only water I had consumed was disguised in a cup of coffee. That's the other change. Less coffee, lots less. And soda pop. Haven't had any in almost three weeks. Not even diet pop.

Walking will be the other phase of this new regimen. During the win-

ter, it will have to be inside, but there are plenty of gymnasiums that encourage their use for that purpose. Walking is supposed to be one of the best therapies for a bad back.

I'm getting a jump on New Year's resolutions. Besides I made a deal with my daughter, Halley. She is competing in another triathlon in April.

If I achieve the fitness level I have set for myself by then, I am going to fly to Florida to watch her compete. Now that is some kind of incentive.

