

Terrorists? No thanks, not in our back yard

Should the federal government send “enemy combatants” from the Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba to the ancient Army prison at Fort Leavenworth?

Hardly anyone in Kansas would say so. Nearly every Kansas politician — Gov. Mark Parkinson, Sens. Sam Brownback and Pat Roberts, Rep. Jerry Moran, many state legislators and other leaders — have blasted the proposal, if you can call it that.

The “plan” has come in a series of leaks, trial balloons and innuendoes from the Defense and Justice departments. The government has never said it is sending any terrorists here, but the shrill opposition of Kansas politicians has been way out in front of the danger.

The idea of holding many of the alleged Al Qaida sympathizers at the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, the main prison for the Army and Air Force, may never come to pass anyway.

As of Monday, the latest word was that the Justice Department was preparing to try these supposed war criminals in several eastern cities, including New York and Washington. They still could be sent inland, to Kansas or Michigan, to serve any sentence handed down by federal courts, however.

And while that would at least take the trials out of our area, Kansas officials apparently won’t be happy unless and until the entire plan is dead. They’re deluging the world with press releases, speeches and statements.

The governor says it’s not just a matter of “not in my back yard” — he notes that highways and rail lines pass through the fort and

the maximum security section was only built to house 30 to 40 prisoners — but really, that’s what it amounts to.

Sure, no one in Kansas wants prisoners who might be a target for terrorist escape plans or revenge bombings. Neither do officials in Indiana and Colorado, both of which have maximum security federal prisons.

The truth is, the government will have to build a facility to house these prisoners wherever they’re sent. You can’t just hold these men in the general population of an American prison, because either they’d form a gang to defend themselves or be killed by native prisoners.

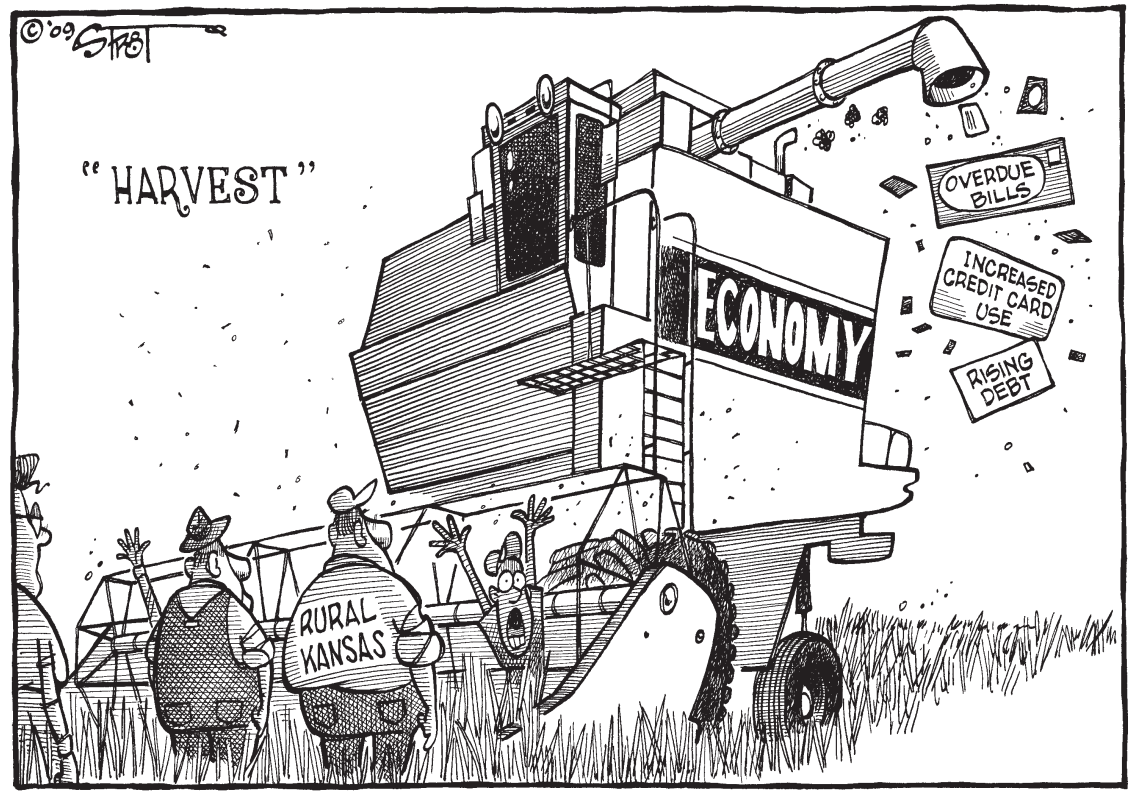
They’d have to be well isolated inside the facility, where escape or demonstrations would not be possible. It could happen. It’s not like President Obama owes us anything or stands to lose our votes. It’s more like he might want to punish a Republican state by sending us terrorists, rather than Colorado, a swing state where he stands to lose a lot.

If so, it’s not likely that our few Congressmen, only one of them a Democrat, will be able to hold the gates. The president made a solemn promise to close “Gitmo” within a year, and he’s running out of time.

Should they come here? One site may be as good as the next, given the need to build a high-security lockup. Kansas could be the place.

Should we buy into that? Not in our back yard, not on your life.

— Steve Haynes



Dad enjoys fishing with girls

I hadn’t been fishing with Lindsay in years, but really, she’s a pretty good fly caster.

We were spending the week in Colorado with Lindsay and her husband Brad. She wanted to go fly fishing, which is an invitation I’d never turn down — especially with a daughter.

Both she and her sister are outdoors women, though they didn’t necessarily marry outdoors men. Her sister has led me into some wild and inaccessible canyons to chase fish, and when she moved to Georgia, she was about the only one in town with a ski rack on the top of her car and a fly rod in the trunk. Made the car easier to find in parking lots.

Lindsay spent several summers in Colorado after graduation — she was a teacher then, and had time off — but she was working as a waitress and said she had trouble finding time to fish.

It seemed to me that she’d gotten pretty good at fly casting, though. Last week, I sent her on down to the river to take the first hole, and she pulled out a fish. It was, oh, maybe two inches long, but really hungry judging by the way it lunged at her fly.

They got bigger after that, and I think she may have caught more



Along the Sappa

By Steve Haynes
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fish than I did. We sort of alternated holes, and I tried to explain that if she fished behind me, there wouldn’t be too many bites.

It was tough fishing, a small, flat, open stream with beaver ponds and meanders. The high sun meant that even your rod’s shadow could spook the fish ahead of you, so you really had to sneak up on them.

We were having a good time, though Brad and Cynthia were ready to go back to town any time we’d decide to quit. But, hey, we don’t get to fish together all that often.

Toward the end, we worked our way up to a beaver pond that, I swear, was full of incompetent trout.

Lindsay had to duck-walk up to the dam to stay low, and practically lay on the logs to cast without being seen. She kept dropping her fly right in the feeding zone, and the trout would jump and miss it.

Now, I know a fish that size has a brain the size of a pea, maybe, but usually they’re better than that. Finally I told her to let me try, and I did catch one, but only after several misses.

Like I said, incompetent trout. Or maybe overeager; they were jumping hard and fast.

By that time, the spouses were tapping their feet on the bank and we knew it was time to go down to the house. You’d think we hadn’t fed them.

We vowed to go back out the next day, but by then, after doing other stuff all morning, with theater tickets that night, we wound up taking a nap.

That’s another invitation I find hard to turn down.

Basically, in nine days in the mountains, we managed to wear ourselves out pretty well. It was fun. I’d do it again in a minute — with more time to fish, of course.

We will deal with flu problem

By Dr. JASON EBERHART-PHILLIPS

State Health Officer

As the H1N1 (swine) flu epidemic enters its fourth month in Kansas, the lurid headlines and cable news frenzy that marked the early stages of the outbreak are over.

Gone are the scenes of subway riders wearing face masks, of school doors closed because of the flu, of bewildered travelers unsure if they should take a vacation in Mexico or New York.

As the springtime alarm about the so-called “swine flu” has given way to summertime complacency, it may seem that the threat is gone, that we Americans have dodged the pandemic bullet.

But in fact the virus has never left us.

Here and around the world, the H1N1 pandemic is gaining momentum, and sooner or later it will likely figure big in your life and the life of every Kansan. Collectively, we need to start thinking about it again, and get ourselves prepared.

For a new organism, the novel H1N1 virus has shown a remarkable capacity to transmit itself among human hosts. In only 100 days, it has spread from two countries in one continent to 160 in every continent of the world.

Most disease has been mild, or without any noteworthy symptoms. But for a significant minority of its victims, the disease has been severe. Already the pandemic strain has claimed about 800 lives worldwide, three times the number lost to the

“bird flu” virus since 2003.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that in the next two years, 20 to 40 percent of the population will be stricken, with many of the cases compressed into “waves” of infection lasting eight to 12 weeks. The number of pandemic-related deaths will range from 90,000 to “several hundred thousand,” according to the federal agency.

In Kansas, as many as 10,000 cases have already occurred, with confirmed disease now reported in 35 counties of 105 counties. Ordinarily, flu is not seen during summer months, but more counties have been confirmed with this disease during July than in any previous month.

The pattern of cases here, as in other states, points to a higher risk for the young. About 80 percent of cases have occurred before age 35. Although the elderly would comprise a majority of severe cases in a normal flu season, cases of H1N1 flu are relatively rare in people over 65.

For public health agencies like mine, and health departments serving every county in Kansas, our objectives in the coming months are simple: to reduce illness and death from the pandemic while minimizing social disruption.

Together we will carefully monitor the spread of the disease, advise health care providers on treatment and prevention, educate the public on “social distancing” and other techniques to slow down trans-

mission, and, if necessary, release publicly held stockpiles of antiviral drugs that can speed recovery in severe cases.

At the same time this fall, we will work with public health departments to administer the largest single vaccination campaign our state has ever seen, when and if federal health authorities decide to make an H1N1 vaccine — currently under development — available.

Clinical trials are just beginning now on human volunteers to determine if initial lots of the new vaccine can generate a sufficient immune response to protect against infection. The trials will also determine if the vaccine is safe.

Priority groups for the initial shipments of the vaccine will be determined soon by a federal committee, so that those most at risk of severe disease and death, and members of the nation’s “critical workforce,” are first in line for protection. Fortunately, supplies are expected to be sufficient to begin immunizing those in lower priority groups within the first several weeks.

From the Bible

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.

Psalm 37:23-24

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Birthday bash was a hoot

If I had to get a year older, I’m glad I did it in style.

My Social Security qualifying birthday was Saturday, and I loved every minute of it. Jim must have laid awake nights just planning it.

When he asked me what I wanted, I had a ready answer. My signature fragrance is a perfume called “Red Door.” I’ve worn it for years.

Imagine my surprise Saturday morning when the first thing I saw when I came into the living room was a big, red door off of a ‘59 Chevy pickup propped up against the entertainment center.

“What’s this?” I asked. To which Jim answered, “Well, you said you wanted Red Door. There’s your red door.”

I laughed so hard, I almost cried. Of course, he also gave me a big bottle of the real thing, but I do love my “other” red door.

Jim and son James admitted they were co-conspirators in the operation, and I think they had as much fun as I did. Jim took pictures and shows them to anyone willing to stand still long enough to look at them. It’s a little embarrassing, because I was in my pajamas and



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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I had a serious case of “bed head.” But, if you can stand to look at them, I guess I can stand it, too.

— ob —

Jim gave me a funny birthday card, too, and there’s a story behind it.

Friday, I got home a few minutes before Jim did. I turned on the fan and plopped down in my chair to catch a few minutes’ rest. As soon as I sat down, our cat, Missy, came into the room and dropped a mouse onto the living room floor. A live mouse!

It was only a baby, but I could hardly believe my eyes. Then, Missy nudged the mouse with her nose and the mouse took off. Toward me!

I screamed and pulled my feet into the chair. Missy re-caught

the mouse and headed toward the kitchen, only to drop it again. This time, the mouse found refuge under the cabinets, squeezing through a quarter-inch gap between the cabinet and the floor. When I told Jim what had happened, he chastised me for not killing it.

Are you kidding? I wasn’t about to get that close.

I had a little talk with the cat last night.

“Listen, Missy,” I said. “I’ve told you over and over not to play with your food.”

Now, back to the birthday card. It pictured a cat on the front with the caption, “Happy Birthday! You’re not getting any slower.” I opened the card and read the punch line: “The mice are just getting faster.”