

KeyOpinion

Watching President Bush this past week as he attempted to articulate his response to North Korea launching missiles was painful — it's as if he chases his thoughts with a fly swatter.

Ever since the Fourth of July, North Korean President Kim Jong Il has all the world talking about his attempts to test long-range missiles. What is dangerous and stupefying was Jong's masterful manipulation of propaganda and public emotions using the television. And meanwhile, that wizard of media imagery, Osama Bin Laden, has been granted all but a reprieve.

Bin Gone

Yesterday, news reports said the CIA is disbanding the unit charged with Bin Laden's capture. In essence, the CIA is off the case. It seems our country's intelligence is stretched too thin.

But the danger of Bin Laden remains ever-present. The fact that Bin Laden could strike at the symbols of American success and financial prowess and escape unscathed is mind-boggling. He inspired a generation of dispossessed and angry Muslims worldwide by offering a mix of politics and spirituality that is particularly compelling. Nothing threatens America and its way of life more than terrorism. Bin Laden is not oppressing his people; he is giving their life a twisted significance — a fast flight to Heaven's Gate.

Flag Burning

Now that the heat is off of Bin Laden, many so-called patriots have been busy raising the domestic dangers of flag burning and of the New York Times.

Let's be clear: flag burning is inevitably a histrionic, desperate and disrespectful act. But that is exactly why it should be allowed. After all, the strength of a nation is measured on its ability to tolerate discord and opinion, not by the degree it regulates behavior. Remember the adage: decaying societies are full of laws. I am sure the penalty would have been stiff 10 years ago if you publicly burned Saddam Hussein's photograph in Iraq.

It is allowing the most extreme forms of expression and speech and protecting those expressions that is the

mark of a true patriot. After all, it is far more heroic to allow and protect a flag burner than to merely wave a flag and eat a hotdog on the Fourth of July.

By Steve Reid
Editor & Publisher

Immediately after the New York Times and three other newspapers published reports of government surveillance to uncover Al-Qaida funding, backers of the war in Iraq and the Bush Administration screamed, "Betrayal! Treason!"

Many hand wringers called for the Times' press credentials to be revoked. They called the Times the friend of terrorists and sought to behead the editors. Never mind that these same finger-pointers were silent when anti-terrorism agent Valerie Plame was revealed as a CIA operative by Senior White House Aide Karl Rove. At least we know politics is consistently inconsistent in ascribing blame.

Of course the Times and the majority of residents of New York City are unapologetically unsupportive of the War in Iraq as well as of Bush and his policies. After all, the paper reflects its core: the New York metro area, which is arguably the most liberal-minded part of the country, save Vermont.

Dick Cheney's claim is that the Times' news report undermined the War on Terrorism. It is a better argument that disbanding the CIA counter-terrorism unit charged with finding Osama is what will soften the War on Terrorism. Osama, once public enemy No. 1 is being sidelined like a second-string player.

And this issue of the press having to be in lockstep with policy is unnerving. Remember the choreography surrounding Bush, senior's war on Iraq. The cameras were in front of the troops as they arrived onshore. The press should never be reduced to cheerleading, especially for war.

It seems that whenever the press is involved, national leaders inevitably take the same tone. The Nixon admin-

istration constantly droned that the media was obfuscating and eroding its mission in Vietnam. The paramour of paranoia and secrecy, Nixon is the icon of abuse of power in an affect of national interest.

Remember, the government will never provide initial press briefings about Abu Ghraib prison atrocities or My Lai massacres or civilian carnage. These acts inevitably find their way into the collective awareness through the media.

It is always a murky mission that demands secrecy and security. It is worth remembering that when someone points his finger at the press, that same finger is inevitable being pointed away from something — usually the problem.



Real Estate: We Don't Need to Sell Ourselves

I wish the panic would stop — the worried look on Realtors' faces, the sellers wondering if they will have to lower their prices.

I want to see some perspective placed on the area's real estate market. We ought mentally divest the Sarasota, Longboat Key and Gulf Coast Market from other areas of the country. We are second-to-none as a premier locale in which to live. Much as southern California for decades served as a lush and warm location of choice, Sarasota in particular is transforming into a city that is fast becoming the crown jewel of Florida. Its geographical and natural beauty, its beaches, schools, arts and architecture conspire to offer a lifestyle unsurpassed by Naples or Palm Beach.

When I first visited Naples three years ago I saw nothing of the magnificence that makes this area compelling. And as a retirement and second home Mecca, where else would anyone rather go than Sarasota?

Ten years ago I was hesitant to move to Florida. I thought it a hot and humid Disneyland filled with hibiscus-shirted salesmen.

I grew up in the Sag Harbor, New York, and thought no other place could match its beauty and quaintness and its area beaches. But after living a decade alternately in Sarasota, Longboat Key and on the Manatee River, I cannot think of calling anywhere else home.

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Survey Snapshot, from Page 3

Longboat's Visioning Survey, Draft I

Pending revision, the following survey is a sample of what the Town of Longboat Key will mail to residents to determine what kinds of changes they will want to see on the island. Before the survey is mailed out to residents, it will be examined and revised by the planning and zoning board and the Commission and go through a public hearing.

In its present form, residents will be asked if they agree or disagree with the following questions:

- Amend zoning code to allow more alterations/additions to commercial properties. This would allow more flexibility for commercial zoning to make it easier for businesses to operate.
- Re-use tourism units lost due to residential development by allowing them to be used in new tourism facilities.
- Concentrate retail at the three shopping centers: Whitney Beach, Center Shoppes and Town Plaza).
- Allow mixed use at those three sites where residences could be built above the shopping.
- Allow mixed use of commercial and residential at any commercial site.
- Allow commercial property owners which are not in the three shopping centers to apply to the Town to rezone to residential uses at current rates of density without a public referendum.
- Redefine density into two types: tourism and residential. Residential density would stay at current levels. Tourism density would allow a sufficient level of density to make a project viable within the context of other Town regulations.

• Ease height restriction for tourism. This would allow the Town to consider higher building heights for tourism facilities compatible with surrounding properties in exchange for certain other benefits for town residents.

• Establish special zoning districts for tourism that would allow the Town greater flexibility to support viable tourism while also having more power to regulate it consistent with Town character.

• Expand use of reclaimed water as supply allows. The Town currently uses all the reclaimed water it can purchase. If the supply increases, the Town should make it a priority to obtain it for uses on golf courses and right of ways.

• Improving the effectiveness of the Town government could be achieved by (Please provide your opinion by circling Yes, No or No opinion after each option):

• Increasing the responsibility of the Town Manager

• Increasing the responsibility of the Commissioners

• Having an elected (strong) Mayor system

• Leave Two at large, each of the five districts elect their commissioner from voters in that district

• The best way to improve the effectiveness of our Commissioners is (pick one):

- Keep present terms limits of 3 two year terms
- Increase terms to 3-years, with a 2 term limit
- Keep 2-year terms, with no term limits
- Increase term to 3-years, with no term limits
- None of the above