

Opinions

Tragedies abroad ignored by media outlets when U.S. military at fault



Ashley Jobe
Columnist

The American media does well to keep some stories under the radar of the public and boost others into the national spotlight. There are varying reasons why stories make the news but do not headline the newspapers, and why some articles get placed above the fold and others are stuck deep within the creases of the morning paper.

One report of an air strike that hit a wedding in southern Kandahar, Afghanistan did not make front-page news. Perhaps in the excitement of the presidential elections this article was overlooked, but for whatever reason, Afghan officials in Kabul, Afghanistan, reported 40 casualties and 28 injuries that occurred as a result of that devastating incident.

On Wednesday, Nov. 5, U.S. warplanes reportedly bombed a wedding party, and most of those who perished were women and children.

In what alternative reality would an Afghan wedding be anywhere near a site that was targeted for obliteration in the name of terrorism? When would a terrorist group assemble so near an innocent gathering such

as a wedding to warrant an air attack with missiles powerful enough to instantly kill 40 people and render 28 others in need of hospitalization?

To whatever degree, the American troops could not have meant to cause such destructive results.

"The United States invests heavily in technology and tactics aimed at minimizing civilian casualties and property damage during times of war," said Sean Giovanello, assistant professor of political science and public administration. "The United States, like other democracies, is sensitive to the political and moral ramifications of civilian casualties. However, it still remains impossible to avoid such casualties in times of war. There is simply no way to entirely eliminate the fog of war."

This sort of tragedy is not unusual to the people of Afghanistan. In July, the eastern province of Nangarhar was brutally attacked by Americans in an air strike. The 47 civilians that were killed were also attending a wedding. The bride herself perished.

Another attack on Aug. 22 was reported to have killed at least 33 civilians. At first, the American military reported a death toll of five to seven civilians, which drastically conflicted with a report from the United Nations that stated that as many as 90 civilians were

pronounced dead as a result of the AC-130 gunship attack. The anger that ensued led Gen. David D. McKiernan to increase the death toll to 33.

This back-and-forth battling between the Afghan government and American commanding officers has led to some conflicting messages to the American public.

Why are we being misled as to the true number of Afghan people being affected, directly or otherwise, from the war we are currently engaged in? What will this mean for the future of our foreign relationships with other Middle Eastern countries?

Hamid Karzai, the president of Afghanistan, has already stated his intentions for President-elect Barack Obama. "The fight against terrorism cannot be won by bombardment of our villages," he said. "My first demand from the U.S. president, when he takes office, would be to end civilian casualties in Afghanistan and take the war to places where there are terrorist nests and training centers."

American military officials and media are not doing an accurate job of telling us exactly what is happening overseas.

If the correct number of deaths, homes eradicated and women and children killed were pushed under the noses of American people, would we be so quick to assume that things were under control in the Middle East?

Advancing gay rights only possible with cooperation and unity

Caleb Tabor
Guest Columnist

I am generally unmoved by political theatrics, but watching President-elect Obama's very eloquent acceptance speech was a surprisingly moving experience.

The emotion in the expressions of the people in the crowds in Chicago was difficult to miss. It was indeed a great day for civil rights.

In his speech, President-elect Obama mentioned this fact, and offered thanks for the support of American Indians, African Americans, Latinos and other different racial minorities, as well as all races in general. He then did something very interesting; he thanked his supporters both gay and straight.

This is the first time this has happened, to my knowledge, in an acceptance speech from a president elect. This shows the ground same-sex rights advocates have made in the past years.

During the next few days that euphoria was lost and I saw something happen that put both of my feet back on the ground and snatched my head out of the clouds.

A constitutional same-sex marriage ban passed in Arizona with a significant margin, one passed in Florida with an even larger margin (in the 60s), and finally the infamous Prop. 8 in California passed by a slim margin (52 percent).

The state of Arkansas also voted to prevent unmarried couples, and by default, homosexuals, from adopting children, which has nothing to do with marriage equality, but much to do with discrimination and oppression. Later, the New York Times reported that a very large number of inner-city minorities voted for Prop. 8, and the blame game began.

In the wake of seeing same-sex marriage rights actually taken away for the first time in U.S. history, I wanted someone to blame. Inner-city minorities, Mormons, Republicans, any and all of them would do.

Later, after careful and prayerful reflection on this, I realized that blaming others does not solve our problem. People should go out and visibly protest in the streets and out in front of government buildings. It is perfectly legal and it is a healthy way to let out some of the anger and let government officials know about societal displeasures.

It is accurate to say that the religious right organized and dumped millions of dollars into this project, there is a problem of homophobia among inner-city cultures and Republicans as a whole tend not to support gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender rights as much as Democrats as a whole do.

There are plenty of Republicans, religious folks and inner-city dwellers who support GLBT rights, and may themselves be a member of the GLBT community.

Many churches exist in California that perform same-sex marriages and offer support to same-sex couples. There are also groups within the Republican party that support marriage equality, and living in the inner-city does not preclude one from supporting marriage equality.

Those who support GLBT rights need to channel their angry energy not into violence and blame toward people who might be perceived and stereotyped as being anti-gay, but into reaching out to supporters, be they believers or non-believers, wealthy or poor, Democrats or Republicans.

The way to fix the problem is to work together constructively from our many walks of life, not blame and marginalize others. My fellow members of the gay community know all too well what it is like to be marginalized and stereotyped.

New and old government leaders making poor financial decisions

Automotive bailout plan spells disaster for taxpayers



Morgan Little
Columnist

Protection rackets are very simple. In exchange for a given amount of payment, a weaker party is protected and stabilized by a stronger party. Provided that the weaker satisfies the demands laid before them, everything works out fine. Anyone who has seen a mob movie understands this perfectly.

Equate the American auto industry to the imaginary George

Martini, a barbershop owner on some grey New York street.

His business is being seized by more efficient, better-run organizations and his profits have plunged over the past few years. Martini's been there for years, he has ties to plenty of people in the neighborhood and he still has a few old connections. For better or worse, these connections are also in the mob, and they agree to fund his efforts to renovate his building and hire new workers. All they want in exchange is to use his store as a meeting place and drug warehouse.

Unfortunately, President-elect Barack Obama and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi are currently playing the role of the mob. Obama deserves points for immediately differentiating himself from the current administration, but is blackmailing the likes of Ford and General Motors the best way to do so?

Essentially, what Pelosi has proposed and Obama supported is taking some of the \$700 billion-plus funds earmarked to bail out financial institutions (which are enjoying a quagmire of their own) and tossing it toward the floundering Detroit corporations. In theory, this sounds dandy.

In practice, it's beyond stupid. Every single penny of the bailout bill has to be put toward saving the country's financial system, and given the ineptitude

of the government's management of said financial planning Washington isn't going to win any awards for competence.

Even if the money isn't taken out of the financial bill, and Congress has tested the water by hiding a \$25 billion grant to automakers with plenty of strings attached, the government simply has no role in such matters.

"Yes, for purposes of this act, I agree that financial institution may encompass auto financing companies," said Democratic Sen. Chris Dodd, who typically has been a voice of reason in Washington.

If that's the case, then Circuit City, which recently filed for bankruptcy, counts as a financial institution, in so much that it buys things, sells things and employs people. Yes, both the finance industry and the American auto industry have been grandly incompetent, but the failure of finance almost brought about a worldwide depression. It held the possibility of toppling faith in capitalism.

As terrible as it may be and as broad as the impact may be, the collapse of Ford and GM is not something the government needs to cede with taxpayer dollars.

Even worse, the money won't be given to help them with their massive health care or production costs. Instead, the government would be forcing them to pour the money into hybrid and fuel-efficient cars.

Is green transportation an admirable goal? Of course. Does the government need to play the role of a Mafia Don to attain such a goal? One would hope not.

A precedent of government involvement in failed retail businesses cannot be set, when federal funding is as tight as it is today. There's a deficit, two wars are still going on and tax dollars are already being put to work saving another industry.

Remember all of those warnings that Obama would end up being a socialist? He's not doing much to counter those claims by agreeing with the automotive bailout plan.