

Intelligence system needs intelligent person to run it

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.

Infighting 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

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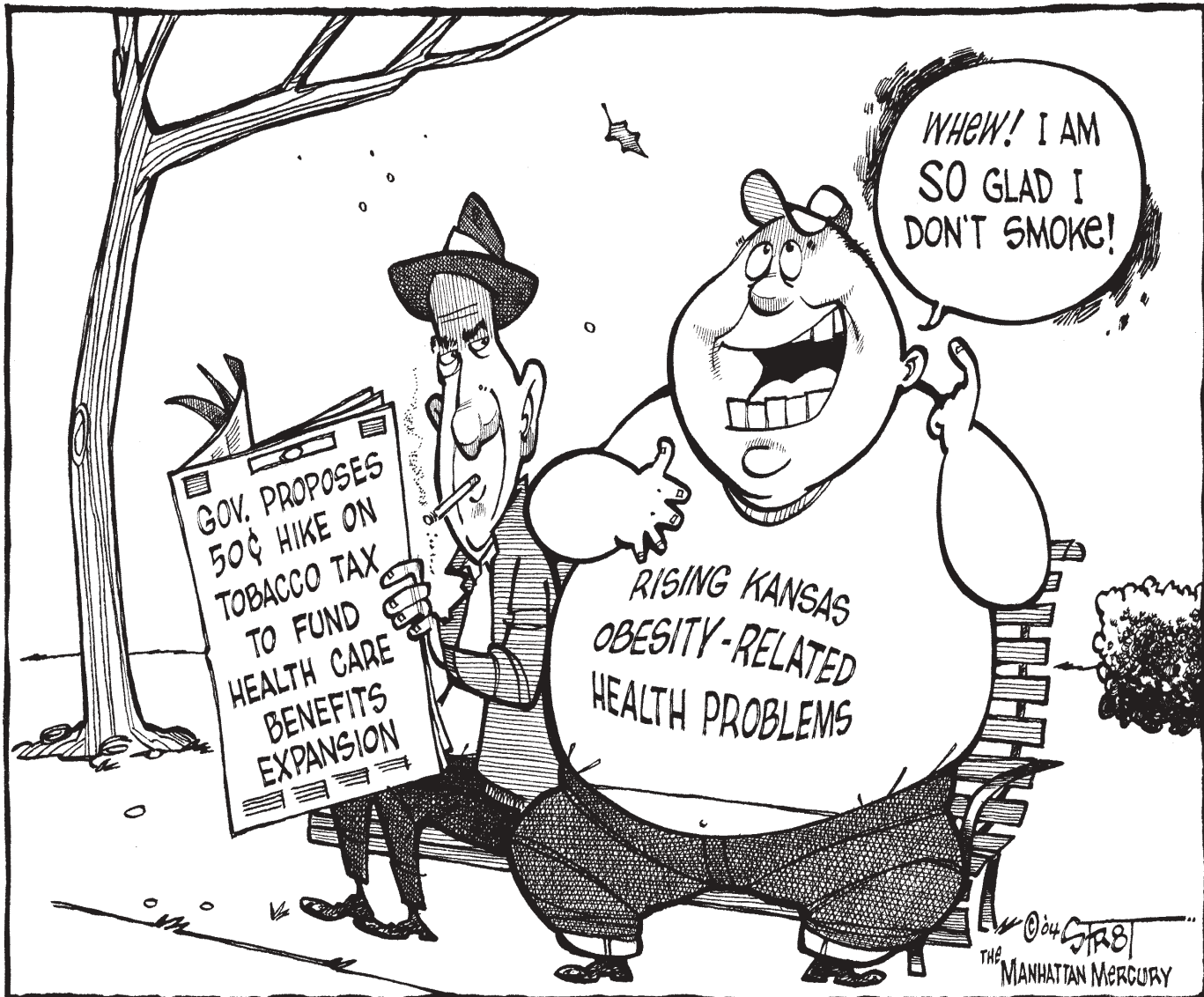
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A New Year's resolution made now

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. Neither Jim nor I take a single

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



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, 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 winter, 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.

You can get used to anything...

Back

Home

Nancy

Hagman



kicked on. And there was an odor. Drowsily, I asked the husband, "What is that smell?"

"Skunk" he replied. We managed to get some sleep. But every time the furnace came on it blew the smell in.

Now just think about, where is the van? — on the carport. And where were my clothes? — in the van.

The next morning I lit every smelly candle I could find. I was afraid to step out the back door, but I had to feed the pets. The smell in the mudroom, where the furnace and the pet food is, was bad.

It was even worse outside — where the van was parked.

But I told myself it wasn't so bad. I drove the van into town. It wasn't so bad.

I went into the store. I came out — the closer I got to the van the more it smelled. Maybe it was bad. I didn't have the courage to check my clothes.

The thing is after I breathed it awhile I'd think that it wasn't that bad. Then I'd go get the mail and walk in the front door and realize, yep, it's that bad.

Finally I baked. The house smelled better.

Finally I brought my clothes in. I think they are okay. People have not been avoiding me any more than usual.

The furnace room still smells though. Well basically that is my just my whole life story anyway — I adjust to the fact that things are not perfect and go on. Try it, really it is a good coping mechanism.

Like they say, time flies whether you are having fun or not, so I just try to have fun.

Denial is another good way to cope — I am not moving my winter coat back.

My sister told me she had a black wool blazer she is no longer wearing and wondered if I would like to have it.

"Is it warm?" I asked.

Just watch I will get through the winter without a real coat yet.

The holiday season can be a challenging emotional roller coaster and often leaves a person feeling tired and grumpy. The pressures and influence of advertising in the media and in the stores, along with the additional work, debt and stress, can result in holidays that are not very happy for many families. To help reduce the hustle and bustle of the season, consider the following:

- Set priorities — decide what would be enjoyed the most by family members and focus on that.

- Plan ahead — make a list of things to do, set aside time each day for those and avoid last minute shopping and preparations.

- Stay in budget — learn to say "no" to expensive holiday ideas. Choose simple,

thoughtful or useful gifts.

- Keep it simple — people tend to over-extend themselves during the holidays. Traditional meals and simple gifts are just as appreciated.

- Start new traditions — be willing to let go of the old if it no longer works, and find new ones.

- Take care of Yourself — counter the holiday pressures by taking time for rest and renewal each day.

Because people expect everything to be

perfect, the holidays often end up disappointing.

Family gatherings and long visits become stressful, and don't live up to the happy, smiling groups portrayed in the media.

Reducing personal expectations can help reduce the stress. Accept that not everything will work out as planned. Keep a sense of humor; often the biggest snafus of the season become the fondest memories in years to come.

These views are those of the writer and should not be considered a replacement for seeking professional help.

Mail questions to High Plains Mental Health Center, Plain Sense, consultation and education department, 208 East 7th, Hays, Kan. 67601

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