



Free Press
Viewpoint

No terrorists
in our backyard

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 actually 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.

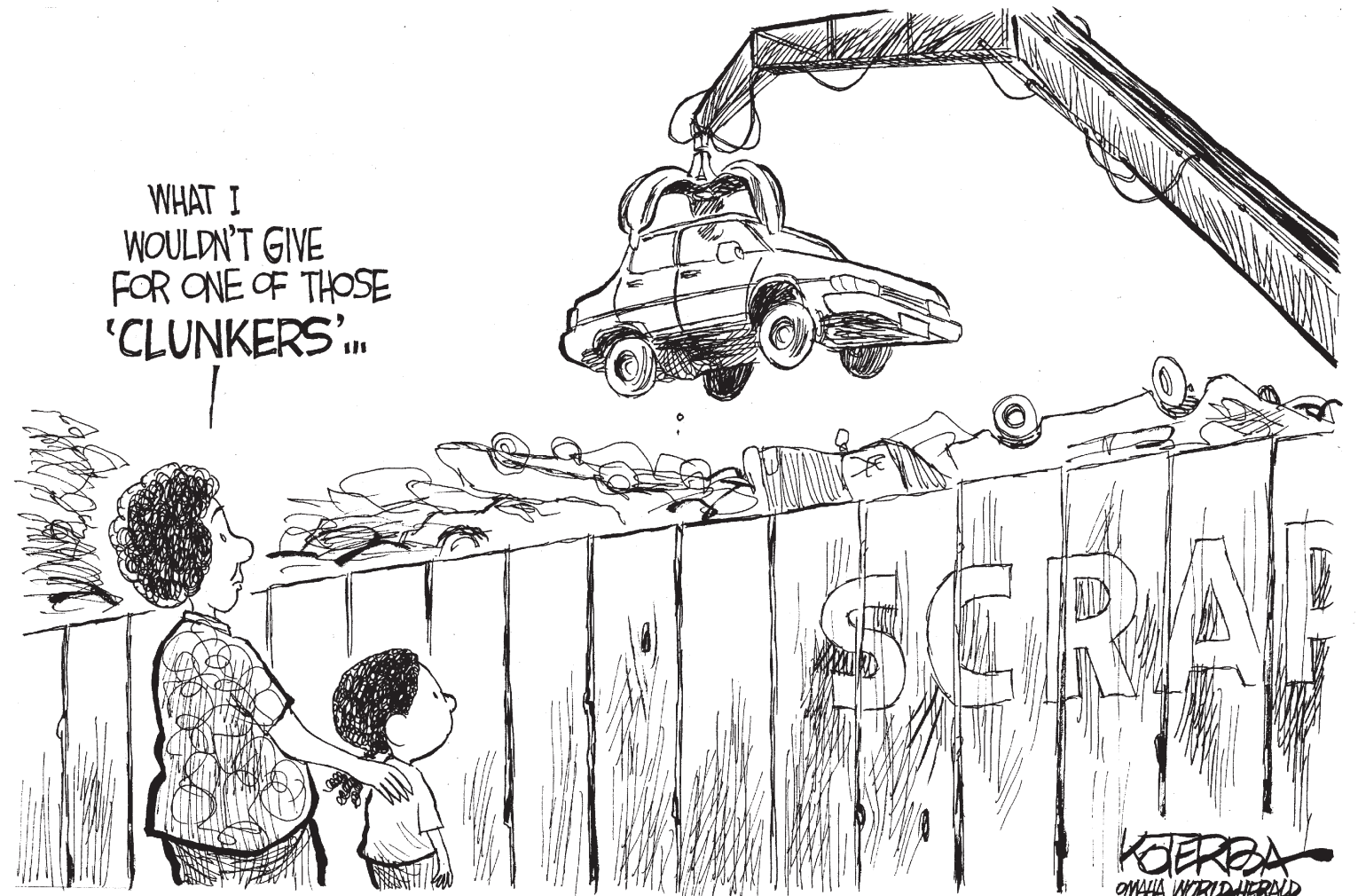
If so, it’s not likely that our few Congressmen, only one of them a Democrat, will be able to hold the gates. The president made a solemn promise to close “Gitmo” within a year, and he’s running out of time.

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



Memory lane just a part of vacation

So what did you do on vacation?

Walked, read, cooked, took a train ride, attended a couple of plays and a concert. Oh, and did I mention, walked, read and cooked?

We took last week off to spend a week with our youngest daughter and her husband in Colorado.

We started by driving to Denver to get them at the airport. Then it was on to Creede, where we had our first paper and the kids grew up.

The first couple of days were relaxing. We read and walked the dog, fed the birds and I fried chicken.

As the week progressed, things got more hectic. The kids did a long hike and went horseback riding. We all went out to a couple of daughter’s favorite restaurants and to the Creede Repertory Theatre to watch some great plays.

Steve and daughter went fishing while Brad, her husband, and I held down the fort. He read and I made zucchini bread.

We did a little work around the house, cleaning light fixtures of dead bugs and the chimney



Cynthia Haynes

- Open Season

of dead fires.

Mostly we talked, walked and bored Brad with all our stories of the years we had lived in this tiny mountain mining town.

Steve explained in minute detail the history of several of the old mines and the geology of the area.

I talked about the people we had known: the guy who owned the building behind the newspaper office and kept a rattlesnake in a pickle bucket; the former cop who got fired for leaving marijuana cigarette butts in the ash tray of his patrol car; and the theater director who read Allen Ginsberg’s poetry after having issued an invitation to the famous poet. The beat poet’s

inflammatory, homosexually oriented verses pretty much put her into shock.

Lindsay had told everyone that she was taking Brad camping. Even his mother went into hysterics at that one. Brad is a city boy. He doesn’t do bugs, much less soot, dirt and sleeping on the ground.

Then, of course, Lindsay told him about the wildlife in the area, including the mountain lion and bear sightings. She’s lucky she got him out to go hiking, let alone camping.

We had a good week. It all went too fast, and by Saturday, we were back in the car for the five-hour trip to Denver. The kids are back in Augusta, Ga., and we’re back in Kansas. The cool Colorado temperatures are just a memory and August in Kansas closes in on us.

But, as Dorothy said, “There’s no place like home.”

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor’West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes @ nwkansas.com

Swine flu – forgotten but not gone

As the H1N1 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,



Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips

- Kansas State Health Officer

points to a distinctly higher risk for the young. The average age for confirmed cases in Kansas is just years, with about 80 percent of cases occurring 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 transmission, and, if necessary, release publicly held stockpiles of antiviral drugs that can speed recovery in cases of severe disease and reduce the risk of fatal complications.

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 for use in the whole population.

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.

tion. Fortunately, supplies are expected to be sufficient to begin immunizing those in lower priority groups within the first several weeks.

As public health departments prepare for mass vaccinations, hospitals and other health care providers are now making sure they are ready for a surge in demand for their services. Businesses around the state are preparing to ensure continuity of operations in the event of high levels of absenteeism.

Schools, which will soon open their doors for a new academic year, are preparing their teachers and parents for heightened vigilance, strict exclusion of ill students, and possible school-wide dismissals in the event of an outbreak.

The media spotlight may be off of the flu at the moment, but throughout Kansas you can see that work is underway to make sure the state is ready for an escalation of viral activity at any time.

In a pandemic, neither alarm nor complacency is helpful. But by understanding the risks, by taking reasonable steps to prevent transmission and by working together on solutions, we will get through this and we will keep each other safe.

Dr. Jason Eberhart-Phillips is the state health officer and director for the Health Department of Health and Environment.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774

U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715 or Fax (202) 225-5124

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Steve Haynes - Publisher
s.haynes @ nwkansas.com

NEWS

Kevin Bottrell - News Editor
kbottrell @ nwkansas.com

Andy Heintz - Sports Reporter
aheintz @ nwkansas.com

Marian Ballard - Copy Editor
mballard @ nwkansas.com

Vera Sloan and Aubrey Spencer - Society Editors
colby.society @ nwkansas.com

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Jasmine Stewart - Advertising Manager
j.stewart @ nwkansas.com

Heather Woofter - Advertising Sales
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Mallard Fillmore

- Bruce Tinsley

