

Are we really losing the war on terrorism

It's far from clear who's winning the War on Terrorism, though the U.S. has not suffered greatly in the last few years, and the terrorists have taken a beating.

Around the world, leaders of al Qaida and its related groups have been killed by bombs and missiles, hunted down and arrested and run into hiding. While the Taliban has become aggressive in Afghanistan, it's nowhere near a victory.

Americans, however, and our news media in particular, tend to blow out of proportion every little skirmish in this war. Overall, we are not only winning the general fight, but our losses have been negligible.

Take the incident where a terrorist double agent who gained the trust of Jordanian and American intelligence officers detonated a bomb in a briefing room, killing eight CIA officers. The loss of eight officers is tragic, but in war, there are casualties.

While not insignificant to the individuals involved or their families, this incident, in the history of our battle, will be little remarked. It represents a series of mistakes in an individual operation, but not a failure of our intelligence system or a major defeat in the war.

Yet, news reports trumpet the bombing as if it was a major issue for the United States. You almost get the idea that some people want us to lose, or at least to play up our every setback.

In the same vein, the "underwear bomber" does not represent a massive failure of our air transport security system, though it does point out some weaknesses. If security had not been so good, one expert noted, the bomber might have carried a real bomb — one that worked. Instead, he was captured, alive but horribly wounded.

It's easy to say that the security apparatus should have spotted the bomber, who had been turned into our embassy in Nigeria as a possible terrorist by his father, but in truth,

the system is not that good. It may not even be possible or desirable for the system to be that good.

The fact is, it works. Millions of people fly every day, and not one of them has been killed by a terrorist act in years. It could happen again, to be sure, but it seems less likely as time goes by. The terrorists are not winning and have mustered only feeble efforts against the U.S. since 2001.

In the meantime, they've been run out of their sanctuaries around the world and forced to exist in caves and inhospitable mountains. They are no longer the threat they once were.

That is not to say that we've won this struggle, but it may never be won. Terrorists can claim victory from a single act, but the civilized world needs to be safe all the time. Eternal vigilance may be the price of 21st century civilization.

Yes, we might as well be prepared for further indignities at the airport checking line, though gate screening isn't terribly effective. Lots of contraband gets through, many fly who perhaps shouldn't.

The greatest obstacle to a victory by the forces of reason may be our will to continue. The more we hear about bombings and death, the less we want to face the threat. Americans, in particular, do not relish long-term conflict, but this one will not go away soon.

Go away it will. All threats fade, all movements run their course. Even the dreaded communist monolith went away, leaving only a hollow shell to scare us in the end.

For now, though, we need to gain some perspective on what's happening, step back and realize that our side has not fared badly, though the battle is far from over.

And think about the consequences of ignoring this problem and letting the terrorist movement grow and fester. — Steve Haynes



Closet collected everything

I'm a little young to remember the radio show "Fibber McGee and Molly," but my parents told me about it and I did watch many episodes of the short-lived television version.

I don't remember much about the show except that the couple's hall closet was a noted disaster. Every time someone would open it, all sorts of stuff would fall out.

That was sort of the feeling I got when Steve and Lacy went to clean our son's closet over Christmas. Things just sort of fell out all over the place.

Lacy graduated in 1999 and left for college and, except to occasional short visits home, he hasn't lived in "his" room or used "his" closet for more than 10 years.

It had become the repository of anything that was taking up space when company was coming.

It was a mess, and the mess was starting to creep out from under the door and slide along the bedroom floor. We either had to clean it up or name it and get it a license.

So when son came home for Christmas, he and his father went to work.

The first layer was stuff Steve and I have brought home from a



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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dozen conventions. You know the kind of stuff I'm talking about: It's interesting, and you just know that when you have a few minutes, you'll study it and it will be of use. But you never have the time and it just piles up and up and up.

The next layer was things I had brought home when mother cleaned out her home before she sold it. This included a box of Swedish weaving and my Classics Illustrated comic books. I put the weaving and comics aside, thinking that they might be worth something, sometime to someone.

This explains why the closet will never really get cleaned out.

The last layer was son's.

I didn't even know that he had ever owned a bowling ball. And what do you do with a couple of old skate boards that it looks like a puppy has used for teething? There

was a ball. It wasn't a basketball or a volleyball or even a soccer ball. None of us could figure out what it had been used to play but it was deflated and definitely out of there.

Next were school papers and camp stuff and photos. He was about to toss his old football tights when I snagged them. They wouldn't fit him anymore, but they sure have come in handy for me this past week when the temperatures bottomed out in the minus 0 range.

The boys gave up when they came to the earthenware jars my Daddy used to make wine in. Son is a professional bartender, but he's not quite ready to start making his own product.

That's just as well. I doubt if his landlord in Lawrence would approve and, despite the cleaning, there still isn't room in the closet for more stuff.

Pajamas get a long workout

This may be TMI (too much information), but I'm still in my pajamas as I write this.

Granted, they are extremely cute pajamas (turquoise fleece with baby panda bears), but I have spent the last 30 hours flat on my back.

I got sick about 8 p.m. Saturday, and for awhile, I was afraid I was going to die. Then I was afraid I wasn't. I remember saying to son James, that I wondered if this was how chemo patients feel. If it's even close, I don't want to go there.

I stayed in Jim's recliner all Saturday night and all day Sunday. His recliner is a little "cushier" than mine, and he encouraged me to recuperate in it, an offer I gladly accepted.

Late Sunday night I felt well enough to run a load of clothes through the washer, fold some clothes from the dryer, load the dishwasher and clean up the wreck the men left in the kitchen. It really wasn't too bad.

I had made a huge pot of stew Friday, a big pan of cornbread and two apple pies on Saturday while I was still feeling fine, so they ate pretty good whilst I was out of commission. I think they both ate pie for



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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breakfast.

Monday has dawned bright and warm, and feeling the sunshine can't help but make a body feel better. I'm convinced I'll survive now and am going to progress from crackers and tea to something a little more substantial. But not apple pie.

— ob —

As everyone in this part of the country knows, it has not been merely cold the past week — it has been bitter cold. I have a thermometer outside my kitchen window, and I think the thing got stuck on "0."

We had some minus degree days and many when it never got over 10. At that point, a few degrees one way or the other don't make much difference. It's kind of hard to listen to talk of "global warming" on days like that.

The good part about this weather is that it has forced Jim to work inside. He put work on his shop "on hold" and got busy running duct work to the rest of the house. We now have heat in the dining room, one more heat duct in the kitchen (which really needed it) and pipe run to the other bedrooms upstairs.

He and James also finished tearing out the old lath and plaster in what will eventually be the library. That just leaves one room to go — our old closet which will become a much-needed office. Yea! I can hardly wait.

— ob —

Whew! I'm exhausted. This little bit of exertion really drained me. I think it's time to head to the recliner. Too bad there's no stew left. I could have milked this for one more day.

E-readers not all that green

Tired of hearing the younger generation brag about reading their books on e-readers or cell phones?

Many abandon newspapers and magazines, claim they are "saving trees!" Other techno-enthusiasts disparage your driving or flying to a conference as they brag how environmentally-friendly their video-conference was. Well, their economic calculations are downright wrong.

According to a Climate Group report, all these mobile phones, computers and printers, and all the servers and ancillary equipment that drive the computer and online operations, emit 830 million tons of carbon dioxide per year. That is about 2 percent of the manmade carbon footprint and equivalent to all the world's aviation-generated CO2.

And it makes sense. The person reading a book on an e-reader is constantly drawing electrical power from either a household outlet or a battery. Reading a paper book uses no electrical energy at all.

Pollution and environmental costs include both materials to make the equipment and the ongoing energy-use combined. Electronics loses on both counts.

One downloaded "book" on an e-reader is stuck on that one machine, not transferable to others, and will soon be obsolete. About one-fourth of the energy consumed by computers and electronic devices is in their



Education Frontlines

By John Richard Schrock

manufacture; about three-fourths is spent in their ongoing use. And their lifespan is fleeting.

Printed books are far cheaper to produce, consume no energy in their use, and can last for centuries. Printed books are often given or sold as used books, serving many readers before they are ultimately recycled as paper.

"Save a tree" by switching from paper to electronics? Paper is a renewable resource and most paper companies plant efficient and fast-growing trees for the pulp industry. But very little of the metal-and-plastic mobile phones, computers and ancillary equipment is "renewable."

And lifespan? Hardware and software turns over in five to six years. Kids are trading in cell phones almost monthly! Thrown in the junk bin twice a decade, our "old" electronics contains some of the world's most problematic toxic wastes, including cadmium and lithium batteries.

The Climate Group report estimates that electronic-related emis-

sions will increase about 6 percent per year through 2020 as more and more people acquire personal computers, mobile phones and broadband internet.

Next time the techno-enthusiasts brag they are "saving a tree" by going paperless, point out that they are the ones using up far more natural resources and energy. And that the paper pulp forests planted to generate our paper are helping to offset their bigger electronic carbon footprint.

John Richard Schrock, a professor of biology and department chair at a leading teacher's college, lives in Emporia. He emphasizes that his opinions are strictly his own.

From the Bible

And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.
Luke 18:1

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Angel Tree makes children happy

To the Editor:

I would like to thank the members of the community who unselfishly gave gifts to the children on the Angel Tree. I submitted the names of my five children not really knowing what to expect. I filled out the information about clothing sizes and things they would like to receive.

I made a hasty trip out to California for my mother, who was dying, during the designated times of the pick ups for the items, and did not even think about the gifts from the Angel Tree. When I got back on Dec. 21, I received a call from Abby Hissong to meet her at the Rocking R to pick up our gifts.

My children and I walked to the store, thinking they would each carry a gift back to the house. Little did I know that my five children and I would not even be able to attempt

Letter to the Editor

to bring home all the gifts that piled up high from the floor. We were all speechless — and that says a lot for the kids! Abby volunteered to load them all in her truck and deliver them.

For the next few days, the children basked in the excitement of what each gift would bring them. Their patience was admirable, until Christmas Day arrived, and mom brought her weary self home from work, when the children tore into the many beautifully wrapped boxes.

Shrieks of joy and wonderment could be heard a block away as paper flew wildly and they uncovered coats, boots, fashion clothes, jeans, lotions, soaps, games, snow pants,

mitten, gloves, and miraculously, in-line skates!

So, thank you for your generous, thoughtful gifts which provided an amazing, fantasy-filled Christmas for my children and me.

God bless you,
Jeanne Isbell, Oberlin

