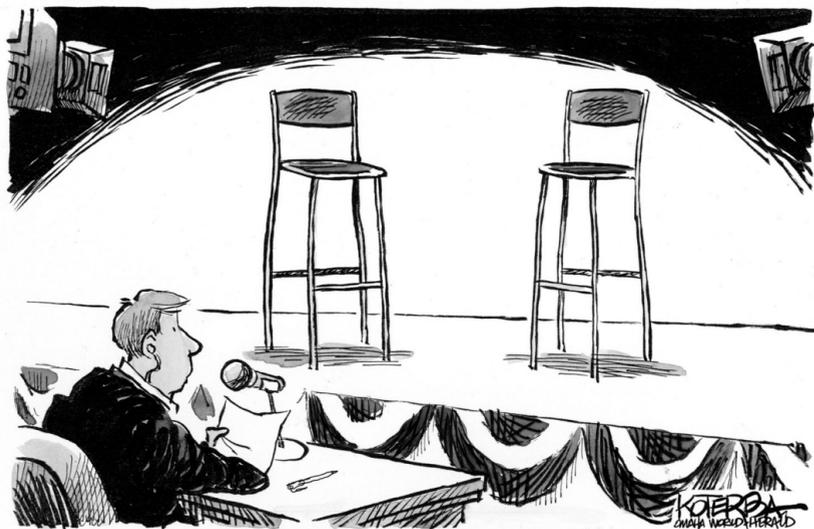


Wednesday's

Editorials, Columns & Letters

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AND THEN THE NETWORKS REALIZED THEY DIDN'T NEED THE CANDIDATES TO HOLD DEBATES...

Paper 'n Ink...

Send in the drones

By Lynn Brisendine

Eleven years later, and in some respects it might as well be a century since the unthinkable took place before our eyes in New York City.

It's true. We have seen much take place in little more than a decade. We have fought two wars on foreign soil, in places so backward and trapped in a religion, that the citizens aren't much different than their seventh century ancestors. And yet, we hang around and keep losing our brave troops to people who hate us in every respect.

We have broken the back of Al Qaeda. Our special forces, and the use of high tech battlefield gadgets have proven effective. At least to some extent. We are now seeing a huge debate taking place in our press about the death of a true human monster. Some folks trying to make a lot of money are changing the story about what happened in Abbottabad, Pakistan in May of 2011.

The "fog of war" even when the battle is fought between just a few in a dark place can result in individuals with different recollections over time.

While these new "facts" or perhaps personal memories see print and air time, the one inconclusive detail remains, that human monster met his fate and is no more.

After eleven hard years of taking these terrorists to task, we have seen much of their leadership removed with prejudice, many by the use of drone aircraft which hover and wait until one or two or more of these killers are found and eliminated.

In another battle zone we took on a truly malignant cult called the Taliban. In the first phase of the Afghanistan war, these religious fanatics were roused, whipped, and run out of the country. They took up residence in rugged camps along the Pakistan border.

We decided to go to war in Iraq and more or less took the pressure off of the Taliban who immediately moved back in and began their destruction of civilization once again.

More of our troops went into that place and the Taliban scattered again. But, can anyone with any common sense believe that when we take our troops out of that place these folks won't rush back in like a bunch of cockroaches looking for crumbs.

It is terrible that any American died in that rocky messed-up place. But, we have spent billions in Afghanistan building roads, bridges and repairing or even worse, developing infrastructure. All the while many of those things needed our money in our country.

To make a point we can consider the

outcome concerning Iraq, another desert place which saw too many of our troops die. We rebuilt much of their country over time and used billions of tax dollars to do it.

For what? We put a government in place which has gone out of its way to not only distance itself from the United States, but to aid and abet another avowed enemy across its border. No, make that two enemies. Iraq has made concessions to Iran and has done what it can to supersede our sanctions against the Iraqi thugs.

Iraq has also made it easier for Iran to supply Syria bad man Assad with weapons, equipment and supplies to continue their war against his own people.

Hardly a day goes by that someone on our shores demands that we take action to stop this civil war in Syria. It seems that too many of our brain trust seem to think we need to participate in numerous desert wars in a region rife with religious conflicts. It becomes necessary for civilized people to have a program naming all of the different sects, cults, religions and kooks that are involved. The only sure thing is that while each of those entities named above hate each other with passion, they still hate us more. The only unifying message that exists is the cry of "Death to America."

To complicate this to a much greater degree, add the support of Russia and China to the mix. Both nations have made it clear that Assad is their guy in the region and they have also made no bones that we should not interfere. That goes double for Iran, another country that supplies them with petroleum and also buys a lot of weapons and other equipment, including machinery and technologies to develop their own nuclear bomb.

Perhaps it's time to take a few steps back and allow the entire region to return to their blood feuds.

All of this and the British send in their wayward Prince Harry. He is "in country" and the Taliban, Al Qaeda, Sunnies, Shiites and Iranians have put out a contract on his head. Kidnap him or kill him, that would be an enormous coup. It seems to me that the best thing right now would be to get Harry, his fellow countrymen and his best allies, us, out of that place.

Bring our troops home.

When the last one leaves, the region will revert to its former backward and terrorized place filled with the Taliban. And the government officials we have kept alive and made rich will welcome them with open arms and a message, that, "hey, we don't like them either."

Oh, we could maintain a presence... send in the drones...

State Capital Highlights

Compiled by Ed Sterling, Texas Press Association



Texans play roles in national party conventions...

AUSTIN — Focus on a just-launched school year and fall sports turned east to the Republican National Convention in Tampa, Fla., Aug. 28-30, and to the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, N.C., Sept. 4-6.

Texans took prominent roles at both conventions, in which the Republican Party nominated former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney and the Democratic Party nominated incumbent President Barack Obama.

San Antonio mayor Julian Castro delivered the keynote address to the Democrats and U.S. Senate nominee and former state solicitor general Ted Cruz spoke to the Republicans. Paul Sadler, D-Henderson, are competing to succeed U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison of Dallas, who chose not to seek reelection.

Also speaking at the Democratic convention were U.S. Reps. Charlie Gonzalez of San Antonio and Al Green of Houston; actress and Obama campaign co-chair Eva Longoria of Corpus Christi and San Antonio; Cecile Richards of Austin, president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America; and Benita Veliz of San Antonio who stumped for the DREAM Act, a path to citizenship for certain undocumented U.S. residents. DREAM stands for Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors.

Republican U.S. Reps. Francisco "Quico" Canseco of San Antonio and Pete Sessions of Dallas spoke at the GOP convention. Canseco's opponent in the race for Congressional District 23 spanning from San Antonio to Del Rio to El Paso, is state Rep. Pete Gallego, D-Alpine. Actress, rancher and Republican activist Janine Turner of Dallas spoke. Two

prominent Texas Republicans, both of them former 2012 presidential candidates, were not given speaking roles at the convention: U.S. Rep. Ron Paul of Lake Jackson and Gov. Rick Perry.

Texas, with 36 electoral votes, is likely to go Republican again on Nov. 6, as indicated by a consensus of published analyses, and is considered a must-win state for Romney. At the Democratic convention, however, Mayor Castro said the 2012 general election is possibly the last general election for Texas to be labeled a "red state" because of its rapidly growing minority population that tends to favor Democratic Party candidates.

TEA to ask for waiver

The Texas Education Agency on Sept. 6 announced plans to submit a request to the U.S. Department of Education, asking it to waive certain provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as the "No Child Left Behind Act" — a federal law that the administration of then-President George W. Bush considered a key achievement.

In seeking the request, Education Commissioner Michael Williams said the U.S. Department of Education's slowness to reauthorize No Child Left Behind, plus troubles associated with local education administrators having to meet and function within two different assessment and accountability systems "takes valuable resources and time away from the intent and focus of improving student achievement and school accountability."

Voting site gets attention

Secretary of State Hope Andrade announced last week that VoteTexas.gov, the official online source for voting information in Texas, is enjoying the spotlight on Texas.gov, the state's official online portal.

Texans can visit VoteTexas.

gov to see if they are registered to vote, download a voter registration application, and find answers to frequently asked questions about voting. They can also find updates about upcoming elections and even remind friends and family to vote.

The last day to register to vote for the November election is Oct. 9.

Word out on pertussis

Mosquito-borne West Nile Virus looms large as a threat to public health, but last week, the word about highly contagious whooping cough went out.

On Sept. 6, Texas Department of State Health Services cited six deaths and more than 1,000 confirmed cases of pertussis, widely known as whooping cough, so far this year in Texas.

The health department and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that pregnant women get a pertussis vaccine "any time after 20 weeks gestation and others who will be around infants should also get a shot: fathers, older siblings, other caregivers and health care professionals like doctors and nurses who care for babies."

"Patients who have pertussis should not go back to work or school until they've had five days of antibiotic treatment," according to the health department.

Where the worst traffic is

The Texas Department of Transportation on Aug. 31 released its annual list of the state's 100 Most Congested Roadways.

Stretches of roadway in Harris, Dallas, Tarrant and Travis counties took the top 30 most-congested spots. A stretch of Interstate 35 in Bexar County is ranked 31st.

The complete list is available to Internet users at www.dot.state.tx.us.

Thinking in Type ...

"It's a girl! And I'm in real trouble."

I spoke those words with a tremble in my voice five years ago, tomorrow.

Enter Madilynn Nicole Brisendine, my baby girl. She was born late on a Thursday night at a healthy 8 pounds, 11 ounces.

We arrived at the hospital 20 hours prior and she had her dad pacing the halls for most of that time.

When we found out a few months prior to her arrival that our new addition was of the tender gender, friends and family began giving me fits about being a softy and being wrapped around the little finger of a certain little girl.

I said phooey to all that. My usual response was "I'll have her toeing the line just like my boys."

That obviously was said tongue-in-cheek since my boys have yet to toe a line when I barked the order.

My point was, a kid is a kid is a kid.

Well, once again I'm proven wrong — and by another female nonetheless.

The predictions were immediately proven true. One look at her and I was a goner.

Because of her, I've already done things I once swore I would never do.

I've learned to tie a bow and make a pony tail.

I've pushed the cart down the Barbie Doll aisle.

I've even proudly shouldered the pink polka-dotted diaper bags and dance bags and backpacks in public.

Before she got here, I would have protested any of those moves, instead walking with a swagger and acting manly.

But late that Thursday night five years ago, carrying my newborn daughter from the delivery room back to the

nurses station, I've never felt like a bigger man.

And in countless instances since, the feeling is the same.

Holding my little girl's hand as she walks into school. Toting her to dance classes and recitals. Sitting on the floor and playing with dolls. Holding her most nights before bed.

Those are all moments I treasure.

So to all my friends who told me I was in trouble, I'd have to say they were right.

But it's the best trouble I've ever gotten myself into.

It's been five years since my home was invaded by pink, but somehow I don't seem to mind as much as I once would have.

Maddie came home to two curious and loving big

brothers to stand guard. Those big brothers have made an art of roughhousing, but their sister has never shied away from jumping in the mix.

She's equally interested though, in finger nail polish and fancy shoes and all the latest five-year-old fashion trends.

I'm still learning to deal with mercurial mood swings and mini dramas that are tougher to quell than all her brothers' problems combined.

But, she has big blue eyes and a smile that melts, so I rarely win an argument.

It may be a wild ride for our little daddy's girl. And if I stay as smitten as I have been the last five years, it may be a wild ride for our little girl's daddy.

ON YOUR PAYROLL

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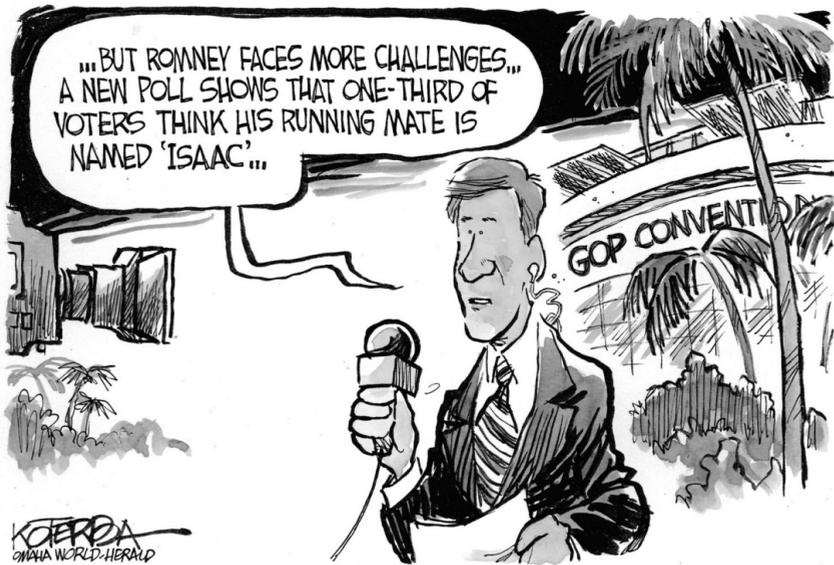
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