

January 16, 2014

Israel's defense minister commits the faux pas of telling the truth about Kerry's efforts with Palestinians. [Breitbart](#) has the story.

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[Jonathan Tobin](#) posts at length on Moshe Ya'alon's outburst.

Give Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu some credit. In his first term as Israel's leader in the 1990s, he might well have issued a statement like the one attributed to Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon yesterday in which the former general trashed U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and damned the security plan that he presented to Israel this month as "not worth the paper it's written on." Since returning to the prime minister's office in 2009 Netanyahu has done his best to keep the relationship with Washington from overheating. If there have been a series of scrapes with the Obama administration, that is largely the fault of the president's desire to pick policy fights with him and the prime minister has done his best not to overreact. No matter how wrong Israel's leaders may think their American counterparts are, little good comes from public spats. As Netanyahu knows, the only ones who benefit from exposing the daylight between the two countries' positions are the Palestinians and other foes.

But apparently Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon hasn't gotten the memo about not telling off the Americans. In an apparently unguarded moment, the former general spouted off about Kerry, the peace process, and the Palestinians yesterday, and the subsequent [report in Yediot Ahronot published in English on their Ynetnews.com site](#) brought down a firestorm on the Israeli government. Though Yaalon [walked back his comments](#) in a statement to the media, he did not deny the accuracy of the original Yediot story. This indiscretion won't help Netanyahu in his dealings with either Obama or Kerry. It is especially foolish coming from a cabinet minister whose department has worked closely with the administration on security measures throughout the last five years to Israel's benefit in spite of the political differences between the governments. But leaving aside the diplomatic harm he has done his country, honest observers must admit that what Yaalon said was true. ...

Uniting left and right, A [NY Times OpEd](#) says the Iran policy is doomed to failure. If Kerry can find another stupid policy in the region, he can have a Mid East "[hat trick](#)." *A great deal of diplomatic attention over the next few months will be focused on whether the temporary nuclear deal with Iran can be transformed into a full-blown accord. President Obama has staked the success of his foreign policy on this bold gamble. But discussion about the nuclear deal has diverted attention from an even riskier bet that Obama has placed: the idea that Iran can become a cooperative partner in regional security.*

Although they won't say so publicly, Mr. Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry surely dream of a "Nixon to China" masterstroke. ...

... The Obama strategy is breathtakingly ambitious. It is also destined to fail.

First, it ignores the obvious fact that, unlike China at the time of President Richard M. Nixon's diplomacy in the 1970s, Iran does not share a common enemy that would force it to unite with America. Though Iran's proxies are fighting Sunni extremists in a number of theaters, Iran itself has cooperated with Al Qaeda and other Sunni extremists, such as Hamas and the Taliban, when it has served its interests to do so. Iran's rulers simply do not regard Al Qaeda as an existential threat on a par with the "Great Satan" (as they see the United States). By contrast, Mao did see the Soviet Union as a sufficient threat to justify an alliance with the "capitalist imperialists" in Washington.

The second major problem is that Iran has always harbored dreams of regional hegemony. There is no sign that the election of the "moderate" cleric Hassan Rouhani as president has changed anything. ...

He put the Moran into moron. **Roll Call** says Virginia Dem Moran will finally leave congress.

Senior appropriator and progressive stalwart James P. Moran will step down at the end of this year, making him the third House Democrat in just three days to announce his retirement. ...

... Over the years Moran has served on Capitol Hill, his professional accomplishments were sometimes overshadowed by personal scandals. Brash and occasionally outspoken to a fault, he has shoved members leaving the House floor, suggested that the Jewish community pushed for the U.S. invasion in Iraq in 2003 and possibly squandered a small fortune in the stock market. In 2012, his son resigned as field director for his father's re-election campaign after he was caught on camera advocating voter fraud.

But Moran has always been a team player in the Democratic power structure, trusted by leadership to take reliable, liberal, party-line votes. ...

Moran's son was featured in **Chris Cillizza's Worst Week in Washington** in October 2012 when he was caught in a James O'Keefe sting.

When approached at a Cosi by a total stranger pushing a vote-fraud scheme, be very, very leery.

Pat Moran, son of Northern Virginia Rep. Jim Moran (D), learned that the hard way this past week when conservative activists caught him on video providing advice about how one person might be able to cast ballots on behalf of a number of people in next month's election.

In the video, Moran, the field director for his father's campaign, appears initially uneasy about the prospect of vote fraud but goes on to suggest that forged utility bills could be used as identification. He adds that the bills must "look good" to fool poll workers. ...

Speaking of DC lowlifes, [Charles Hurt](#) has more on "Duty."

... Support would be to never send soldiers to die for a mission not worth dying for. As secretary of defense and president of the United States, that would be your responsibility to determine. Or "duty," if you like. If they are dying for something you honestly believe the commander in chief does not believe in, then you have a duty to quit and make known your grave concerns about such treasonous leadership.

Mr. Gates also reveals Washington's worst-kept secret of the past four decades: Mr. Biden has been wrong about every major foreign policy issue of his time. Such ineptitude would get anybody fired from Macy's shoe department. But in Washington, it makes Mr. Biden the reigning expert on foreign affairs and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for years.

Mr. Gates also smears Mrs. Clinton by relaying a conversation she had with Mr. Obama in which both of them acknowledged that they opposed sending reinforcement troops to Iraq when the fighting grew particularly nasty because they were afraid support might hurt their political careers.

Still, Mr. Gates declares that Mrs. Clinton would make a fine president. And, in an effort to be "even-handed," says so would Mr. Biden.

Dear God, save America!

If you've been wondering about the fuss over the internet court decision, we have the skinny from a [WSJ OpEd](#).

A federal appeals court in Washington slapped the Federal Communications Commission on Tuesday for overstepping its legal authority by trying to regulate Internet access. The FCC is now a two-time loser in court in its net-neutrality efforts. Has the government learned its lesson, or will the agency take a third stab at regulating the Internet? The answer to that question will affect the Internet's growth in the 21st century.

The FCC's quest to regulate the Internet began in 2010, when the commission first promulgated rules for net neutrality. The rules, proponents argue, are needed to police Internet "on-ramps" (Internet service providers) ostensibly to ensure that they stay "open." To accomplish this, some want the FCC to subject the Internet to ancient communications laws designed for extinct phone and railroad monopolies.

But the trouble is, nothing needs fixing. The Internet has remained open and accessible without FCC micromanagement since it entered public life in the 1990s. And more regulation could produce harmful results, such as reduced infrastructure investment, stunted innovation, slower speeds and higher prices for consumers. The FCC never bothered to study the impact that such intervention might have on the broadband market before leaping to regulate. Nor did it consider the ample consumer-protection laws that already exist. The government's meddling has been driven more by ideology and a 2008 campaign promise by then-Sen. [Barack Obama](#) than by reality. ...

MIT scientist dumps on Deval Patrick, MA Gov.

While Gov. Deval Patrick and others painted a dire picture of what global warming might do to us, others are more skeptical.

MIT **Professor** Richard Lindzen is a leading international expert on climate change.

*"The changes that have occurred due to global warming are too small to **account** for," he told WBZ-TV. "It has nothing to do with global warming, it has to do with where we live."*

Lindzen endorses sensible preparedness and environmental protection, but sees what he terms "catastrophism" in the climate change horror stories.

"Global warming, climate change, all these things are just a dream come true for politicians. The opportunities for taxation, for policies, for control, for crony capitalism are just immense, you can see their eyes bulge," he says.

"Even many of the people who are supportive of sounding the global warning alarm, back off from catastrophism," Lindzen said. "It's the politicians and the green movement that like to portray catastrophe."

The earth is staying in balance. **Business Insider** reports on a heat wave in Australia.

Australian authorities warned Tuesday of some of the worst fire danger since a 2009 inferno which killed 173 people, with most of the continent's southeast sweltering through a major heatwave.

Victoria state, where the so-called Black Saturday firestorm flattened entire villages in 2009 and destroyed more than 2,000 homes, was again bracing for extreme fire weather.

"These next four days promise to be amongst the most significant that we have faced in Victoria since Black Saturday," said acting state premier Peter Ryan.

Tens of thousands of firefighters were on standby, and 1,290 brigades were in a "state of high preparedness", he added, with the peak danger day expected on Friday when very strong winds are forecast. ...

The Atlantic has some good news; we're not getting zapped by lightning like in the past.

In the first half of the 20th century, hundreds of Americans died each year from lightning strikes. The data is messy, but in the years from about 1920 to the middle of the 1940s, about 400 people were killed by lightning annually.

Last year, 23 did, the fewest on record. Other recent years have had a similarly small number of lightning fatalities, with 28 in 2012, and 26 in 2011, the previous record.

These numbers are all the more remarkable considering how the population of the United States has exploded over the same time period. Measured on a per person basis, the decline in lightning deaths over the last century is staggering, falling from about 3 or 4 annual deaths per million Americans, to fewer than 0.1 in recent years. ...

Andrew Malcolm tops off our week with late night humor.

Fallon: President Obama invited unemployed Americans to the White House for a discussion on income inequality. Because if there's one way to show sympathy for the unemployed, it's to have them over to a giant white mansion where you get to live for free.

Leno: That MSNBC anchor has apologized for making fun of a Mitt Romney grandchild. She said from now on before she goes on the air, she'll remind herself that some people may actually be watching MSNBC.

Letterman: People come up to me all the time with their questions. They say, 'Dave, why is it so cold out?' And I reply, 'It's the chill, that Arctic blast coming off Michelle Obama.'

Leno: In the movie "Wolf of Wall Street" they say the F-word 506 times, breaking the old record of 505 Obama set when he heard about Robert Gates' new book. ...

Don't miss the cowboy-in-training staring down a Brahma bull.

Breitbart

[Israeli Defense Minister: Kerry is 'Obsessive,' 'Messianic'](#)

by Joel B. Pollak



Israel's Defense Minister, Moshe "Boogy" Ya'alon, is facing [criticism](#) from the opposition after slamming U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. The Israeli daily *Yediot Ahronot* [reported earlier](#) on Tuesday that the outspoken Ya'alon had said that Kerry, who recently completed his tenth trip to the region in less than a year on the job, "turned up here determined and acting out of misplaced obsession and messianic fervor" for a peace deal.

Ya'alon added: "In reality, there have been no negotiations between us and the Palestinians for all these months --but rather between us and the Americans. The only thing that can 'save us' is for John Kerry to win a Nobel Prize and leave us in peace." Breitbart News [offered](#) a similar analysis last week, noting: "The real negotiations are not those between Israel and the Palestinians, but between Israel and the Obama administration."

In addition, Ya'alon was candid in his views of Kerry's plan for Israel's security in a peace agreement, saying that it was "not worth the paper it's written on....It contains no peace and no security." Israel's chief negotiator, Tzipi Livni, accused Ya'alon of harming relations with the U.S., but other politicians came to his defense. "The State of Israel can't sacrifice its security and it can't outsource the state's security to censors," one said.

Contentions

[Yaalon's Unwelcome Peace Process Truths](#)

by Jonathan S. Tobin

Give Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu some credit. In his first term as Israel's leader in the 1990s, he might well have issued a statement like the one attributed to Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon yesterday in which the former general trashed U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and damned the security plan that he presented to Israel this month as "not worth the paper it's written on." Since returning to the prime minister's office in 2009 Netanyahu has done his best to keep the relationship with Washington from overheating. If there have been a series of scrapes with the Obama administration, that is largely the fault of the president's desire to pick policy fights with him and the prime minister has done his best not to overreact. No matter how wrong Israel's leaders may think their American counterparts are, little good comes from public spats. As Netanyahu knows, the only ones who benefit from exposing the daylight between the two countries' positions are the Palestinians and other foes.

But apparently Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon hasn't gotten the memo about not telling off the Americans. In an apparently unguarded moment, the former general spouted off about Kerry, the peace process, and the Palestinians yesterday, and the subsequent [report in Yediot Ahronot published in English on their Ynetnews.com site](#) brought down a firestorm on the Israeli government. Though Yaalon [walked back his comments](#) in a statement to the media, he did not deny the accuracy of the original *Yediot* story. This indiscretion won't help Netanyahu in his dealings with either Obama or Kerry. It is especially foolish coming from a cabinet minister whose department has worked closely with the administration on security measures throughout the last five years to Israel's benefit in spite of the political differences between the governments. But leaving aside the diplomatic harm he has done his country, honest observers must admit that what Yaalon said was true. The question facing both Israel and the United

States is not so much what to do about Yaalon or other members of Netanyahu's Cabinet who can't keep their mouths shut, but at what point it will behoove the two governments to acknowledge the futility of Kerry's endeavor.

Having already conceded that Yaalon was stupid to say such things within earshot of a reporter, the defense minister gets no sympathy here for the abuse he is taking today in Israel's press as well as from parliamentary allies and foes. The Israeli government has to be frustrated with Kerry's persistence in pushing for concessions from them, especially when they see no sign of moderation on the part of their Palestinian peace partners [who will not accept the legitimacy of a Jewish state](#) no matter where its borders are drawn nor renounce the right of return for the descendants of the 1948 refugees. But as damaging as pressure on Israel to accept the 1967 borders and the division of Jerusalem may be, so long as Palestinian Authority head Mahmoud Abbas is prevented by the reality of his people's political culture and the threat from Hamas and other opposition groups from ever signing a deal that would end the conflict, Netanyahu knows that the best policy is to avoid an overt conflict with the U.S.

That said, Yaalon's reminder of the absurdity of Kerry's quest does help clarify the situation for those naïve enough to believe the talks have some chance of success.

Yaalon's assertion that the negotiations are not between Israel and the Palestinians but between the Jewish state and the U.S. is self-evident. The PA has repeatedly demonstrated that it won't budge from uncompromising positions against realistic territorial swaps or security guarantees, much less the existential questions of refugees and two states for two peoples. All that has happened in the past year is that Israel has been prevailed upon to bribe the PA by releasing terrorist murderers for the privilege of sitting at a table again with Abbas.

Nor can there be any real argument with Yaalon's assessment of Kerry's behavior when he described the secretary's crusade as "inexplicably obsessive and messianic." Few in either Israel or the United States, even those who are most in favor of his efforts, thought he had much of a chance to start with and there's been no evidence that the odds have improved. His crack that "all that can save us is for John Kerry to win a Nobel Prize and leave us in peace" makes no sense since the only way the secretary will get such an honor is if Abbas signs on the dotted line. But it probably also reflects what Abbas is thinking since his goal is to prevent an agreement without actually having to turn one down publicly.

Yaalon is also right to dismiss the security guarantees Kerry has offered Israel in exchange for a withdrawal from the West Bank. The example of the Gaza withdrawal—which Yaalon opposed when he was chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces, a stand that led to his term being cut short by former prime minister Ariel Sharon—as well as the situation along the border with Lebanon illustrates what happens when Israel tries to entrust its security either to Palestinian good will or third parties.

But perhaps the most incisive of Yaalon's controversial comments was his assertion that Abbas's future was dependent on Israel's remaining in the West Bank, not on its departure from the territories:

Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) is alive and well thanks to us. The moment we leave Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) he is finished.

Without an Israeli security umbrella, Hamas or more radical Fatah factions would have deposed Abbas a long time ago. His administration over most of the West Bank is simply impossible without Israeli help. Pretending that this isn't the case is one of the key fictions that form the foundation of Kerry's conceit about giving Abbas sovereignty over the area and why such a deal or a unilateral Israeli retreat, as some are now suggesting, would repeat the Gaza fiasco.

Most Israelis would applaud any effort to separate the two peoples and desperately want an agreement that would end the conflict for all time rather than merely to pause it in order for the Palestinians to resume it later when they are in a more advantageous position. Though the minister shouldn't have criticized Kerry publicly, until the secretary and those who are supporting his pressure on Israel and not on the Palestinians can answer Yaalon's politically incorrect comments, the peace process is doomed.

NY Times

[Obama's Losing Bet on Iran](#)

by Michael Doran and Max Boot

WASHINGTON — A great deal of diplomatic attention over the next few months will be focused on whether the temporary nuclear deal with Iran can be transformed into a full-blown accord. President Obama has staked the success of his foreign policy on this bold gamble. But discussion about the nuclear deal has diverted attention from an even riskier bet that Obama has placed: the idea that Iran can become a cooperative partner in regional security.

Although they won't say so publicly, Mr. Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry surely dream of a "Nixon to China" masterstroke. They are quietly pursuing a strategic realignment that, they believe, will end decades of semi-open warfare between Iran and the United States and their respective allies. In our view, the Obama administration wants to see in its place a "concert" of great powers — Russia, America, the European nations and Iran — working together to stabilize the Middle East as in the 19th century, when the "Concert of Europe" worked together to stabilize that Continent.

As a first step, Mr. Kerry has made no secret of his desire to involve Iran in Syrian peace talks, scheduled to convene next week in Geneva. And much more than previous administrations, this one has refrained from countering Iranian machinations in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.

There are two main reasons for this attempted shift. One is simply the desire of the president to extricate the United States from the Middle East. The other reason, arguably more important, is fear of Al Qaeda: The White House undoubtedly sees Iran and its Shiite allies as potential partners in the fight against Sunni jihadism.

The Obama strategy is breathtakingly ambitious. It is also destined to fail.

First, it ignores the obvious fact that, unlike China at the time of President Richard M. Nixon's diplomacy in the 1970s, Iran does not share a common enemy that would force it to unite with America. Though Iran's proxies are fighting Sunni extremists in a number of theaters, Iran itself has cooperated with Al Qaeda and other Sunni extremists, such as Hamas and the Taliban, when it has served its interests to do so. Iran's rulers simply do not regard Al Qaeda as an

existential threat on a par with the “Great Satan” (as they see the United States). By contrast, Mao did see the Soviet Union as a sufficient threat to justify an alliance with the “capitalist imperialists” in Washington.

The second major problem is that Iran has always harbored dreams of regional hegemony. There is no sign that the election of the “moderate” cleric Hassan Rouhani as president has changed anything.

On the contrary, Iran is stepping up its support for militants in the region. There have been reports recently that Iran is smuggling sophisticated long-range missiles to Hezbollah via Syria and that it sent a ship, intercepted by the Bahraini authorities, loaded with armaments intended for Shiite opponents of the Sunni government in Bahrain.

Iran under President Rouhani has done nothing to lessen its support for the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria either. It has, in fact, gone “all in,” sending large numbers of its own operatives and its Hezbollah allies, along with copious munitions, to help the regime stay in power.

Iran’s power play is engendering a violent pushback from Sunnis increasingly radicalized in the process. This is the third and final problem that will doom Obama’s outreach to Tehran.

In Iraq, the Shiite prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, who is surrounded by aides with ties to the Iranians, has been arresting prominent Sunnis in Anbar Province, thereby driving many of the tribal fighters who once fought Al Qaeda in Iraq back into an alliance with the terrorist group. Al Qaeda-linked fighters have now taken control of Falluja, a town that American forces secured in 2004 after a costly campaign.

Jihadist influence now extends from western Iraq into neighboring Syria, where Sunnis are reacting just as violently to the Iranian-orchestrated offensive to keep Assad’s Alawite regime in power. With the United States providing little or no support to moderate opposition elements, extremist groups such as the Nusra Front and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (an offshoot of Al Qaeda in Iraq) are increasingly prominent among the rebel forces.

The spillover from Syria is also affecting Lebanon, where Hezbollah has long been the dominant force. But now Hezbollah’s ruthlessness has been matched by Sunni terrorists who, on Nov. 19, bombed the Iranian Embassy in Beirut. Hezbollah is presumed to have retaliated when Mohamad B. Chatah, a leading opponent of Syrian and Iranian interference in Lebanon, was killed by a car bomb on Dec. 27 close to the spot where a former Lebanese prime minister, Rafik Hariri, was also killed by a car bomb in 2005.

This shows what happens when the United States stands aloof and refuses to do more to counter Iranian power: America’s allies in the region take matters into their own hands. The result is the polarization of the entire region into pro- and anti-Iran blocs that feed a mushrooming cross-border civil war.

The situation will only get worse if Iran is allowed to maintain its nuclear program with international blessing. Saudi Arabia has made clear that it is prepared to build its own bomb, while Israel has threatened to launch a unilateral strike on Iranian nuclear facilities.

Mr. Obama's hopes of using an opening to Iran to stabilize the Middle East will almost certainly backfire. Before long, America is likely to be forced back into its traditional, post-1979 role as the leader of a coalition to counter Iranian designs. The place to begin is in Syria, which is now ground zero in the struggle between the two regional blocs.

Trying to draw the Iranians into a negotiated solution will almost certainly mean keeping Mr. Assad in power. That, in turn, will only play into the hands of Sunni extremists.

The United States must work, together with its allies, to build up a non-Qaeda alternative to the Assad regime by providing moderate rebel fighters with arms, training, coordination — and, if necessary, the support of Western air power. It would have been better if we had done this at the beginning of the civil war when extremists were less prominent in the rebel camp. But even now, there is no better alternative.

Michael Doran is a senior fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. Max Boot is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and the author of "Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare From Ancient Times to the Present."

Roll Call

[Virginia's Moran Announces Retirement From Congress](#)

by Emma Dumain

Senior appropriator and progressive stalwart James P. Moran will step down at the end of this year, making him [the third House Democrat](#) in just three days to announce his retirement.

The 12-term Virginia lawmaker will announce his decision in a Wednesday morning statement obtained early by CQ Roll Call.

"After 35 years as a public servant, as Mayor of Alexandria, and for the past 23 as a member of the House of Representatives, it's time to close this chapter of my life and move on to the next challenge," Moran said.

Moran represents a strong Democratic district that encompasses the inner suburbs of Washington, D.C., including Alexandria and Arlington. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee will likely not have trouble holding the seat in 2014. (To see which other House members are leaving Congress, check out [Roll Call's Casualty List](#).)

But with Moran's departure, the House does lose a member with deep ties to the institution. In his 23 years in office, he served all but two terms on the Appropriations Committee, and he'll leave in December as the ranking Democrat on the Interior-Environment Appropriations Subcommittee.

"My chosen role in the U.S. Congress has been an appropriator," Moran said in his statement Wednesday.

The timing of Moran's retirement announcement is significant in that respect: It comes just hours before the House is set to vote on an historic omnibus spending bill that could restore Congress' power over the federal purse strings.

Moran could be gaming to leave Congress on a high note.

"I've seen the appropriations process at its height, and more recently its nadir," Moran said. "When the appropriations process is working, the government functions on behalf of the people, the economy is stronger, and the country overall becomes more inclusive, egalitarian and productive."

The omnibus on the floor on Wednesday, Moran continued, "represents a budgetary cease fire, and I hope a historic turning point in getting this necessary funding process back on track."

Over the years Moran has served on Capitol Hill, his professional accomplishments were sometimes overshadowed by personal scandals. Brash and occasionally outspoken to a fault, he has [shoved members leaving the House floor](#), suggested that [the Jewish community pushed](#) for the U.S. invasion in Iraq in 2003 and possibly squandered a small fortune in the stock market. In 2012, [his son resigned as field director](#) for his father's re-election campaign after he was caught on camera advocating voter fraud.



But Moran has always been a team player in the Democratic power structure, trusted by leadership to take reliable, liberal, party-line votes.

"I prepare to leave Congress feeling very fortunate," said Moran, "grateful for what we've accomplished, and optimistic for the future of Northern Virginia, the Washington Metropolitan Region, and our nation."

Read Moran's full statement below: ...

WaPo - Worst Week in Washington

Who had the worst week in Washington? Pat Moran, son of Rep. Jim Moran.

by Chris Cillizza, October 25, 2012

When approached at a Cosi by a total stranger pushing a vote-fraud scheme, be very, very leery.

Pat Moran, son of Northern Virginia Rep. Jim Moran (D), learned the hard way this past week when conservative activists [caught him on video](#) providing advice about how one person might be able to cast ballots on behalf of a number of people in next month's election.



In the video, Moran, the field director for his father's campaign, appears initially uneasy about the prospect of vote fraud but goes on to suggest that forged utility bills could be used as identification. He adds that the bills must "look good" to fool poll workers.

Within 24 hours of the release of the video, which was recorded by the conservative-aligned Project Veritas, Moran had resigned from his position in the campaign — although he sounded slightly short of remorseful in a statement explaining his departure.

"At no point did I take this person seriously," Moran said. "He struck me as being unstable and joking, and for only that reason did I humor him."

Um, okay. Regardless, the damage to Moran and his father will probably be minimal. Barack Obama won 69 percent of the vote in Virginia's 8th District in 2008, and Jim Moran was reelected to an 11th term in 2010 with 61 percent support.

Still, becoming the national poster boy for vote fraud is never a good thing.

Pat Moran, for forgetting that walking away is sometimes the best policy, you had the worst week in Washington. Congrats, or something.

Washington Times

Dereliction of 'Duty' is Robert Gates' unprincipled duplicity

by Charles Hurt

Only Washington could create a sleazy charlatan like Robert M. Gates and pass him off as some bipartisan example of competence and honor.

With his memoir out justifiably sliming President Obama, Vice President Joseph R. Biden and former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Mr. Gates makes like a greasy, mangle-patched rat scrambling atop the floating debris of a sunken ship.

"I never doubted Obama's support for the troops," Mr. Gates grandly writes, posturing himself as the magnanimous centrist who passes for nobility only in Washington.

"Never doubted Obama's support for the troops, only his support for their mission."

Holy crapes! How did this get past an editor? Does the guy not have any friends to glance over his book to tell him what a treacherous wretch he is for even thinking such stupidity, let alone memorializing it forever in a hardcover book about himself that he modestly titled "Duty?"

I will tell you what duty is. Duty is getting out of high school and signing up for the Marines because you love your country. Duty is the unquestioned following of your orders and deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan on a mission to make America safer. Duty is talking with your wife and young, growing family on Skype and keeping upbeat even though you will go on a mission tomorrow morning that very likely will get both of your legs and your right arm blown off.

Duty is being that wife who sheds not a tear in front of her children but bawls through her prayers to God that night alone in bed to keep the father of her children safe for one more day. Duty is the mother who bravely accepts the folded flag from her teenage son's casket in a frozen graveyard. Duty is the father who searches around his intolerable grief to grasp the pride he has for his only son who gave every last measure on a battlefield far, far away.

So tell us, Mr. Gates, how is it possible for a commander in chief to support the troops but not their mission?

Does he do this by keeping the troops in harm's way to die for a cause he does not believe is worthy? Does he support the troops by sending over even more to die for this unworthy cause?

I don't like speaking for other people, especially people who have wept, bled and died for my freedom, but I am pretty sure the troops and their families don't much care for that kind of "support."

You, like your commander in chief, have a seriously warped notion of what support means. Not to mention duty.

Support would be to never send soldiers to die for a mission not worth dying for. As secretary of defense and president of the United States, that would be your responsibility to determine. Or "duty," if you like. If they are dying for something you honestly believe the commander in chief does not believe in, then you have a duty to quit and make known your grave concerns about such treasonous leadership.

Mr. Gates also reveals Washington's worst-kept secret of the past four decades: Mr. Biden has been wrong about every major foreign policy issue of his time. Such ineptitude would get anybody fired from Macy's shoe department. But in Washington, it makes Mr. Biden the reigning expert on foreign affairs and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for years.

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Dear God, save America!

WSJ

[A Victory for an Unfettered Internet](#)

After another court loss, the FCC should abandon its 'net neutrality' regulation goal.

by Robert McDowell

A federal appeals court in Washington slapped the Federal Communications Commission on Tuesday for overstepping its legal authority by trying to regulate Internet access. The FCC is now a two-time loser in court in its net-neutrality efforts. Has the government learned its lesson, or will the agency take a third stab at regulating the Internet? The answer to that question will affect the Internet's growth in the 21st century.

The FCC's quest to regulate the Internet began in 2010, when the commission first promulgated rules for net neutrality. The rules, proponents argue, are needed to police Internet "on-ramps" (Internet service providers) ostensibly to ensure that they stay "open." To accomplish this, some want the FCC to subject the Internet to ancient communications laws designed for extinct phone and railroad monopolies.

But the trouble is, nothing needs fixing. The Internet has remained open and accessible without FCC micromanagement since it entered public life in the 1990s. And more regulation could produce harmful results, such as reduced infrastructure investment, stunted innovation, slower speeds and higher prices for consumers. The FCC never bothered to study the impact that such intervention might have on the broadband market before leaping to regulate. Nor did it consider the ample

consumer-protection laws that already exist. The government's meddling has been driven more by ideology and a 2008 campaign promise by then-Sen. [Barack Obama](#) than by reality.

Further FCC attempts to regulate the Internet could trigger global regulation of the Internet by the International Telecommunication Union, a treaty-based organization under the U.N.'s control. Russian President Vladimir Putin and his allies have been working for a decade to upend a 1988 agreement—forged by delegates from 114 countries—to leave the Internet unfettered. The U.S. has so far been opposed to applying new international rules for the Internet. In October, 193 countries will gather again for talks to conclude a new treaty that will decide the Internet's fate. Proponents hope to build off victories won last year at International Telecommunication Union talks in Dubai that gave the agency narrow authority to regulate. The goal is to achieve what Mr. Putin summarized in 2011 as "international control of the Internet."

The prospect of multilateral regulation makes the FCC's next move all the more important, as it will set the standard for what happens in the next round of negotiations in South Korea. The U.S. argument that regulation of the Internet at home is a good idea but a bad one internationally is eroding American credibility. The U.S. attempt to have it both ways has inspired scorn from other countries, as I personally experienced during official meetings in Dubai in 2012.

Which is why the FCC should drop its pursuit of net-neutrality rules altogether. The regulations are a bad idea for many reasons, but especially because they radically depart from—and endanger—the highly successful, nongovernmental, private-sector-led, "multi-stakeholder" process for resolving the Internet's technical challenges. Under this loose structure, engineers, academics and users from all over the world work individually to keep a borderless "network of networks" open and thriving. The flat and dispersed architecture of the Internet defies centralized and top-down control: No government is capable of keeping up with the Web's warp-speed evolution. The nimble multi-stakeholder structure of Internet governance, which enjoyed broad bipartisan and international support during the Clinton and Bush administrations, has made the Internet the greatest deregulatory success story of all time.

As a result of this framework for innovation, Internet usage has penetrated faster than any technology in history. Rapid adoption of Internet-enabled mobile devices is profoundly improving the lives of billions of people, especially in the developing world. It is also helping to change their political expectations as it strengthens the sovereignty of the individual by providing fast and inexpensive access to the world's information. Authoritarian regimes feel threatened by unfettered Internet access. That's why they've embarked on a patient diplomatic strategy to accrue power over its on-ramps.

Pursuing an expanded U.S. government role into the Internet's affairs foolishly plays into the hands of these pro-regulation regimes. At a minimum, new American rules provide them with political cover and the veneer of a rational argument to use for their own nefarious ends. Especially in light of current concerns about [National Security Agency](#) surveillance, it should be obvious that the problem of too much state interference with the Internet will not be cured by even more government meddling, either domestically or internationally. Now is a chance to turn back the tide of state encroachment.

The U.S. government must reverse course immediately. First, the FCC should abandon any further legal appeals of its case. Next, the FCC should unequivocally restate its commitment to the multi-stakeholder model of resolving network-management challenges and Internet governance. Then, the commission should work with antitrust and consumer-protection agencies to take an inventory of all existing laws that could either prevent or cure anticompetitive conduct in the Internet sphere,

instead of making new rules. This will be essential to the International Telecommunication Union negotiations in the fall, as proponents of global rules just need a simple majority of the 193 to impose their agenda.

In short, governments could have a seat at the multi-stakeholder Internet-governance table, they just shouldn't own the table. The existing paradigm has produced positive and constructive results and will continue to do so if governments stay out of the way.

Otherwise, the consequences of multilateral control of the Internet could cause a radical disruption of the digital economy that would harm tomorrow's Internet users in the developing world the most. It is not too late to turn back these assaults on Internet freedom, but we are running out of time.

Mr. McDowell is a former commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission and a visiting fellow at the Hudson Institute.

CBS - Boston

MIT Professor Urging Climate Change Activists To 'Slow Down'

BOSTON (CBS) — A new proposal on [climate change](#) focuses on public [health](#), energy, transportation and basic infrastructure.

Under the plan unveiled Tuesday, \$40 million will go to help cities and towns in Massachusetts shore up the power supply and keep the lights on.

Ten million will be earmarked for the coast, to protect it from rising sea levels.

But will it work?

While Gov. Deval Patrick and others painted a dire picture of what global warming might do to us, others are more skeptical.

MIT [Professor](#) Richard Lindzen is a leading international expert on climate change.

"The changes that have occurred due to global warming are too small to [account](#) for," he told WBZ-TV. "It has nothing to do with global warming, it has to do with where we live."

Lindzen endorses sensible preparedness and environmental protection, but sees what he terms "catastrophism" in the climate change horror stories.

"Global warming, climate change, all these things are just a dream come true for politicians. The opportunities for taxation, for policies, for control, for crony capitalism are just immense, you can see their eyes bulge," he says.

"Even many of the people who are supportive of sounding the global warming alarm, back off from catastrophism," Lindzen said. "It's the politicians and the green movement that like to portray catastrophe."

Business Insider

Australia Is Hotter Than It's Been In 100 Years

by Amy Coopes

Australia heatwave

Authorities on Tuesday warned of extreme fire danger in the next few days



Australian authorities warned Tuesday of some of the worst fire danger since a 2009 inferno which killed 173 people, with most of the continent's southeast sweltering through a major heatwave.

Victoria state, where the so-called Black Saturday firestorm flattened entire villages in 2009 and destroyed more than 2,000 homes, was again bracing for extreme fire weather.

"These next four days promise to be amongst the most significant that we have faced in Victoria since Black Saturday," said acting state premier Peter Ryan.

Tens of thousands of firefighters were on standby, and 1,290 brigades were in a "state of high preparedness", he added, with the peak danger day expected on Friday when very strong winds are forecast.

Two separate grass-fires tested crews early at Little River, west of Melbourne, and Kangaroo Ground to the east.

The flames raced out of control and triggered brief emergency alerts before water-bombing aircraft and engine teams managed to bring them under control.

There were also blazes alight in neighbouring South Australia state.

Victoria and South Australia are preparing this week for what forecasters are describing as "severe to extreme heatwave conditions", with successive days of temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius (104 F) expected.

A similar heatwave struck before the 2009 fires, Australia's worst natural disaster of the modern era in terms of casualties. An estimated 374 people died during the preceding heatwave, with another 173 fatalities in the firestorm itself.

If the forecasts come to pass, Melbourne will endure its longest stretch of hot weather in 100 years.

Road tar was melting in southern Tasmania, with temperatures in the island state some 18 degrees above the January average, breaking several records.

On Tuesday, players at the Australian Open were sweltering.

A ball boy collapsed and water bottles melted on court as the mercury soared above 40 degrees Celsius.

Experts said the outlook had echoes of 2009.

"The forecast weather patterns are quite reminiscent of conditions before Black Saturday, with severe and expansive high temperatures across the southern part of the continent and the presence of low pressure cells on either side of the country in the tropics," said bushfire specialist Jason Sharples from the University of New South Wales in Canberra.

"The combination of high temperature and low relative humidity means that the moisture content of vegetation will be very low. Hence, if a bushfire was to start, it would be expected to spread more rapidly than normal."

Hospitals and emergency authorities are on standby for an influx of heat-related call-outs, with Ambulance Victoria recalling "all available staff (and) every available vehicle."

The heat system has moved across Australia from the west coast, where a wildfire in Perth razed 52 homes on Sunday and claimed the life of one man as he prepared his home for the flames.

Hundreds of residents sheltering in evacuation centres since the weekend were allowed to return to their homes for the first time Tuesday and reported devastating scenes.

"The glass didn't shatter, it melted," said Stoneville resident Stacey Delich.

"It's bad luck and that's all it is," she added. "We live in the bush and we know it can happen, and unfortunately it happened to us."

Wildfires and hot weather are common in Australia's December-February summer months, but the current event is unusual because it is occurring in what is supposed to be a neutral period in the El Nino pattern bringing average conditions.

El Nino, a phenomenon characterised by usually warm ocean temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific, is generally associated with hotter, drier conditions in Australia.

Atlantic

Almost No Americans Die From Lightning Strikes Anymore—Why?

In the middle of the 20th century, hundreds of Americans died each year from lightning strikes. Now, fewer than 30 do. What gives?

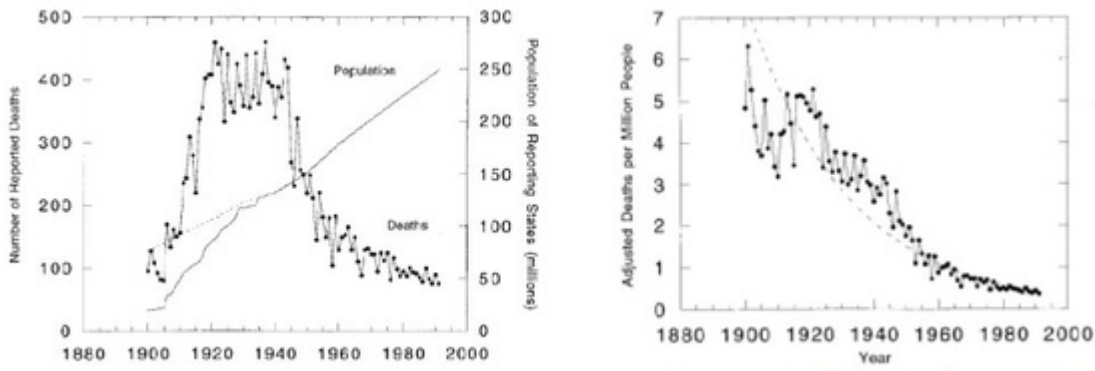
by Rebecca J. Rosen



In the first half of the 20th century, hundreds of Americans died each year from lightning strikes. The data is messy, but in the years from about 1920 to the middle of the 1940s, about 400 people were killed by lightning annually.

Last year, [23 did](#), the fewest on record. Other recent years have had a similarly small number of lightning fatalities, with [28 in 2012](#), and [26 in 2011](#), the previous record.

These numbers are all the more remarkable considering how the population of the United States has exploded over the same time period. Measured on a per person basis, the decline in lightning deaths over the last century is staggering, falling from about 3 or 4 annual deaths per million Americans, to fewer than 0.1 in recent years.



Left shows the yearly number of lightning deaths from 1900 to 1991. Dashed line represents total population of the contiguous U.S. and the solid line represents the population of the states included in the data. Right shows the same data per million people, adjusted for a change in coding procedures in 1945. ([Lopez and Holle/Journal of Climate](#))

Why do so few Americans die from lightning strikes these days?

In the lightning-death literature, one explanation has gained prominence: urbanization. Lightning death rates have declined in step with the rural population, and rural lightning deaths make up a far smaller percent of all lightning deaths (see figure at right). Urban areas afford more protection from lightning. Ergo, urbanization has helped make people safer from lightning. Here's a graph showing this, neat and clean:

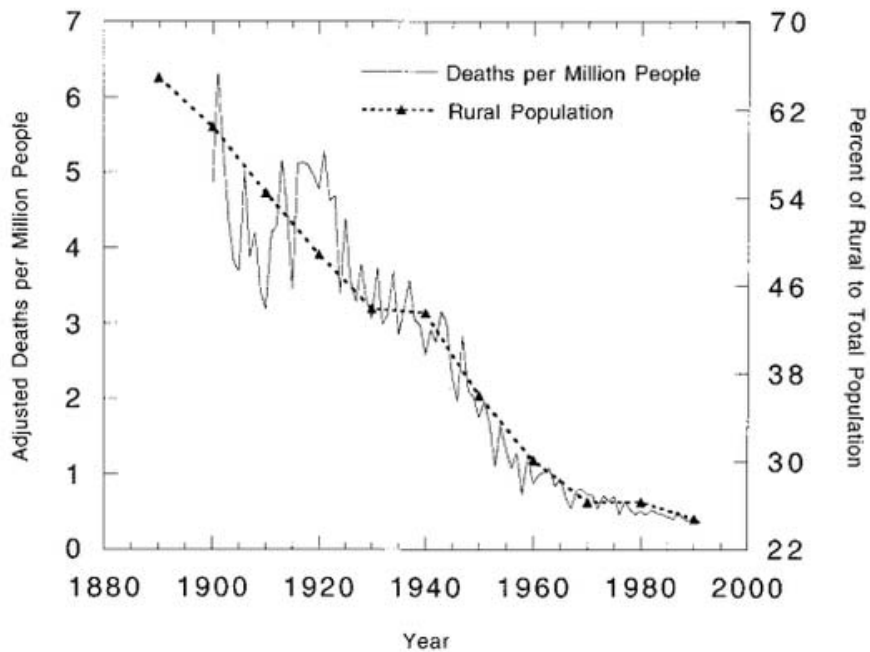


FIG. 5. Solid line: Time series of adjusted yearly lightning deaths normalized by the population of the contiguous United States, as in Fig. 3. Dashed line: Percent of the contiguous U.S. population living in rural areas at the time of each decennial census since 1890, as in Fig. 4.

Lopez and Holle/*Journal of Climate*

But is the move from farms to cities what is driving the decline?

Sure, lightning deaths and the rural population both declined during the 20th century, but so did a lot of other things, for instance, the percent of people living without electricity and plumbing, two infrastructural improvements that also help make your home less vulnerable to lightning. Of course, the development of better infrastructure—what I'll refer to as modernization—is *related* to urbanization, but it is not limited to urban areas. Over the 20th century, rural infrastructure modernized as well. How can we know how much each is driving the decline in lightning deaths?

There's one number we'd really need, and that's the death rate for the rural population over time. If the rural rate held steady, than urbanization is responsible. If it too dropped, we'd be able to get a glimpse of the relative merits of the urbanization and modernization theories.

Unfortunately, the data just aren't good enough to get at that level of granularity.

I spoke with Ronald Holle, a meteorologist who studies lightning deaths, and he agreed that modernization played a significant role. "Absolutely," he said. Better infrastructure in rural areas—not just improvements to homes and buildings, but improvements to farming equipment too has—made rural regions safer today than they were in the past. Urbanization seems to explain some of the decline, but not all of it.

"Rural activities back then were primarily agriculture, and what we call labor-intensive manual agriculture. Back then, my family—my grandfather and his father before that in Indiana—had a team of horses, and it took them all day to do a 20-acre field." Today, a similar farmer would be inside a fully-enclosed metal-topped vehicle, which offers excellent lightning protection. Agriculture has declined as a percent of total lightning-death-related activities, as the graph below shows, but unfortunately it does not show the per capita lightning-death rate of people engaged in agriculture.

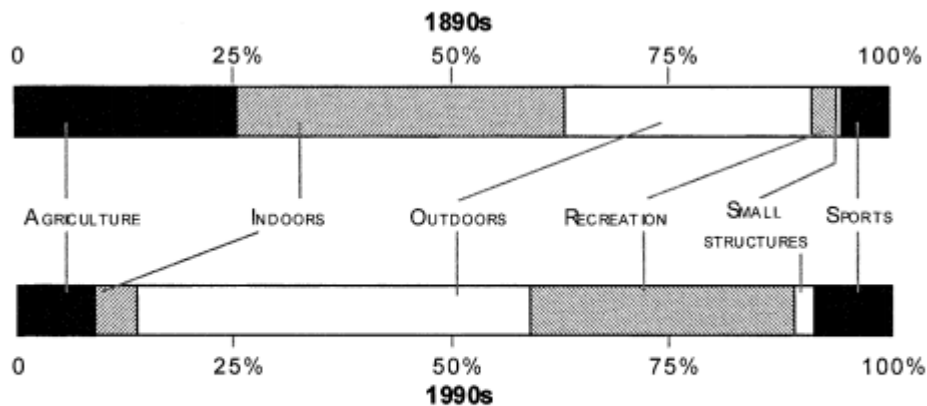


FIG. 2. Comparison of the percentage of types of lightning death incidents 100 yr apart, without unknown cases.

Holle emphasized to me that there's not going to be one "simple, sweeping [explanation for] lightning fatalities." Modernization and urbanization may have each played their parts, but so have better education about lightning safety and improved medical treatments. By [one count](#), in

1959 there were two injuries for every lightning death; by 1994 there were eight; by 1991 the ratio climbed as high as 10:1. Unfortunately, data from the mid-century probably dramatically under-counted lightning-related injuries, so these ratios have less explanatory power than it would at first seem. More significant are the twin factors of better infrastructure and a more urban population.

Death by lightning is perhaps the most cliché way to express the randomness that can befall a person. "You could get struck by lightning" is just another way of saying, hey, anything could happen.

And, of course, anything *could* happen. Lightning does strike. But its likelihood, and the likelihood of nearly any other seemingly random chance, is not some exogenous, constant factor, but a product of the millions of decisions we make, big and small, that together structure our society and our lives. So, yes, lightning could strike, but it just doesn't strike like it used to.

IBD

Late Night

by Andrew Malcolm

Conan: Last night, "12 Years a Slave" won the Golden Globe for Best Drama. There was so much buzz, the studio has announced a sequel, "13 Years a Slave."

Letterman: Last year was one of the lowest murder years ever in New York City. And you know why? Because they killed the guy who keeps the murder records.

Fallon: President Obama invited unemployed Americans to the White House for a discussion on income inequality. Because if there's one way to show sympathy for the unemployed, it's to have them over to a giant white mansion where you get to live for free.

Leno: That MSNBC anchor has apologized for making fun of a Mitt Romney grandchild. She said from now on before she goes on the air, she'll remind herself that some people may actually be watching MSNBC.

Letterman: People come up to me all the time with their questions. They say, 'Dave, why is it so cold out?' And I reply, 'It's the chill, that Arctic blast coming off Michelle Obama.'

Leno: Exciting political news. Actor Steven Segal says he may run for governor of Arizona. Polls look good. They say if he does run, he could easily beat Dolph Lundgren.

Conan: Charlie Sheen says he has married his porn star girlfriend. Call me sentimental, but I think this porn-star marriage has a real chance.

Fallon: North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un turned 31 last week. Opening presents, he said, "Aw, you shouldn't have." Then North Koreans said, "But you said we had to."

Letterman: There was one moment during Kim Jong-Un's birthday party. You could tell he was a little disappointed. He said, "Where's the birthday gift from my uncle? Oh, never mind."

Conan: Dennis Rodman took a delegation of ex-NBA players to North Korea to play that country's top team. Not to promote diplomacy. To avoid child support.

Letterman: Today it's eight degrees outside. Tomorrow 28. Thank God, I didn't put away my tank-top.

Letterman: It's so cold in New York these days, the hookers have started working from home.

Conan: Critics accuse President Obama of having Attention Deficit Disorder. Obama responded by saying, "That's ridiculous. Look---a bird!"

Conan: The Hong Kong man considered father of Kung Fu movies has passed away. His last words came after his lips had already stopped moving.

Conan: A member of Congress said that unemployment benefits basically pay people to "not work." He said the only people who should be paid for not working are members of Congress.

Conan: Good news—the Polar Vortex is leaving the United States for Canada. The bad news—it's booked on JetBlue.

Leno: Dennis Rodman sang Happy Birthday to North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un the other day. Kim addressed Rodman by his Korean name, Dim Dumb Loon.

Conan: Japan McDonald's are selling cheese fries that you can't get here in the U.S. Which makes me wonder, Who REALLY won World War II?

Conan: The Polar Vortex that put the entire country in a deep freeze headed north to Canada. Finally some payback for Justin Bieber.

Fallon: A small plane made an emergency landing in the middle of the Bronx. Everyone onboard managed to escape with only minor injuries, while the plane was stolen.

Fallon: Obama gave photographers a rare chance to shoot his weekly lunch with Joe Biden. Then Biden told his friends, "Told ya I knew the president!"

Fallon: President Obama announced a plan to create things called "Promise Zones" to help the economy in troubled areas. But "Promise Zones" sound more like something your parents would say during The Sex Talk. "Remember, Gary, you should wait until you're in love before touching someone's Promise Zone."

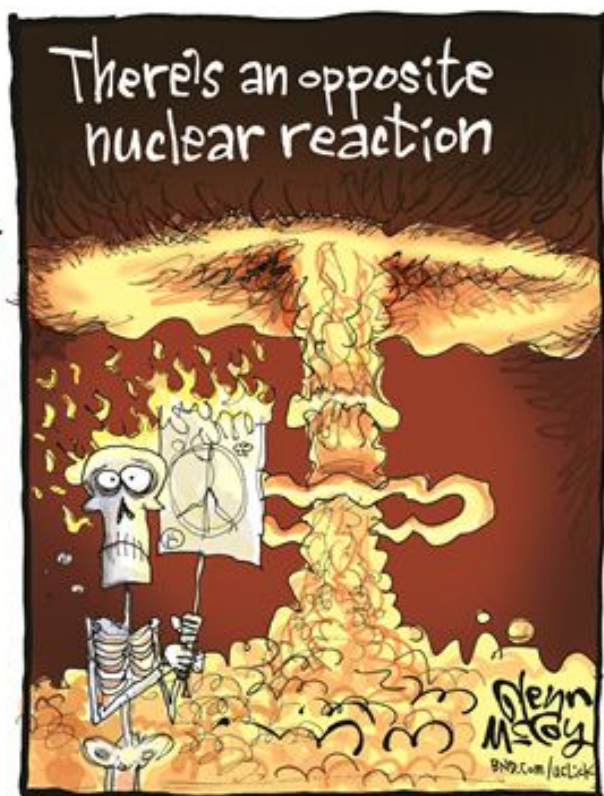
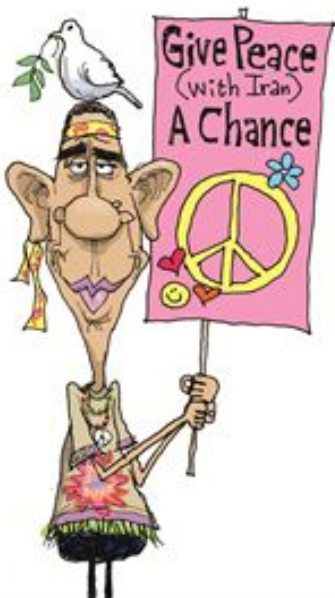
Letterman: Amazing New York City crime statistics. In 2013, overall crime was way down. Hardly any overalls were stolen.

Leno: In the movie "Wolf of Wall Street" they say the F-word 506 times, breaking the old record of 505 Obama set when he heard about Robert Gates' new book.

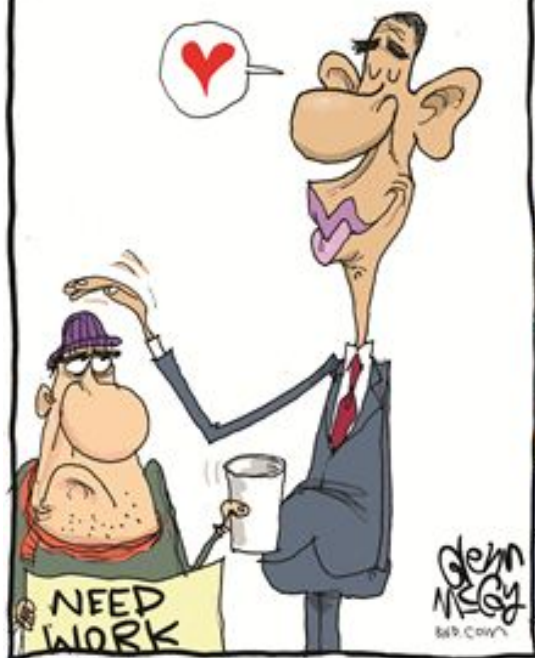
Leno: Dennis Rodman has apologized for his recent outburst from North Korea on CNN. Says he's been under a lot of stress, drinking, and he promised to be sober in time for Fidel Castro's Super Bowl party.

Leno: President Obama plans some 'Promise Zones' to receive extra government economic help. The rest of the country, of course, remains his 'Broken Promise Zones.'

For every foolish
action...



Of course President Obama
loves the poor and unemployed.

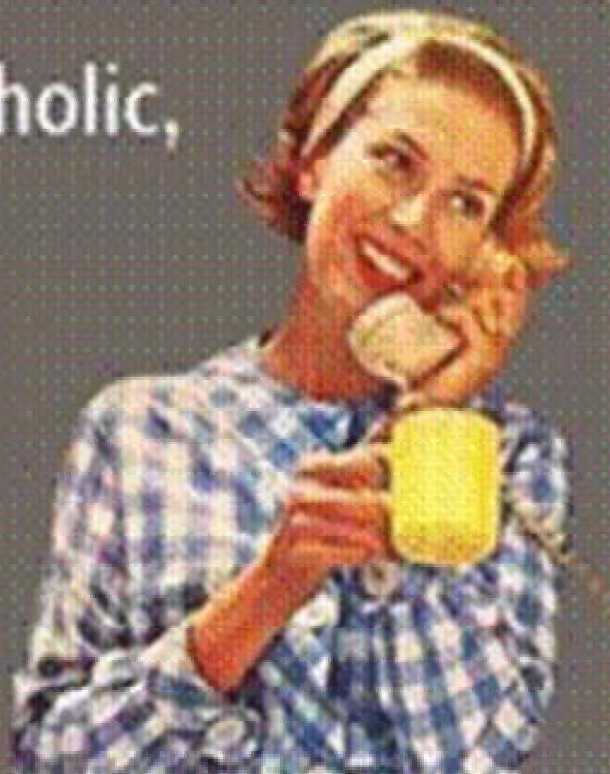


Why else would
he create so many
of them ?



I'm not an alcoholic,
alcoholics go
to meetings.

I'm a drunk,
we go to
parties.



It all makes sense now. Gay marriage and marijuana are being legalized at the same time.

**CERTIFIED
FUNNY**
certifiedfunny.com

Leviticus 20:13 says if a man lays with another man, he should be stoned.

We were just misinterpreting it.

