

June 5, 2014

Before we get to the Bergdahl trade, the obama disaster de jour, we'll pay some attention to some other items. Tennessee law prof [Glenn Reynolds](#) of Instapundit devotes his weekly USA Today column to the VA, the disaster of a few weeks ago. Reynolds makes the point that firing Shinseki will have little long term effect on the perverse incentives that always pervade government efforts.

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A couple of left greenies got all excited thinking China was going to work on limiting carbon emissions. [David Harsanyi](#) points out it is not true. The Chinese are not as stupid as our government.

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one had actually made any mention of China pondering a new quantitative cap on carbon dioxide emissions. (h/t Tim Carney.) ...

... it would be irrational to expect a growing nation with a per capita GDP of \$5,000 to set absolute caps in emissions. China, in fact, has consistently stated that emissions would likely keep rising until its per capita GDP was around five times what it is today. Which is good news for the billions of Chinese still living in poverty and bad news for Western Luddites.

And from USA Today more on the ice that is still on the Great Lakes.

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*Unimaginably, there's still ice from the savage winter of 2013-14 on the south shore of Lake Superior near Marquette, Mich.*

*The Marquette Mining-Journal newspaper reports that according to some forecasts, the ice may last until July:*

*"To many area residents who suffered through one of the worst winters on record for the area, seeing the ice chunks on the lake every day is a continuing reminder of that wintry grip of Mother Nature, which still has yet to completely loosen," the paper noted on its website.*

OK. Now we learn from Ralph Peters why the administration was so blindsided by the Bergdahl backlash.

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*But compassion, please! The president and all the president's men and women are not alone. Our media elite — where it's a rare bird who bothered to serve in uniform — instantly became experts on military justice. Of earnest mien and blithe assumption, one talking head after another announced that "we always try to rescue our troops, even deserters."*

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**Peter Wehner** posts on the "dishonorable deal."

*Even I, a consistent and at times quite a harsh critic of President Obama, have been taken aback by the latest turn of events.*

*To recapitulate: Mr. Obama released five high-value, high-risk terrorists from Guantanamo Bay in exchange for Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who it appears was a deserter—and has been known to be a deserter for a couple of years. People who served with him are calling on the military to court martial Bergdahl. Media reports indicate that at least six Americans died in their efforts to rescue him.*

*In de facto negotiating with the Taliban and acceding to their demands, the president violated a law he signed, requiring him to inform Congress 30 days in advance of any prisoner release from Guantanamo Bay. And the effect of this deal will be to incentivize the capture of more Americans, since it obviously pays dividends. ...*

**Jennifer Rubin** wonders if Hillary Clinton will "go down with the obama foreign policy ship."

*...This is not only a catastrophe for Obama and for the United States, but also for Hillary Clinton. On Tuesday, she defended the Taliban trade despite public outcry from even Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl's fellow soldiers. Clinton must decide whether to stick by the president and get pulled down in the undertow or to separate herself to maintain her credibility in a run for the White House. If she does the former, the press and public will increasingly see her as running for the third Obama term and determined to stick close to his failed policies. If she does the latter, she risks the ire of the base and the wrath of the White House.*

*The dilemma reminds us of several unappealing Clinton traits. First, she is overly cautious, always waiting to calculate which way the wind is blowing. That leaves all sides dissatisfied and reinforces the view that she is an entirely political figure, not a model stateswoman. Second, we really don't know what she thinks. Unlike previously secretaries of state who left a personal imprint on their work, we really have no idea what her own policy would look like. She has been a good soldier, but where is the evidence she knows where and how to lead? And finally, a great deal of the downward spiral for the Obama foreign policy concerns her own competence and judgment. She didn't seem to have kept an eye on al-Qaeda in North Africa, nor does her handling of the U.S.-Israeli relationship indicated a deft touch and ability to instill trust in others. She championed the president's Iran engagement and backed the interim agreement, both of which seem destined to be seen as foolish gambits.*

*Obama's foreign policy slide into chaos, retreat and appeasement now present Clinton with the most important choice of her career: Does she choose to play to the left or to strike out on her own and take the furor from her base on issues on which she claims to have expertise and maturity? I suspect it is first, but for her, her party's and the country's sake (since she could be president) I certainly hope she strikes out on her own.*

**WSJ - Notable and Quotable** has this from Jay Carney last June.

*... We cannot discuss all the details of our efforts, but there should be no doubt that on a daily basis we are continuing to pursue—using our military, intelligence and diplomatic tools—the effort to return him home safely. And our hearts are with the Bergdahl family.*

*With regard to the transfer of Taliban detainees from Guantanamo Bay, we have made—the United States has not made the decision to do that, though we do expect the Taliban to raise this issue in our discussion, if and when those discussions happen.*

*As we have long said, however, we would not make any decisions about transfer of any detainees without consulting with Congress and without doing so in accordance with U.S. law.*

**John Hinderaker** posts on the White House claiming Bergdahl was being "swift boated."

*This would be unbelievable, if we weren't talking about Barack Obama's White House. Chuck Todd reported on the Today show this morning that, in trying to explain why they so badly miscalculated the Bergdahl affair, White House aides told him that they didn't know that the soldiers who served with Bergdahl were "going to swift boat him." ...*

*... There is a nice historical continuity here. Just as the men who served with John Kerry told inconvenient truths about him—far from being factually inaccurate, the most effective Swift Boat ads quoted Kerry's own words when he called his fellow servicemen war criminals—those who served with Bergdahl were driven to tell the truth about him in the wake of the administration's false claim that Bergdahl "served with honor and distinction." Is the White House now calling them all liars? I don't think so, but if that is their claim, let's see the Army's 2010 report. I am pretty sure it will confirm that Bergdahl was a deserter, at best.*

*Just when you think the Obama administration can't make the Bergdahl fiasco any worse, they fool you.*

**Hinderaker** also posts that Mad Magazine is making fun of the trade. Mad came up with a take-off of Saving Private Ryan and treated us to a movie poster for "Trading Private Bergdahl - They got five Taliban leaders. We got one deserting weasel."

*Recently, President Obama exchanged five Taliban leaders for an American POW, Bowe Bergdahl. One prisoner for five is an iffy trade to begin with — but even more so when it was revealed that Bergdahl had deserted his post. So, Obama got his man, but there was a lot of collateral damage — it kind of reminds us of a movie we once saw...*

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## USA Today

### [VA scandal exposes greedy socialism](#)

#### ***Phony lists and dead patients wouldn't fly in a free-market health care system.***

by Glenn Harlan Reynolds

So Secretary Eric Shinseki is now [ex-secretary Shinseki](#), and cleaning up the Department of Veterans Affairs' health care mess will now be someone else's job. But there's a good chance that no matter who is in charge, the cleanup will be, basically, impossible. That's because the VA is government health care.

Not all that long ago, some people were boosting the VA's government-run nature as a plus. Writing in the *Washington Post* during the debate over Obamacare, Ezra Klein [suggested](#) that we should expand VA coverage to non-veterans, because the government just does health care better than the private sector: "Medicare is single-payer, but VA is *actually socialized medicine*, where the government owns the hospitals and employs the doctors. ... If you ordered America's different health systems (from) worst-functioning to best, it would look like this: individual insurance market, employer-based insurance market, Medicare, Veterans Health Administration."

A couple of years later, in 2011, Klein hailed the VA health system as an example of "[when socialism works in America](#)": "The thing about the Veteran's (Affairs') health-care system? It's socialized. Not single-payer. Not heavily centralized. Socialized. As in, it employs the doctors and nurses. Owns the hospitals. . . . If I could choose my health-care reform, I don't think I'd go as far towards government control as the VA does. But the program is one of the most remarkable success stories in American public policy, and it needs to be grappled with."

Now that the VA has [erupted in scandals](#) involving phony wait lists, and people dying because of treatment delays, an audit reveals a "[systemic lack of integrity](#)" in the system. According to the auditors, "Information indicates that in some cases, pressures were placed on schedulers to utilize inappropriate practices in order to make waiting times appear more favorable."

In other words, they cooked the books. And what's more, they did it to ensure bigger "[performance bonuses](#)." The performance may have been fake, but the bonuses were real. (One whistle-blower compared the operation to a "[crime syndicate](#).")

And that captures an important point. People sometimes think that government or "nonprofit" operations will be run more honestly than for-profit businesses because the businesses operate on the basis of "greed." But, in fact, greed is a human characteristic that is present in any organization made up of humans. It's all about incentives.

And, ironically, a for-profit medical system might actually offer employees less room for greed than a government system. That's because VA patients were stuck with the VA. If wait times were long, they just had to wait, or do without care. In a free-market system, a provider whose wait times were too long would lose business, and even if the employees faked up the wait-time numbers, that loss of business would show up on the bottom line. That would lead top managers to act, or lose their jobs.

In the VA system, however, the losses didn't show up on the bottom line because, well, there isn't one. Instead, the losses were diffused among the many patients who went without care -- visible to them, but not to the people who ran the agency, who relied on the cooked-books numbers from their bonus-seeking underlings.

And, contrary to what Klein suggests, that's the problem with socialism. The absence of a bottom line doesn't reduce greed and self-dealing — it removes a *constraint* on greed and self-dealing. And when that happens, ordinary people pay the price. Keep that in mind, when people suggest that free-market systems are somehow morally inferior to socialism.

*Glenn Harlan Reynolds, a University of Tennessee law professor, is the author of [The New School: How the Information Age Will Save American Education from Itself](#).*

## **The Federalist**

### **No, China Is Not Following Obama's Lead On Carbon Emissions**

#### ***More wishful thinking***

by David Harsanyi

Jonathan Chait recently [scolded the Wall Street Journal](#) for [an editorial](#) it ran detailing the harm the EPA's proposal to slash 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions from existing power would inflict on the economy. And though he utilized the standard inventory of liberal grievances, Chait added a gotcha. You see, though the WSJ had "sneered" at the prospect of Obama's unilateral move inspiring countries like China to similarly tackle emissions, Chait points out that *the very next day* the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases went ahead and promised to set its own absolute cap on emissions by 2016. "The target will be written into China's next five-year plan, which comes into force in 2016," said He Jiankun, chairman of China's Advisory Committee on Climate Change, according to a Reuters [story](#).

Obama's leadership was already working! [Salon](#), ("Hopping on the climate bandwagon? China says it, too, may cap emissions") [Think Progress](#) ("One Day After U.S. Announces Emissions Target, China Says Carbon Cap Is On The Way") and others, were thrilled about the news.

There are, it turns out, a few minor problems with this storyline. The most glaring? It isn't actually true. Andrew C. Revkin of the New York Times did some legwork and [reports](#) that He Jiankun has absolutely no power to speak for the Chinese government or even the climate committee. And no one had actually made any mention of China pondering a new quantitative cap on carbon dioxide emissions. (h/t Tim Carney.)

I consulted with The Times's Beijing bureau. Christopher Buckley, a reporter who [in 2011 had covered China's emissions plans](#) while with Reuters, spoke with He Jiankun, who told him repeatedly that he did not in any way speak for the government, or the full expert climate committee.

The [corrected Reuters piece](#) now tells us that "Adviser says China considers cap on CO2 emissions." Now, obviously, it's not Chait's fault that a highly regarded media outlet ran with a story that relied heavily on wishful thinking and happened to bolster Obama's new bid to save the planet. But, the thing is, even if the story were true, China is *always* promising to reduce carbon emission and it's always disregarding those promises. Just as easily as autocrats can provide edicts — the kind of unilateral actions so many liberals seem to admire these days — they can just as easily break or ignore them.

Back in 2009, in the lead up to global summit on climate change in Copenhagen, China set a "firm target" for limiting greenhouse gas emissions, and that it would aim to reduce its "carbon intensity" by [40-45 percent by the year 2020](#). China made [similar promises](#) ahead of the Doha conference in



2012. China has seen some modest gains through efficiencies, but it still loves coal and has yet to meet any of those benchmarks, or even try.

Moreover, in China environmental policy is less about rules and more about suggestions. China recently [released a report](#) that found only a small fraction of its cities comply even the most basic anti-pollution regulations. When it comes to large-scale caps on growth, an extensive piece in the Economist points out that [China deploys its own form of federalism](#):

In the West it is often said that one of China's chief advantages in dealing with climate change is that its leaders can impose tough policies that democratic systems shy away from. Mr Wen once said the government would use "an iron hand" to make the country more energy-efficient. But in environmental matters the government does not have an iron hand.

If local officials—mayors and provincial or county party secretaries—do not like a policy, they can quietly ignore it. As an official in Guangdong once said about pollution controls, "We don't think these decisions apply to us." The bosses of large state-owned companies often wield as much power as the ministers who supervise them. Occult systems of patronage matter more than apparent hierarchies. In the Chinese system, the centre proposes; provinces and counties dispose.

Contra Chait, a person can believe in climate change science and still believe that deliberately sabotaging economic growth rather than focusing on adaptation is an immoral proposition. It is more likely that China's position is the one that Xie Zhenhua, the nation's chief negotiator on climate change treaties, offered [state media a few years back](#). And that is that it would be irrational to expect a growing nation with a per capita GDP of \$5,000 to set absolute caps in emissions. China, in fact, has consistently stated that emissions would likely keep rising until its per capita GDP was around five times what it is today. Which is good news for the billions of Chinese still living in poverty and bad news for Western Luddites.

## USA Today

### [Endless winter: Yes, there's still ice on Lake Superior](#)

by Doyle Rice



*Huge chunks of ice remain on the south shore of Lake Michigan near Marquette, Mich., on Sunday.* I'm gonna keep writing about this until the last cube of ice is melted (if that happens). Unimaginably, there's still ice from the savage winter of 2013-14 on the south shore of Lake Superior near Marquette, Mich.

The National Weather Service in Marquette posted this late yesterday, June 1:



The Marquette *Mining-Journal* newspaper reports that according to some forecasts, the ice may last until July:

"To many area residents who suffered through one of the worst winters on record for the area, seeing the ice chunks on the lake every day is a continuing reminder of that wintry grip of Mother Nature, which still has yet to completely loosen," the paper noted on its [website](#).





## National Review

### [Why Team Obama Was Blindsided by the Bergdahl Backlash](#)

***The president and Ms. Rice seem to think that the crime of desertion in wartime is kind of like skipping class.***

by Ralph Peters

Congratulations, Mr. President! And identical congrats to your sorcerer's apprentice, National Security Adviser Susan Rice. By trying to sell him as an American hero, you've turned a deserter already despised by soldiers in the know into quite possibly the most-hated individual soldier in the history of our military.

I have never witnessed such outrage from our troops.

Exhibit A: Ms. Rice. In one of the most tone-deaf statements in White House history (we're making a lot of history here), the national-security advisor, on a Sunday talk show, described Bergdahl as having served "with honor and distinction." Those serving in uniform and those of us who served previously were already stirred up, but that jaw-dropper drove us into jihad mode.

But pity Ms. Rice. Like the president she serves, she's a victim of her class. Nobody in the inner circle of Team Obama has served in uniform. It shows. That bit about serving with "honor and distinction" is the sort of perfunctory catch-phrase politicians briefly don as electoral armor. ("At this point in your speech, ma'am, devote one sentence to how much you honor the troops.")

I actually believe that Ms. Rice was kind of sincere, in her spectacularly oblivious way. In the best *Manchurian Candidate* manner, she said what she had been programmed to say by her political culture, then she was blindsided by the firestorm she ignited by scratching two flinty words together. At least she didn't blame Bergdahl's desertion on a video.

The president, too, appears stunned. He has so little understanding of (or interest in) the values and traditions of our troops that he and his advisers really believed that those in uniform would erupt into public joy at the news of Bergdahl's release — as D.C. frat kids did when Osama bin Laden's death was trumpeted.

Both President Obama and Ms. Rice seem to think that the crime of desertion in wartime is kind of like skipping class. They have no idea of how great a sin desertion in the face of the enemy is to those in our military. The only worse sin is to side actively with the enemy and kill your brothers in arms. This is not sleeping in on Monday morning and ducking Gender Studies 101.

But compassion, please! The president and all the president's men and women are not alone. Our media elite — where it's a rare bird who bothered to serve in uniform — instantly became experts on military justice. Of earnest mien and blithe assumption, one talking head after another announced that “we always try to rescue our troops, even deserters.”

Uh, no. “Save the deserter” is a recent battle cry of the politically indoctrinated brass. For much of our history, we *did* make some efforts to track down deserters in wartime. Then we shot or hanged them. Or, if we were in good spirits, we merely used a branding iron to burn a large D into their cheeks or foreheads. Even as we grew more enlightened, desertion brought serious time in a military prison. At hard labor.

This is a fundamental culture clash. Team Obama and its base cannot comprehend the values still cherished by those young Americans “so dumb” they joined the Army instead of going to prep school and then to Harvard. Values such as duty, honor, country, physical courage, and loyalty to your brothers and sisters in arms have no place in Obama World. (Military people don't necessarily all like each other, but they know they can depend on each other in battle — the sacred trust Bergdahl violated.)

President Obama did this to himself (and to Bergdahl). This beautifully educated man, who never tires of letting us know how much smarter he is than the rest of us, never stopped to consider that our troops and their families might have been offended by their commander-in-chief staging a love-fest at the White House to celebrate trading five top terrorists for one deserter and featuring not the families of those soldiers (at least six of them) who died in the efforts to find and free Bergdahl, but, instead, giving a starring role on the international stage to Pa Taliban, parent of a deserter and a creature of dubious sympathies (that beard on pops ain't a tribute to ZZ Top). How *do* you say “outrageous insult to our vets” in Pashto?

Nor, during the recent VA scandal, had the president troubled himself to host the families of survivors of those vets who died awaiting care. No, the warmest attention our president has ever paid to a “military family” was to Mr. and Mrs. Bergdahl.

(I will refrain from criticism of the bumptious attempts to cool the flames of this political conflagration by Secretary Hagel: I never pick on the weak.)

What is to be done? Behind the outrage triggered by Team Obama's combination of cynicism and obliviousness (Bergdahl was so ill we had to set those terrorists free immediately, without notifying Congress, but now he's chugging power shakes in a military hospital . . . and all this just happened

to come at the peak of the VA scandal . . . ), military members don't really want to lynch Bergdahl. But they want justice.

Our military leaders need to rediscover their moral courage and honor our traditions, our regulations, and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. We need a fresh, unprejudiced 15-6 investigation (the military equivalent of a grand jury). We already know, as the military has known since the first 24 hours after Bergdahl abandoned his post, that sufficient evidence exists for a court-martial, but it's important to do this by the numbers.

It's hard to believe that the resulting court-martial would not find Bergdahl guilty of desertion (although there will be heavy White House pressure to reduce the charge to Absent Without Leave, or AWOL, status, a lesser offense). If he is convicted, I for one do not want him to go to prison. I'm sure he's paid and paid for betraying his comrades, quite possibly suffering brutal sexual violence. But if he is found guilty, he needs to be formally reduced to the rank of private, stripped of all privileges and entitlements (the taxpayer should not pay for a deserter's lifelong health care — Bergdahl's book and film deals can cover that), and he should be given the appropriate prison sentence, which would then be commuted by the president. Thereafter, let Mr. Bergdahl go home and live with himself.

As for President Obama, how about just one word of thanks to the families of those fallen soldiers you sent out to find Bowe Bergdahl?

*Fox News Strategic Analyst Ralph Peters is a retired Army officer and former enlisted man.*

## Contentions

### Obama's Dishonorable Deal

by Peter Wehner

Even I, a consistent and at times quite a harsh critic of President Obama, have been taken aback by the latest turn of events.

To recapitulate: Mr. Obama released five high-value, high-risk terrorists from Guantanamo Bay in exchange for Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, who it appears was a deserter—and has been known to be a deserter for a couple of years. People who served with him are calling on the military to court martial Bergdahl. [Media reports](#) indicate that at least six Americans died in their efforts to rescue him.

In *de facto* negotiating with the Taliban and acceding to their demands, the president violated a law he signed, requiring him to inform Congress 30 days in advance of any prisoner release from Guantanamo Bay. And the effect of this deal will be to incentivize the capture of more Americans, since it obviously pays dividends.

Yet the Obama administration took this humiliating accommodation and portrayed it as a victory of American values and purpose. The president held a Rose Garden event on Saturday extolling the deal. National Security Adviser Susan Rice [referred to it](#) as an “extraordinary day for America” that deserves to be “celebrated.” And Ms. Rice said of Sgt. Bergdahl, “He served the United States with honor and distinction.”

Really, now? A deserter who, [according to the New York Times](#), “left a note in his tent saying he had become disillusioned with the Army, did not support the American mission in Afghanistan and was leaving to start a new life,” is a person who served with “honor and distinction”? By what ethical calculus does she claim this to be so?

This illustrates quite well the fundamental differences the president and his aides and I have. My response to what has occurred is not just intellectual but visceral. I consider what occurred, when everything is taken into account, to be substantively indefensible and morally dishonorable. The president, in my estimation, has rendered a great service to our enemies, and they know it. (Mullah Omar, the head of the Taliban, [hailed](#) the release of the top five Taliban commanders from Guantanamo as a “great victory” for the mujahideen of Afghanistan.) The president’s decision may well endanger American lives down the road. And his administration has elevated an apparent deserter—one whose actions were reported on in the past (see this 2012 [Rolling Stone article](#) by Michael Hastings) and who is responsible for the death of fellow soldiers who tried to rescue him—into a hero.

This strikes me as morally grotesque. Yet for Mr. Obama and some of those in the progressive movement, the events of the last few days count as a fantastic achievement, one worth venerating and exalting.

Years ago John Gray wrote a book called *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. In this case, it’s the president and I who occupy different worlds, including different moral worlds. Mr. Obama is proud of a series of acts that I would think he would, after careful reflection, feel regret for and even (when it comes to his administration lionizing Sgt. Bergdahl) some shame.

At times individuals interpret the same events at such different angles of vision that their actions are nearly incomprehensible one to another. I will confess that more than I ever imagined, I have that feeling with my president.

## Right Turn

### [Will Hillary Clinton go down with Obama’s foreign policy ship?](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

Whatever foreign policy credibility President Obama had left has crumbled in the wake of the backlash over the release of five Taliban terrorists, the decision by the Palestinian Authority and Hamas to form a unity government and the newly candid criticism over his disastrous non-policy in Syria.

The president’s approval ratings on foreign policy are at all-time lows according to [CNN/ORC](#) (40 percent) and [The Post/ABC News](#) (41 percent) polls. This is especially noteworthy since at least some of the polling samples followed his West Point speech and the prisoner swap, which the White House apparently thought would be heralded as a great move. The White House spin that there is nothing to learn about Benghazi, Libya, and that the select committee on Benghazi is a witch hunt has not worked. Now, according to The Post/ABC News poll, 58 percent of Americans think the administration engaged in a cover-up, while the select committee has a positive approval split off 51 to 42 percent.

In Syria, virtually nobody will defend the president’s paralysis. Even his former ambassador [Robert Ford has come out to blast him](#):

Former U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford revealed Tuesday that he resigned from his post because he could no longer defend the Obama administration's policy in that country.

"I was no longer in a position where I felt I could defend the American policy," he said on CNN. "We have been unable to address either the root causes of the conflict in terms of the fighting on the ground and the balance on the ground, and we have a growing extremism threat."

The administration's only success, Ford suggested, is the removal of a majority of President Bashar Assad's chemical weapons, a deal Russia helped orchestrate after President Obama backed off his threat of a military strike last September.

But even with that success, Ford said Assad is still using chemical weapons.

He is no right-wing hawk. Ford is a career foreign service officer whom the president entrusted with his Syria policy. Even more problematic for Obama and his secretaries of state is Ford's more general attack on the administration's foreign policy: "As far back as 2012, Ford said he warned that terrorist groups would become more pronounced in Syria as they have in Afghanistan, Yemen, Mali and Somalia. 'This is not rocket science. In a place where there is no government control, terrorist groups can infiltrate in and set up places where they can operate freely,' he said. 'And we warned this would happen in Syria, and it has.' " He could add Libya to that list.

The Post sums up: "To explain that, simply take a sampling of news around the world, which has ranged from terrible to not-so-bad recently. Russia annexed Crimea and is behaving more and more like the Soviet Union, Syria gassed its citizens in a civil war (after Obama pressured them not to), the United States has failed to coax Israelis and Palestinians toward a two-state solution. Among the good news from Americans' perspective, the global financial system did not collapse and the United States withdrew from wars that long-ago lost public support. (Hooray?!)" Then there is the Iran interim deal, which is widely seen as useless or even counterproductive; the Egyptian coup and phony election (and resulting widespread animus toward the United States); the violence in Venezuela and the complaints of Pacific allies that we never "pivoted" toward Asia.

This is not only a catastrophe for Obama and for the United States, but also for Hillary Clinton. On Tuesday, she [defended](#) the Taliban trade despite public outcry from even Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl's fellow soldiers. *Clinton must decide whether to stick by the president and get pulled down in the undertow or to separate herself to maintain her credibility in a run for the White House.* If she does the former, the press and public will increasingly see her as running for the third Obama term and determined to stick close to his failed policies. If she does the latter, she risks the ire of the base and the wrath of the White House.

The dilemma reminds us of several unappealing Clinton traits. First, she is overly cautious, always waiting to calculate which way the wind is blowing. That leaves all sides dissatisfied and reinforces the view that she is an entirely political figure, not a model stateswoman. Second, we really don't know what she thinks. Unlike previously secretaries of state who left a personal imprint on their work, we really have no idea what her own policy would look like. She has been a good soldier, but where is the evidence she knows where and how to lead? And finally, a great deal of the downward spiral for the Obama foreign policy concerns her own competence and judgment. She didn't seem to have kept an eye on al-Qaeda in North Africa, nor does her handling of the U.S.-Israeli relationship indicated a deft touch and ability to instill trust in others. She championed the president's Iran engagement and backed the interim agreement, both of which seem destined to be seen as foolish gambits.



Obama's foreign policy slide into chaos, retreat and appeasement now present Clinton with the most important choice of her career: *Does she choose to play to the left or to strike out on her own and take the furor from her base on issues on which she claims to have expertise and maturity?* I suspect it is first, but for her, her party's and the country's sake (since she could be president) I certainly hope she strikes out on her own.

### **WSJ - Notable & Quotable: Bergdahl**

#### **[What then-White House Press Secretary Jay Carney said about Sgt. Bergdahl in June 2013.](#)**

*From a White House press briefing by Press Secretary [Jay Carney](#), June 21, 2013:*

Q: Jay, going to back to Afghanistan, the Taliban has offered to release Bowe Bergdahl in exchange for five members of the Taliban who are currently being held at Guantanamo Bay. Is this something that the administration is considering? Is this something that the President would agree to?

Mr. Carney: What I can tell you is that the main dialogue that we support is the dialogue between Afghans—between the Taliban and the Afghan government. However, there are some issues that we would like to discuss with the Taliban directly, and this includes the safe return of Sergeant Bergdahl, who has been gone for far too long.

We continue to call for and work toward his safe and immediate release. We cannot discuss all the details of our efforts, but there should be no doubt that on a daily basis we are continuing to pursue—using our military, intelligence and diplomatic tools—the effort to return him home safely. And our hearts are with the Bergdahl family.

With regard to the transfer of Taliban detainees from Guantanamo Bay, we have made—the United States has not made the decision to do that, though we do expect the Taliban to raise this issue in our discussion, if and when those discussions happen.

As we have long said, however, we would not make any decisions about transfer of any detainees without consulting with Congress and without doing so in accordance with U.S. law.

### **Power Line**

#### **[White House Accuses Vets of “Swift Boating” Bergdahl](#)**

by John Hinderaker

This would be unbelievable, if we weren't talking about Barack Obama's White House. Chuck Todd reported on the Today show this morning that, in trying to explain why they so badly miscalculated the Bergdahl affair, White House aides told him that they didn't know that the soldiers who served with Bergdahl were “going to swift boat him.” This elicited a stunned reaction on Twitter (via [Twitchy](#)):

Todd confirmed that the White House really did complain that soldiers were “swift boating” Bergdahl:



There is a nice historical continuity here. Just as the men who served with John Kerry told inconvenient truths about him—far from being factually inaccurate, the most effective Swift Boat ads quoted Kerry’s own words when he called his fellow servicemen war criminals—those who served with Bergdahl were driven to tell the truth about him in the wake of the administration’s false claim that Bergdahl “served with honor and distinction.” Is the White House now calling them all liars? I don’t think so, but if that is their claim, let’s see the Army’s 2010 report. I am pretty sure it will confirm that Bergdahl was a deserter, at best.

Just when you think the Obama administration can’t make the Bergdahl fiasco any worse, they fool you.

## Power Line

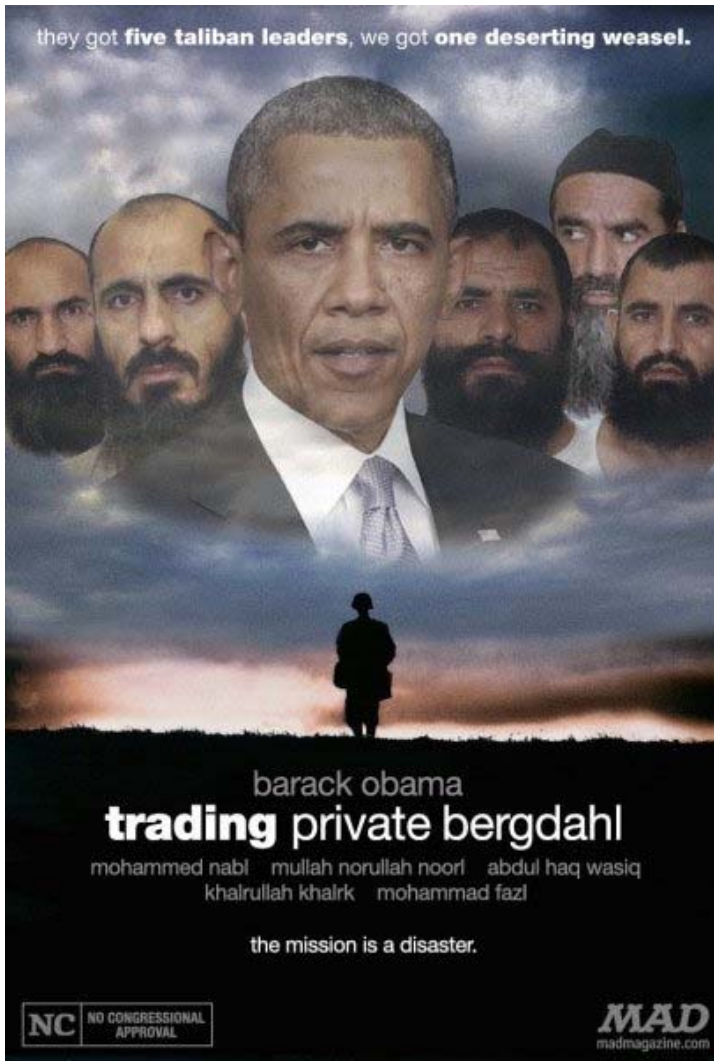
### [Mad Magazine on the Bergdahl Fiasco](#)

by John Hinderaker

I read Mad magazine a long time ago—50 years or more. This was long before anyone thought of getting serious political commentary from comedy shows and publications, and I don’t recall Mad having a political slant. It was generally transgressive, however, and that tradition apparently continues. [Mad](#) weighs in on the Bowe Bergdahl disaster:

Recently, President Obama exchanged five Taliban leaders for an American POW, Bowe Bergdahl. One prisoner for five is an iffy trade to begin with — but even more so when it was revealed that Bergdahl had deserted his post. So, Obama got his man, but there was a lot of collateral damage — it kind of reminds us of a movie we once saw...

Another takeoff on *Saving Private Ryan*.



UPDATE: Then, of course, there is this, via a reader:



# DAILY NEWS

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