

June 9, 2014

**Streetwise Professor** posts on the Taliban trade.

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*Mr. Xi's perception, say these analysts, has been heightened by U.S. President Barack Obama's failures to intervene militarily in Syria and Ukraine. And it's led him to conclude that he has a window of opportunity to aggressively assert China's territorial claims around the region."*

*I've often said that I hope Bismarck ("There is a special providence for fools, drunkards, and the USA") and Adam Smith ("there is a lot of ruin in a nation") are right. Obama is putting both aphorisms to the test.*

A couple of our favorites try to understand how it came to pass we have such amateurs running our foreign policy. **Kimberley Strassel** introduces us to this president's "Kissingers."

*... NSC (**National Security Council**) staff are foreign-policy grownups, and its meetings are barred to political henchmen.*

*Or that was the case, until the Obama White House. By early March 2009, two months into this presidency, the New York Times had run a profile of David Axelrod, noting that Mr. Obama's top campaign guru and "political protector" was now "often" to be found "in the late afternoons" walking "to the Situation Room to attend some meetings of the National Security Council." President Obama's first national security adviser, former Marine General and NATO Commander Jim Jones, left after only two years following clashes with Mr. Obama's inner circle.*

*He was replaced by Democratic political operative and former Fannie Mae lobbyist Tom Donilon. Mr. Donilon joined Ben Rhodes, the Obama campaign speechwriter, who in 2009 had been elevated to deputy national security adviser for strategic communications. Also present was Tommy Vietor, whose entire career prior to NSC spokesman was as an Obama spinmeister—as a press aide in the 2004 Senate run, and campaign flack for the 2008 Iowa caucuses, and assistant White House press secretary. In fairness, his credentials also included getting caught on camera in 2010 pounding beers, shirtless, at a Georgetown bar. America's foreign-policy experts at work.*

*Not that Mr. Obama's first instinct is even to rely on his now overtly political NSC. This paper reported in September 2013 that as the White House struggled with the question of military intervention in Syria, it summoned all the old "Obama loyalists" for advice. They included his 2008*

campaign manager ( David Plouffe ), his former press secretary ( Robert Gibbs ), a former speechwriter ( Jon Favreau ), and Mr. Vietor (who had by then left the NSC to form a political consulting group).

A serious-minded NSC, in the tumultuous aftermath of Benghazi, would have responded with a sober assessment for its president of the real and continued terror threat, and of the failings that resulted in four dead Americans. Instead we find the deputy NSA, Mr. Rhodes, crafting an internal email advising his colleagues to spin, and blame it all on an Internet video. Mr. Rhodes had no interest in advising the president on hard realities. His only interest was ensuring his boss got re-elected. ...

**Jonah Goldberg** sees the comedy.

*I think the Bergdahl story is really very serious and there are still lots of things we don't know. My friend James Rosen's story that Bergdahl turned mujahideen in captivity is very interesting, but it doesn't mean — nor does Rosen say — that he was a jihadi when he left his base. And, while the case doesn't look good for Bergdahl, we don't know that he was a deserter yet. We only know that he was AWOL. Indeed, according to an earlier Pentagon report, we know he had a habit of wandering off base. That may make him a flake or an idiot, but it doesn't prove he was a deserter.*

*Indeed, there are so many unknowns here that it might be best to withhold judgment on a lot of aspects to this story.*

*Save perhaps one: The White House is run by clowns. ...*

*... My only point is that the White House's political chops in this fiasco look about as sharp as Dom DeLuise's forehead. That's kind of weird when you consider that his foreign-policy shop is largely run by political hacks — as Kim Strassel notes in her excellent column from yesterday. "Obama's Kissingers," as Strassel calls them, should be better at the politics than the foreign policy, given their resumes. But it turns out they stink at both. When you run foreign policy like a domestic political operation, it turns out that both the policy and the politics can blow up on you. I think this is because over the long haul foreign policy doesn't work like domestic politics. You can have the best political hacks in the world, but if you give them a job they're not suited for, it will actually make things worse. If you want to see what I mean, ask your mechanic to do your prostate surgery. ...*

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## George Will when a president goes rogue.

... Obama did not comply with the law requiring presidents to notify Congress 30 days before such exchanges of prisoners at Guantanamo. Politico can be cited about this not because among the media it is exceptionally, well, understanding of Obama's exuberant notion of executive latitude but because it is not. Politico headlined a story on his noncompliance with the law "Obama May Finally Be Going Rogue on Gitmo." It said Obama's "assertive" act "defied Congress" — Congress, not the rule of law — in order "to get that process [of closing the prison at Guantanamo] moving." It sent "a clear message" that "Obama is now willing to wield his executive powers to get the job done." Or, as used to be said in extenuation of strong leaders, "to make the trains run on time."

The 44th president, channeling — not for the first time — the 37th (in his post-impeachment conversation with David Frost), may say: "When the president does it, that means that it is not illegal." Already the administration says events dictated a speed that precluded complying with the law.

This explanation should be accorded open-minded, but not empty-minded, consideration. It should be considered in light of the fact that as the Veterans Affairs debacle continued, Obama went to Afghanistan to hug some troops, then completed the terrorists-for-Bergdahl transaction. And in light of the fact that Obama waged a seven-month military intervention in Libya's civil war without complying with the law (the War Powers Resolution) that requires presidents to terminate within 60 to 90 days a military action not authorized or subsequently approved by Congress.

Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.), vice chairman of the intelligence committee, says the administration told him he would be notified about negotiations for the release of terrorists. He now says he cannot "believe a thing this president says." ...

## Ann Coulter has some interesting items.

... Three days before he walked off his base, Bergdahl emailed his parents:

- "I am ashamed to be an american."
- "The US army is the biggest joke ... It is the army of liars, backstabbers, fools and bullies."
- "These people need help, yet what they get is the most conceited country in the world telling them that they are nothing and that they are stupid."
- "The horror that is america is disgusting."

These emails were given to the author of a 2012 Rolling Stone article on the case by Bergdahl's own parents.

The overwrought soldier's father, Bob, emailed back: "OBEY YOUR CONSCIENCE!" And then, according to the Rolling Stone profile reporting these emails — as well as the Army report on the incident — Bergdahl "decided to walk away.

"Bergdahl's unit commander, Evan Buetow, told CNN's Jake Tapper that intercepted Taliban "chatter" soon revealed that Bergdahl was looking for a member of the Taliban who spoke English. (Other than his father.)

*Buetow said he couldn't prove it, but he believed Bergdahl began helping the Taliban attack his own unit. After that, Buetow says, the assaults were much more direct, and Bergdahl would have known the unit's tactics and how they would respond to an attack. ...*

Graduation season is upon us and Dilbert's dad, Scott Adams, has some terrible gift ideas.

*... Many of you are wondering what kind of gift to buy for the innocent wretch in your life who is about to be excreted from the gentle embrace of our education system into the turd-infested pool of misery that we call work. I am here to help.*

*Gifts are all about the thought you put into them and the message they send. I did some online searching and discovered that all of the top graduation gift suggestions are—as far as I can tell—designed as clever revenge for the grad's teen years. It's payback time!*

1. One of the top suggested gifts for grads is **Money Clips**. Try to keep a straight face when you give a money clip to a grad that has a mountain of student debt and no job prospects. Write something on the card along the lines of “This is to keep all of your money organized.” You want to leave some doubt as to whether your intention is to be an evil revenge-monkey or you're just a terrible gift-buyer. If you're like me, your unstylish wardrobe for the past twenty years is all the reasonable doubt you'll need.

2. **Luggage** is another popular gift item for grads. Nothing says get out of my house like luggage. If that isn't subtle enough, follow the example of my parents and combine the luggage gift with a one-way ticket to another state. Message received! ...

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## Streetwise Professor

### You Got Some 'Splainin' to Do, Barry

by Craig Pirrong

Looking back at Obama's West Point speech helps one comprehend the otherwise incomprehensible Bergdahl-Taliban imbroglio. You can see his mind, such as it is, at work. He is too clever by half, too convinced of his own brilliance and righteousness, and possessed of some acute blind spots, particularly regarding the military, and especially those serving in the ranks whom he does not have any experience with whatsoever.

In the speech, Obama effectively declared victory in Afghanistan. The Al Qaeda “leadership” had been decimated. The Afghan security forces were able to step up. The Taliban were not even mentioned.

So time to declare victory and end the war and go home. And one of the signifiers of the end of a war is the exchange of POWs. Hence, the negotiation of a trade of Bergdahl for five Taliban hardliners. (“Dead-enders”, as Rumsfeld would have called them.) Moreover, once five really bad actors are released from Gitmo, what is the basis for keeping the rest? Thus, the next stage would have been additional releases.

But then things spun out of Obama's control, and the contradictions in the policy, its ham-fisted implementation, and inane justifications exploded into view-and in Obama's face.

First there was the strong skepticism about the prudence-or sanity-of releasing Taliban hardliners. Then there was Bergdahl himself, and Bergdahl's father. Because of Obama's blindspot about the military-one shared by most of his administration-he did not expect the furious reaction from the ranks, especially from those who had served with Bergdahl or served in the same area at the same time and therefore bore the brunt of the fallout from his apparent desertion. No doubt the perfumed Pentagon princes assured Obama that everyone would be pleased to have a comrade come home. But this was to misjudge the widespread belief in the ranks that Bergdahl had broken the code with his comrades, and that soldiers died as a result.

This was compounded by Obama's very public-and literal-embrace of Bergdahl's father, an avowed Taliban supporter who has called on God to avenge the deaths of Afghan children. Deaths he clearly blames on the US, not on the Taliban. Meaning that avenging the deaths of Afghan children would involve the deaths of US servicemen and women.

Blindsided by the furious onslaught, the administration responded in typical fashion. It trotted out Susan "Say Anything" Rice to claim that Bergdahl had been "captured on the field of battle" (almost certainly false) and had served with "honor" (again, almost certainly false). When this just re- vectored the blowback onto Rice's sorry backside, Jay Carney interrupted his way out the door to support her, claiming that Bergdahl did serve with distinction because he had volunteered and put on the uniform.

Um, Jay, that may be a necessary condition for honorable service, but it isn't a sufficient one. Indeed, if just putting on the uniform is all that matters, why are there distinctions made when one takes it off? Most are discharged honorably, but some depart the service with dishonorable or less-than-honorable discharges. Implying that one's conduct while in uniform matters. Some people dishonor the uniform through their conduct while in service. The issue here is whether Bergdahl did that.

But perhaps Jay Carney isn't aware of the concept of dishonorable discharges. Though he should be. John Kerry's discharge status was an issue in 2004.

Which brings us to the next administration response: slime the soldiers who have accused Bergdahl of desertion in the face of the enemy. Yesterday it was reported that people in the administration were accusing these veterans of "Swift Boating" Bergdahl. A lot of fire is being delivered in the direction of these guys. You see, Bergdahl is honorable. They stayed and fought, but they are psychos (as one Obama administration staffer put it). How lovely.

But we're not done yet. There is also the issue of the process and the timeline of the deal with the Taliban. The administration claimed that it had to act in haste, without giving Congress the legally-mandated 30 days notice of the release of Gitmo detainees, because of its grave concern about Bergdahl's physical and mental condition. But these concerns were allegedly based on a video taken in December and received, via the Qataris, in January. The five month lag belies any serious alarm about the imminence of Bergdahl's medical peril.

Belatedly the administration allowed several Senators to view the tape, to mixed reviews. Some, like the awful Dick (and I do mean Dick) Durbin toed the administration line. Others were less impressed. And not all of the unimpressed were Republicans. Manchin and Feinstein did not see evidence of imminent danger.

The health justification is especially dubious given the fact that this deal has been in the works for years. Years. At least since 2011. Moreover, there are indications that the motivation for the deal had a [large political component](#):

President Obama [has] announced that the United States will now pursue “a negotiated peace” with the Taliban. That peace is likely to include a prisoner swap – or a “confidence-building measure,” as U.S. officials working on the negotiations call it – that could finally end the longest war in America’s history. Bowe is the one prisoner the Taliban have to trade. “It could be a huge win if Obama could bring him home,” says a senior administration official familiar with the negotiations. “Especially in an election year, if it’s handled properly.”

I would bet you dimes to donuts that the “senior administration official” is Susan Rice, especially in light of her history of viewing geopolitical issues through a domestic political filter:

At an interagency teleconference in late April, Susan Rice, a rising star on the NSC who worked under Richard Clarke, stunned a few of the officials present when she asked, “If we use the word ‘genocide’ and are seen as doing nothing, what will be the effect on the November [congressional] election?” Lieutenant Colonel Tony Marley remembers the incredulity of his colleagues at the State Department. “We could believe that people would wonder that,” he says, “but not that they would actually voice it.” Rice does not recall the incident but concedes, “If I said it, it was completely inappropriate, as well as irrelevant.”

Previous attempts to do the deal had been derailed by serious people, like Leon Panetta, Robert Gates, and yes, Hillary. People who take national security seriously. Obama has succeeded in getting rid of serious people, replacing Panetta with the pathetic Chuck Hagel, for example. [What's more, he deliberately set up the process to review the deal to exclude any possibility of a veto this time.](#) The military was expected to “suck it up and salute.” Which the perfumed princes apparently did, whereas the rank and file did not.

In sum, Obama had been trying to close the deal that was done last week for years, as part of a broader diplomatic and political agenda. He had been stymied by fierce opposition within his own administration. He short circuited that opposition through key appointments (Hagel, Rice) and the creation of an ad hoc process that gave no opportunity for serious opposition to assert itself. Thus, the “health concerns” justification is completely at odds with the history of this situation: it is an ex post defense of a policy that Obama can’t defend on its merits.

Obama is clearly desperate-desperate-for a deal. No doubt as a part of his ongoing Legacy Project. How desperate? [This desperate](#):

Clinching it was a phone call Obama made two days later, on May 27, with the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, who said Qatari officials had agreed to measures to prevent at least an immediate return to the battlefield of the five Taliban prisoners, the officials said.

“Prevent *at least an immediate* return.” These guys have to go on time out for a while, to have a somewhat decent interval before returning to the fight. And even then, Obama admits that it’s “absolutely” possible these guys will kill again.

We’ve seen this movie before. You give Obama a fig leaf, and he will grab it and give you everything you want. (The Syrian chemical weapons deal is the classic example of that.)

For their part, once the deal was done, the Taliban punked Obama by releasing a video of the handover, along with much more extensive coverage of the joyous reception given the five released terrorists in Qatar.

And speaking of Qatar, which obviously played a huge role in all this, that could be the worst part of this sorry episode. Again in his desperation to deal, Obama has gone all in with the Qataris, who are truly malign actors whose interests are definitely not aligned with the US. Qatar has deep ties with the Muslim Brotherhood and was pushing its efforts in Egypt. Qatar is engaged in a struggle with Saudi Arabia to exert influence, and even achieve dominance, throughout the Middle East. Farming out key roles to these people is a dangerous game. (Interestingly, Obama met with the former emir of Qatar at West Point.)

So Obama has some serious explaining to do to justify this fiasco. So far his explanations have done worse than fallen flat: they've unleashed a firestorm of criticism. So you know what will happen: dismissing this as a manufactured DC controversy ([which has already happened](#)), attacks on the messenger (already well underway), and spin, spin, spin. Indeed, many of the media dervishes are whirling away as we sit here.

But not to worry. It's not like anybody is noticing that Obama is feckless and incompetent, and taking advantage of that. Well, other than Putin, of course. [And the Iranians.](#) [And the Chinese:](#)

On the surface, this may look reckless. But one theory gaining traction among senior officials and policy analysts around Asia and in Washington is that the timing is well calculated. It reflects Mr. Xi's belief that he is dealing with a weak U.S. president who won't push back, despite his strong rhetorical support for Asian allies.

Mr. Xi's perception, say these analysts, has been heightened by U.S. President Barack Obama's failures to intervene militarily in Syria and Ukraine. And it's led him to conclude that he has a window of opportunity to aggressively assert China's territorial claims around the region.

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**WSJ**

**[Meet Obama's Kissingers](#)**

***The National Security Council is no place for speechwriters and lobbyists.***

by Kimberley A. Strassel

If the Bergdahl uproar feels creepily reminiscent of the Benghazi uproar, or the Syrian "red line" uproar, or the choose-your-own- [Obama](#) -foreign-adventure uproar, it's because they all have a common denominator. This is what happens when political hacks formally take over foreign policy.

It's the "formal" point that bears some meditation. [Barack Obama](#) isn't the first president to make foreign-policy decisions on the basis of domestic political calculations. He does, however, win the distinction of being the first president to utterly disregard—to treat with contempt—the institutions and procedures that were designed to help the commander in chief insulate the serious business of foreign policy and national security from baser political concerns.





*Tommy Vietor, left, former National Security Council spokesman, and Ben Rhodes, deputy National Security Adviser.*

At the heart of this effort is the National Security Council, which has served presidents since its inception under Harry Truman. Made up of the president, vice president, a national security adviser, various Cabinet secretaries, and representatives from the military and the intelligence agencies, the NSC has been by procedure and fierce tradition a rare apolitical forum, a place for the president to hear hard reality. NSC staff are foreign-policy grownups, and its meetings are barred to political henchmen.

Or that was the case, until the Obama White House. By early March 2009, two months into this presidency, the New York Times had run a profile of David Axelrod, noting that Mr. Obama's top campaign guru and "political protector" was now "often" to be found "in the late afternoons" walking "to the Situation Room to attend some meetings of the National Security Council." President Obama's first national security adviser, former Marine General and NATO Commander Jim Jones, left after only two years following clashes with Mr. Obama's inner circle.

He was replaced by Democratic political operative and former Fannie Mae lobbyist Tom Donilon. Mr. Donilon joined Ben Rhodes, the Obama campaign speechwriter, who in 2009 had been elevated to deputy national security adviser for strategic communications. Also present was Tommy Vietor, whose entire career prior to NSC spokesman was as an Obama spinmeister—as a press aide in the 2004 Senate run, and campaign flack for the 2008 Iowa caucuses, and assistant White House press secretary. In fairness, his credentials also included getting caught on camera in 2010 pounding beers, shirtless, at a Georgetown bar. America's foreign-policy experts at work.

Not that Mr. Obama's first instinct is even to rely on his now overtly political NSC. This paper reported in September 2013 that as the White House struggled with the question of military intervention in Syria, it summoned all the old "Obama loyalists" for advice. They included his 2008 campaign manager ( David Plouffe ), his former press secretary ( Robert Gibbs ), a former speechwriter ( Jon Favreau ), and Mr. Vietor (who had by then left the NSC to form a political consulting group).



A serious-minded NSC, in the tumultuous aftermath of Benghazi, would have responded with a sober assessment for its president of the real and continued terror threat, and of the failings that resulted in four dead Americans. Instead we find the deputy NSA, Mr. Rhodes, crafting an internal email advising his colleagues to spin, and blame it all on an Internet video. Mr. Rhodes had no interest in advising the president on hard realities. His only interest was ensuring his boss got re-elected.

The same political Svengalis rooted for Mr. Obama's decision to set an Afghan withdrawal deadline, over the objections of military personnel. They were the architects of the president's decision to drop his "red line" warning to Syria's Bashar Assad on Congress, and then blame Congress for failure of action. They gave us resets, pivots and leading from behind, and in recent weeks have explained that Mr. Obama's foreign policy is best described as "Don't do stupid [stuff]." This is what happens when you give hacks control: Your foreign-policy "vision" gets reduced to a public-safety commercial from a vodka company.

Presidents bear ultimate responsibility for institutional dysfunction, but it is also the case that Mr. Donilon and his successor, [Susan Rice](#), have ill-served their boss by tolerating (or even encouraging) political nonsense. Debate all you want over what motivated the White House to do the Bergdahl swap. What's beyond debate is that politics drove its rollout, and that there was nobody with enough seriousness or clout in the White House to stop it.

It was a political desire to sweep the Veterans Administration scandal off the front pages that put President Obama in the Rose Garden with Sgt. Bergdahl's parents—when Secretary of State [John Kerry](#), or even a press release, would have given distance. It was a political desire to claim a foreign-policy victory that saw Ms. Rice again peddling a phony story, this time about how Sgt. Bergdahl had served with "honor and distinction"—when senior officials had to know that was questionable. Who failed to warn the president that Sgt. Bergdahl's fellow soldiers would surely speak out? Who failed to walk him through the ABCs of the statute he signed requiring Congressional notification, or warn him of the bipartisan fury his cold shoulder would inspire?

Most remarkable is that despite the endless loop of foreign-policy fiascoes, this White House seems oblivious of the need for institutional change. It has had its share of experienced hands ( Bob Gates, [Leon Panetta](#) ) come and go, but shows no evidence it learned from them. In Obama world, there is only politics. And so the world will continue to burn.

## **National Review**

### **[Release the White House Hacks!](#)**

***The Obama administration's handling of the Bergdahl fiasco has been beyond laughable.***

by Jonah Goldberg

I think the Bergdahl story is really very serious and there are still lots of things we don't know. My friend James Rosen's story that Bergdahl turned mujahideen in captivity is very interesting, but it doesn't mean — nor does Rosen say — that he was a jihadi when he left his base. And, while the case doesn't look good for Bergdahl, we don't know that he was a deserter yet. We only know that he was AWOL. Indeed, according to an earlier Pentagon report, we know he had a habit of wandering off base. That may make him a flake or an idiot, but it doesn't prove he was a deserter.

Indeed, there are so many unknowns here that it might be best to withhold judgment on a lot of aspects to this story.

Save perhaps one: The White House is run by clowns. It's like a Fellini movie over there. Actually, that's not quite fair. Clowns are actually pretty professional. They go to school to do what they do. That reminds me of one of my favorite scenes from *The Simpsons*. Sideshow Bob is talking to his brother Cecil through the plate glass of a jail visiting room.

**Sideshow Bob:** You wanted to be Krusty's sidekick since you were five. What about the buffoon lessons, the four years at clown college?

**Cecil Terwilliger:** I'll thank you not to refer to Princeton that way.

Look, I'm not making an ideological point here. For years, the White House had certain procedures and mechanisms in place that helped to ensure the dignity of the office and protect the president from saying too many things he'd later regret (like screwing up Billie Jean King's resume, or slandering Rutherford B. Hayes, or calling the Benghazi attack a "bump in the road"). Of course, no president is immune to gaffes, but you try to keep them out of the prepared text. And of course, as conservatives, we can appreciate what amounts to one of our core insights on how the world works: Sometimes things go badly (I think it sounds more impressive in Latin).

In the old days, there was an unwritten rule of politics: Don't put the president next to a guy who looks like he just emerged out of spider-hole with Mullah Omar.



But these are more relaxed and tolerant times. Still, in the Washington of yore, the president's advance team would at least go over with the president's guests what they might say when standing alongside the leader of the free world. You know just to make sure everyone is on the same page. But that's hard to do when the page is written in . . . Pashto!

Seriously, that Rose Garden ceremony with the Bergdahls was like a first draft of a scene from HBO's *Veep*. In the final version, Mrs. Bergdahl would be in a burqa and ululating while Mr. Bergdahl was shouting "Allahu Akbar!" and firing an AK-47 into the White House portico causing plaster to fall down. But, you know, sometimes subtler is better.

I shouldn't make light of Mr. and Mrs. Bergdahl's ordeal, even if Mr. Bergdahl seems to have some, uh, interesting ideas. They remain sympathetic people put in a horrible situation (which is one reason the president desperately tried to make this all about them, as I write here).



My only point is that the White House's political chops in this fiasco look about as sharp as Dom DeLuise's forehead. That's kind of weird when you consider that his foreign-policy shop is largely run by political hacks — as Kim Strassel notes in her excellent column from yesterday. "Obama's Kissingers," as Strassel calls them, should be better at the politics than the foreign policy, given their resumes. But it turns out they stink at both. When you run foreign policy like a domestic political operation, it turns out that both the policy and the politics can blow up on you. I think this is because over the long haul foreign policy doesn't work like domestic politics. You can have the best political hacks in the world, but if you give them a job they're not suited for, it will actually make things worse. If you want to see what I mean, ask your mechanic to do your prostate surgery.

This president, we are constantly told, gets his information about scandals in his own administration the same way we do: from the newspapers. This raises an interesting question: Why have an office in the White House? Apparently you can do this job from anywhere.

Maybe Obama needs to get a subscription to *Rolling Stone*? If he'd read this story from two years ago, he'd at least know that Bergdahl's case was like Norwegian weather in September: a lot of gray. In fairness, I don't want the president of the United States wasting his time reading that rag. But in the old days, *someone* in the White House would have read up on the guy. A pro would have said, "Hey, let's type Bowe Bergdahl into the Google machine and hit the 'I'm feeling lucky' button!" If they'd done that, they would have at least known not to say Bergdahl was captured on the "battlefield" and that he had served "with honor and distinction." On why this was outrageous see Ralph Peters. On why this was politically stupid, see the entry in the dictionary for "Duh."

This White House went a different way. They sent Susan Rice — Susan Rice! — out on the Sunday shows to beclown herself *again*. This woman was going to be secretary of state until she went out on the Sunday shows and read Ben Rhodes's talking points verbatim. Apparently that's sort of her thing. She reads what the hacks above — or below — give her. It's like she's the Ron Burgundy of foreign policy. But you'd think this time around she'd go over with her staff exactly what they know — and don't know. You'd think she'd be like Roy Scheider in *Jaws 2* telling the town council, "As God is my witness, I'm not going through that Hell again." Instead she's like Mikey from the Life cereal commercials and the White House political hacks are like the other kids. "Give these talking points to Susie, she'll say anything."

And now, to cover their mistakes, these guys are complaining anonymously to Chuck Todd that Bergdahl is being "swiftboated" by his former comrades. My friend lowahawk called this one perfectly. Seriously, what's the point of putting the hacks in charge if they can't even hack right?

It's amazing how good liberals are at creating terms that attack motives in order to deflect inconvenient facts. I have my problem with the uses and abuses of "McCarthyism," "witch hunts," "climate deniers," "reality-based community" etc. But "swiftboating" really stands out as slimy piece of business. What the Swiftboat vets did was tell the truth as they saw it about events they had firsthand experience with. Some of their recollections may have fallen short of accurate, but many were completely accurate. I guarantee you not one in a hundred people who throw the term "swiftboating" around can tell you exactly what the vets did wrong.

Well, I take that back. They can tell you what they did wrong: They created problems for the Democrats. What they can't tell you was what the vets said that was inaccurate — *because they don't care*.

## Washington Post

### When a president goes rogue

by George F. Will

What Winston Churchill said of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles — that he was a bull who carried his own china shop around with him — is true of Susan Rice, who is, to be polite, accident-prone. When in September 2012 she was deputed to sell to the public the fable that the Benghazi attack was just an unfortunately vigorous movie review — a response to an Internet video — it could have been that she, rather than Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, was given this degrading duty because Rice was merely U.N. ambassador, an ornamental position at an inconsequential institution. Today, however, Rice is Barack Obama's national security adviser, so two conclusions must be drawn.

Perhaps she did not know, in advance of the swap of five terrorists for Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the, shall we say, *ambiguities* about Bergdahl's departure from his platoon in Afghanistan and the reportedly deadly consequences of his behavior. If so, then she has pioneered a degree of incompetence exotic even for this 10-thumbed administration. If, however, she did know and still allowed Obama to present this as a mellow moment of national satisfaction, she is condign punishment for his choice of such hirelings.

Perhaps this exchange really is, as Obama said in defending it, an excellent thing "regardless of the circumstances, whatever those circumstances may turn out to be." His confidence in its



excellence is striking, considering that he acknowledges that we do not know the facts about what would seem to be important “circumstances.”

Such as the [note Bergdahl reportedly left before disappearing](#), in which he supposedly said he did not approve of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan. And the notably strong and numerous [expressions of anger](#) by members of Bergdahl’s battalion concerning his comportment and its costs.

Obama did not comply with the law requiring presidents to notify Congress 30 days before such exchanges of prisoners at Guantanamo. Politico can be cited about this not because among the media it is exceptionally, well, *understanding* of Obama’s exuberant notion of executive latitude but because it is not. Politico headlined a story on his noncompliance with the law “[Obama May Finally Be Going Rogue on Gitmo](#).” It said Obama’s “assertive” act “defied Congress” — Congress, not the rule of law — in order “to get that process [of closing the prison at Guantanamo] moving.” It sent “a clear message” that “Obama is now willing to wield his executive powers to get the job done.” Or, as used to be said in extenuation of strong leaders, “to make the trains run on time.”

The 44th president, channeling — not for the first time — the 37th (in his post-impeachment [conversation with David Frost](#)), [may say](#): “When the president does it, that means that it is not illegal.” Already the administration says events dictated a speed that precluded complying with the law.

This explanation should be accorded open-minded, but not empty-minded, consideration. It should be considered in light of the fact that as the Veterans Affairs debacle continued, Obama went to Afghanistan to hug some troops, then completed the terrorists-for-Bergdahl transaction. And in light of the fact that Obama waged a seven-month military intervention in Libya’s civil war without complying with the law (the [War Powers Resolution](#)) that requires presidents to terminate within 60 to 90 days a military action not authorized or subsequently approved by Congress.

Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-Ga.), vice chairman of the intelligence committee, says the administration told him he would be notified about negotiations for the release of terrorists. He now says he cannot “[believe a thing this president says](#).”

Obama says his agents “consulted with Congress for quite some time” about prisoner exchanges with the Taliban. Mike Rogers (R-Mich.), chairman of the House intelligence committee, says there have been [no consultations](#) since 2011. Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) [says](#) “I don’t like it when the White House says the intelligence committees were briefed. Because we weren’t.” He says Obama is “referring to ... 2011-2012, when I was still in grade school.”

Now, now. “Assertive” presidents can’t be expected to “go rogue” without ruffling feathers. And omelets cannot be made without breaking eggs. Etc.

This episode will be examined by congressional committees, if they can pierce the [administration’s coming cover-up](#), which has been foreshadowed by the response to congressional attempts to scrutinize the politicization of the Internal Revenue Service. If the military stalls on turning over files to Congress pertaining to the five years of Bergdahl’s absence, we will at least know that there is no national institution remaining to be corrupted.

## Human Events

### [Bowe Bergdahl, just deserts](#)

by Ann Coulter



Death Penalty Month at [anncoulter.com](#) has already been interrupted by the psycho in Santa Barbara, and now it's being interrupted by the Buddhist in Bagram.

Keeping to the spirit of Death Penalty Month, let's review the execution of Pvt. Eddie Slovik. Slovik's offense: desertion in wartime. (See the tie-in?)

Unlike Bowe Bergdahl, who deserted his unit, according to the accounts of his comrades, Slovik never actually deserted. He also didn't call America a "disgusting" country or say he was "ashamed to be an American."

Slovik was just a chicken.

In October 1944, as Allied forces were sweeping through France, Slovik left his position on the front lines, walked to the rear of his unit and handed a note to the cook, confessing his desertion. The letter explained that he was "so scared" that he had already abandoned his unit once, and concluded: "AND I'LL RUN AWAY AGAIN IF I HAVE TO GO OUT THERE."

Slovik was like Bradley Manning minus the lipstick and eyeliner.

A lieutenant, a company commander, and a judge advocate all tried to persuade Slovik to shred the letter and return to his unit, warning him that he'd be tried for desertion otherwise. Slovik refused.



In the middle of World War II, the military court-martialed Slovik, tried him, and sentenced him to death.

Allied Supreme Commander Dwight Eisenhower denied Slovik's pardon request, saying it would encourage more desertions, just as the fighting was getting especially hot. Slovik was executed by firing squad and buried among the numbered graves of court-martialed rapists and murderers in an American military cemetery in France.

Contrast Slovik's story with the beloved troop whose return just cost us the release of five of the most dangerous terrorists in the world.

Three days before he walked off his base, Bergdahl emailed his parents:

- “I am ashamed to be an american.”
- “The US army is the biggest joke ... It is the army of liars, backstabbers, fools and bullies.”
- “These people need help, yet what they get is the most conceited country in the world telling them that they are nothing and that they are stupid.”
- “The horror that is america is disgusting.”

These emails were given to the author of a 2012 *Rolling Stone* article on the case by Bergdahl's own parents.

The overwrought soldier's father, Bob, emailed back: “OBEY YOUR CONSCIENCE!” And then, according to the *Rolling Stone* profile reporting these emails — as well as the Army report on the incident — Bergdahl “decided to walk away.

“Bergdahl's unit commander, Evan Buetow, told CNN's Jake Tapper that intercepted Taliban “chatter” soon revealed that Bergdahl was looking for a member of the Taliban who spoke English. (Other than his father.)



Buetow said he couldn't prove it, but he believed Bergdahl began helping the Taliban attack his own unit. After that, Buetow says, the assaults were much more direct, and Bergdahl would have known the unit's tactics and how they would respond to an attack.

U.S. forces in the area spent the next two months on a single mission: trying to find Bergdahl. It is beyond dispute that any American killed during that time was killed on a mission to "rescue" Bergdahl from his new comrades.

Over the years, the Taliban produced several propaganda videos with Bergdahl — eating, doing push-ups, and criticizing American foreign policy.

During the Vietnam War, POW Navy Vice Admiral James Stockdale disfigured himself so that he could not be used in a propaganda video. He slit his wrists to avoid being tortured for information.

When captured Navy aviator Jeremiah Denton was forced by the North Vietnamese to make a propaganda video, he blinked the word T-O-R-T-U-R-E in Morse code, over and over again, as he said these words:

"I don't know what is going on in the war now. My only sources are North Vietnamese radio, magazines and newspapers. But whatever the position of my government, I agree with it. I support it. I will support it as long as I live."

It was the first confirmation the U.S. had that the North Vietnamese were torturing POWs.

These men — and many more — had limbs torn from their sockets, their legs and backs shattered by the North Vietnamese. As Denton said of the repeated torture, he'd rather lose an arm than his honor.

When right-wingers get choked up about "the troops," these are the sort of men we're thinking of. Not Bowe "America is disgusting" Bergdahl.

But to Obama, Bergdahl was the picture of American manhood and military honor.

He released five of the most dangerous terrorists in the world — captured at great cost to our military — in order to give Bergdahl an exit plan from his Great Adventure. (Before he ever set foot in Afghanistan, Bergdahl had told a fellow soldier, "If this deployment is lame, I'm just going to walk off into the mountains of Pakistan.")

Bergdahl wasn't being "left behind" or "left on the battlefield." He was being left where he wanted to be, with the poor, innocent Talibanists, far away from this "disgusting" country that made him "ashamed to be an American."

## Daily Beast

### 10 Terrible Gift Ideas for Graduates From Dilbert Creator Scott Adams

*Most gifts for grads—except cash, of course—tend to suck. Consider these strangely popular choices.*

by Scott Adams

Many of you are wondering what kind of gift to buy for the innocent wretch in your life who is about to be excreted from the gentle embrace of our education system into the turd-infested pool of misery that we call work. I am here to help.

Gifts are all about the thought you put into them and the message they send. I did some online searching and discovered that all of the top graduation gift suggestions are—as far as I can tell—designed as clever revenge for the grad's teen years. It's payback time!

1. One of the top suggested gifts for grads is **Money Clips**. Try to keep a straight face when you give a money clip to a grad that has a mountain of student debt and no job prospects. Write something on the card along the lines of "This is to keep all of your money organized." You want to leave some doubt as to whether your intention is to be an evil revenge-monkey or you're just a terrible gift-buyer. If you're like me, your unstylish wardrobe for the past twenty years is all the reasonable doubt you'll need.
2. **Luggage** is another popular gift item for grads. Nothing says *get out of my house* like luggage. If that isn't subtle enough, follow the example of my parents and combine the luggage gift with a one-way ticket to another state. Message received!
3. I learned from Google that **digital cameras** are still popular graduation gifts. Most graduates have smartphones in their pockets, so this is an elegant way to say, "When I think of you, I am reminded of unnecessary things."
4. One Internet gift site suggested that you buy **baskets of toiletries** for grads. Let me explain something in case it isn't obvious: If your gift has "toilet" right in the name, it will never be considered a family heirloom. This is the sort of gift you give to a coworker's kid whose name you had to verify by asking around.
5. **Gift cards** are popular presents for grads. A gift card says, "I was standing in line at Starbucks when I realized I am obligated to buy a gift for someone whose life has never interested me enough to learn about their hobbies." A gift card is an especially evil/clever gift for anyone graduating with a degree in economics. An economics major will recognize that you went out of your way to transmogrify your perfectly useful cash into an inconvenient receptacle of value that will someday get lost under a big pile of other things in a drawer.
6. **Cologne** was a popular gift suggestion online. The gift of fragrance says, "I'm not as happy as I could be with the odor coming from your body." If you can think of another interpretation of that gift, you're probably trying too hard.
7. Several gift sites suggest buying **tool sets** for grads. Tools pair well with a witty message on the card that says, "When I see tools, I think of you." Or you could go with the more straightforward approach of "You'll need these unless you're the only broke thing in your home." That might sound mean, but if you can't have a good laugh at the expense of others, why are they even here?

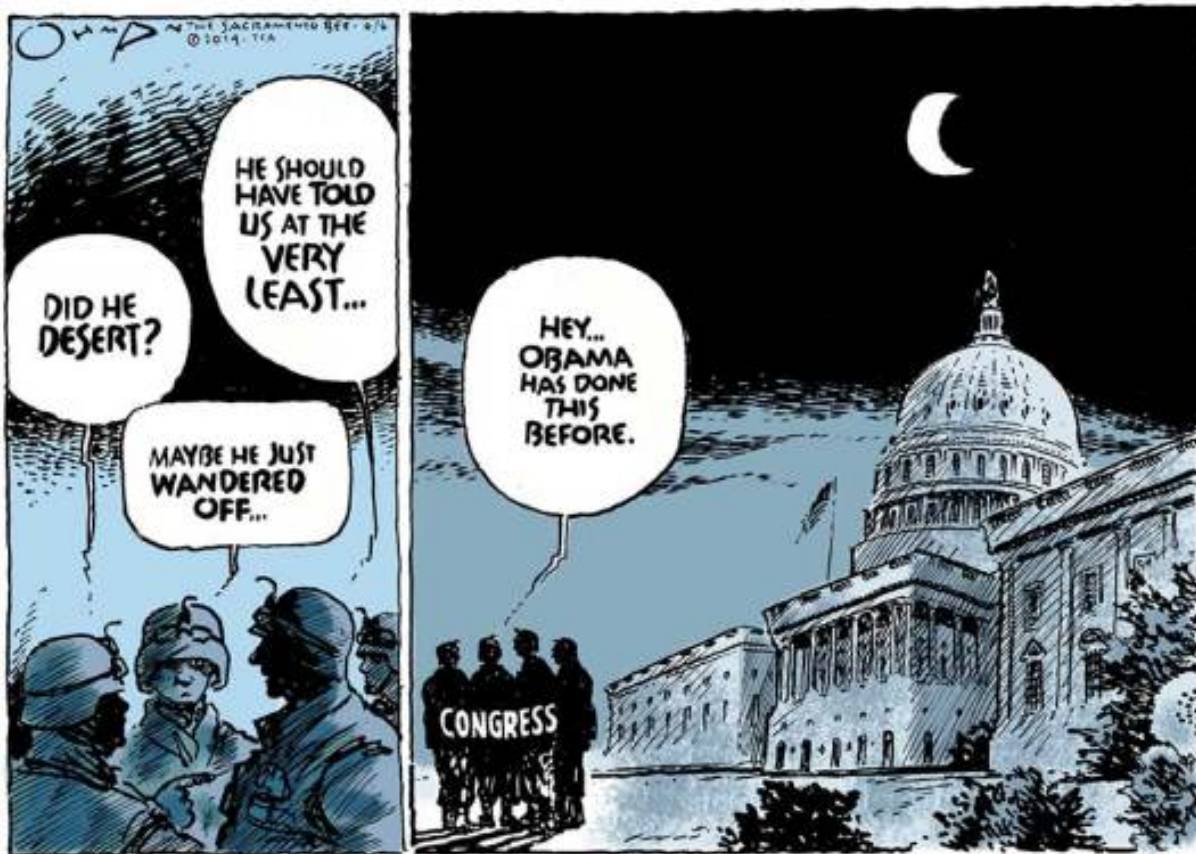
8. If you can't find an online source for butter churns, consider buying your graduate a [watch](#). For those of you who are not old enough to remember, a watch was a device for telling time back in olden days, before smartphones. These days a watch serves primarily as a thing you have to wear when you are visited by the person who gave it to you.

9. I saw on the Internet a suggestion that you should buy your grad a [Swarofski Crystalline USB memory stick](#). Your first reaction might be that there's no obvious reason for such a product to exist. But someday when your grad is eating Top Ramen and wondering how to transfer the Stuxnet virus to his workplace, that memory stick will be just the ticket.

10. The most diabolical gift you can give a grad is my book [How to Fail at Almost Everything and Still Win Big](#). If the grad goes on to fame and riches you can take credit for generously providing the book that made all of the difference. And if the grad does a career-long face plant and someday comes to you for financial help you can say, "You should have read the book."

Okay, that last item in the list was a commercial for my book and you probably didn't appreciate it. But objectively speaking, if you were expecting to buy a graduation gift, I just saved you some time. Can we call it even?

Scott Adams is the creator of Dilbert and the author of [How to Fail at Almost Everything and Still Win Big](#).





# A Quick History Lesson

**13th Amendment:  
ABOLISHED SLAVERY**

**100% Republican Support  
23% Democrat Support**

**15th Amendment:  
RIGHT TO VOTE FOR ALL**

**100% Republican Support  
0% Democrat Support**

**14th Amendment:  
GAVE CITIZENSHIP TO  
FREED SLAVES**

**94% Republican Support  
0% Democrat Support**

Like us at  
FACEBOOK/  
STOP  
HILLARY  
IN 2016

**OBAMACARE:**

**0% Republican Support  
86% Democrat Support**



