

COMMENTARY

Newsroom: (541) 346-5511
Room 300, Erb Memorial Union
P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403
E-mail: editor@dailyemerald.com
Online Edition:
www.dailyemerald.com

Editor in Chief:
Jessica Blanchard
Managing Editor:
Michael J. Kleckner
Editorial Editor:
Julie Lauderbaugh
Assistant Editorial Editor:
Jacquelyn Lewis

Monday, October 8, 2001

Editorial

Columbus Day needs to serve as a reminder

In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue, rammed right into the Americas and is now best known for his infamous imperialization of Native American land. Christopher Columbus may be immortalized for his exploration of the New World with a national holiday, but the massive deaths and concurrent destruction of native cultures has marred his historical image. And the meaning of the holiday commemorating the man has become as convoluted as the history lessons Americans have been teaching their children about the explorer.

Originally, Columbus Day was a holiday for Italian-Americans to honor the great Italian explorer who opened the door to the New World with his expedition. History textbooks have been written about Columbus in a favorable light, focusing on the voyage of the Niña, Pinta and Santa Maria in the toilsome journey across the Atlantic. Information about the atrocious treatment of natives once they reached land is widely unknown and therefore ignored.

At the time, Columbus didn't know that what he was doing was wrong. Explorers from a bevy of European countries were sailing the globe in search of new land and the notion of taming "savages" outside of European borders was widely accepted. Imperialization was an attractive prospect for leaders looking to expand the reach of their empire and, after all, everybody else was torturing and killing "savages," too.

Instead of doing away with Columbus Day altogether, as some critics suggest, perhaps as a society we should use the holiday as a reminder of how far we've come as humanitarians.

The quest for imperialization has now transcended into a vision of globalization, although people argue about which is worse. As a modern society, we've changed the way we "civilize" foreign cultures, and we now seek to understand them. In hindsight, Manifest Destiny was not the ideal it was created to be.

The celebration of Columbus Day should be focused on our commonalities as a global community. We should acknowledge Columbus' efforts — both noteworthy and unfortunate — because everyone needs to be taught the truth about our country's origin, no matter how difficult the conversation may be.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com.

How do you feel about the military action?

The Emerald encourages all voices to express their concerns about this sensitive topic and its implications in the future. All letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries are limited to 550 words. Letters and commentaries can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com.

Seeking out the head of the snake

'All I fear we have done is awaken a sleeping giant, and fill him with a terrible resolve.'

— Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Imperial Japanese Navy Commander-in-Chief, on the occasion of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec. 8 (Tokyo time), 1941

We had always assumed that World War III would open — and close — with a mutually destructive volley of nuclear warheads.

Instead, we may have seen World War III begin with something as innocuous, we believed, as aircraft.



Pat Payne
Columnist

On Sept. 11, as everyone now knows, four planes were hijacked simultaneously from East Coast airports. Two of these planes were piloted deliberately into the side of the towers of the World Trade Center. Once the trademarks of the New York

skyline, the towers were gone in the blink of an eye. A third plane, apparently meant to hit Air Force One or the White House, instead crashed into the Pentagon. A fourth plane crashed in Pennsylvania instead of whatever target it was intended for, thanks to passengers who used the last moments of their lives to retake the plane.

The war began Sunday with an odd opening volley: As we are conducting strikes to try to halt the Taliban's air power, we will soon be sending billions in food and medical aid to the Afghan people themselves.

In the same vein that World War III opened unconventionally, it will most likely be fought unconventionally. We had promised retaliation if the country of Afghanistan did not turn over Osama bin Laden, the Saudi exile millionaire thought responsible for the attacks. The Taliban leadership has thus braced for invasion. They're gonna wait a while.

This will not be a "go in, fight our way to the Rhine and spank Hitler" style of operation. If anything, it will probably resemble the exploits of Merrill's Marauders in the Pacific, or the British Long-Range Desert Group and the Special Air Service (still in existence

today) against the Afrika Korps. Both were small groups of commandos who fought a guerilla war, equipped, armed and trained for long stretches in territory that is hostile in every sense of the word.

There will most likely not be an invasion of Afghanistan in the same way we attacked Iraq during the Gulf War. History is against that course of action. The main body of Afghanistan is mountainous, especially in the eastern districts, including the capital of Kabul. This is territory that — while inhospitable — the natives know like the back of their hands.

The Afghans put this knowledge to good use during the prolonged Soviet invasion of 1979-1988. The Soviets were eaten alive by the Mujahideen soldiers who were, ironically, armed by the United States. Those soldiers now form the core of the army of the Taliban, Afghanistan's de facto leadership.

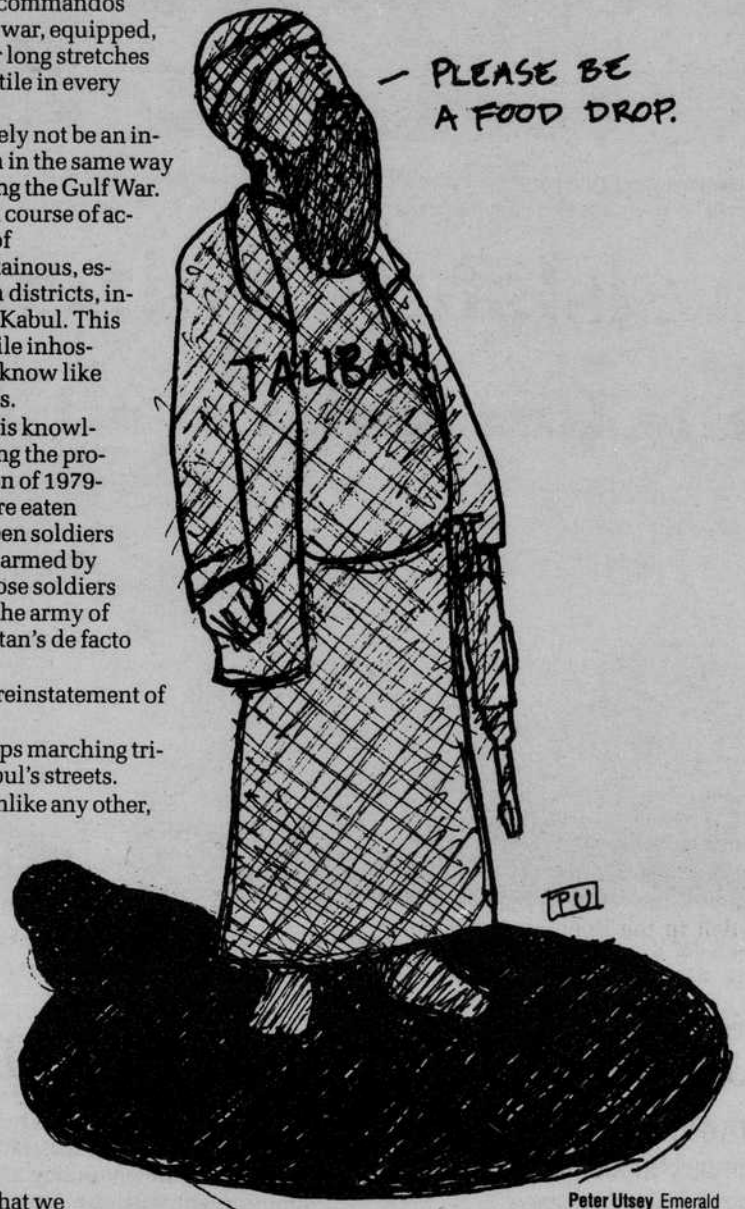
So there will be no reinstatement of the draft.

We won't have troops marching triumphantly down Kabul's streets.

This will be a war unlike any other, and as secret a war as possible. We are looking at a war fought from both the air and the shadows, where public airstrikes to destroy the terrorists' training and logistical capability will be merely a supplement to a war of assassination and sabotage.

I have no illusions that we will "rid the world of evildoers," as President Bush suggested. What we can hope to do instead is perhaps make these men, who are so willing to die for Allah or bin Laden or anyone else — as well as the men and governments who bankroll them — think twice before trying something else as audacious and outrageous as the attack on the World Trade Center.

All I can say is this: Now that we have



Peter Utsey Emerald

gone in, we had better go straight for the head of the snake and cut it off entirely. Bin Laden now knows that we are coming after him. We had better take him out this time, because it's almost certain he will try to deny us a second chance.

Pat Payne is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. He can be reached at patpayne@dailyemerald.com.

Poll Results:

Every week, the Emerald prints the results of our online poll and the poll question for the next week. The poll can be accessed from the main page of our Web site, www.dailyemerald.com. We encourage you to send us feedback about the poll questions and results.

Last week's poll question:

Which academic department is most underfunded?

Results: 68 total votes

Art history — 10.3 percent, or 7 votes

Comparative literature — 7.4 percent, or 5 votes

Education — 19.1 percent, or 13 votes

Geological studies — 11.8 percent, or 8 votes

Marketing — 2.9 percent, or 2 votes

Mathematics — 8.8 percent, or 6 votes

Theater arts — 13.2 percent, or 9 votes

Don't know — 26.5 percent, or 18 votes

Maybe the local media need to examine more departments in-depth to reveal the extent of underfunding.

This week's poll question:

Which anniversary is the University celebrating this year?

The choices:

10th

125th

150th

200th

Don't know

Letters to the editor

Drug war may have funded terrorism

What do the United States government and the Taliban have in common? Unbridled fanaticism.

When the U.S. government gave \$43 million to the Taliban in exchange for the Taliban declaring opium poppy farms to be "against the will of God," the U.S. sought to fuel its own fanatical obsession, the "War on Drugs."

Despite U.S. knowledge that the Taliban was an oppressive 'rogue regime' of religious fundamentalists with documented abuses of human rights, the U.S. government ignored the Taliban's systematized cruelties in order to push its own domestic and dogmatic anti-drug agenda.

In the wake of the Sept. 11 calamities, it is grotesquely ironic that "we" gave millions in anti-drug aid to Afghanistan's Taliban, the regime that, in addition to committing countless crimes against Afghani people, still harbors bin Laden and his network of suspected terrorists. By militarizing the Taliban to punish Afghani farmers growing opium poppies — farmers desperate for a cash crop to feed their families in a country of destroyed agricultural infrastructure — the U.S. government may have indirectly subsidized terrorism. It's just one more example of the drug war causing more harm than good.

Wrye Sententia
associate director, Center for
Cognitive Liberty & Ethics
Davis, Calif