

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Red flags are just one step toward stopping assaults

Over the past few years, sexual assaults of women on campus have been prominent in the media. There were 11 forcible sexual assaults on campus last year, although this figure may dramatically understate the actual number, given that the FBI estimates 90 percent of assaults go unreported. In March, a woman was almost raped on campus before fighting off her attacker.

In response to these incidents, the major shuttle services on campus — SafeRide, Night Ride and the Designated Driver Shuttle — are instituting a policy that would place a red flag on the antennae of their vehicles in the 48 hours after a major sexual assault attempt, rape or armed robbery.

We applaud this action as a step in the right direction, but feel it can go even further. The Department of Public Safety should implement a similar program for their vehicles.

The problem with the plan is that the red flags are a warning signal few may see. SafeRide, Night Ride and DDS vans are not often seen by the majority of the student population on campus at night, and we fear that the signal may go unnoticed. The flags should be augmented by other means to announce that an assault on students has occurred.

There are many additional ways to get the word out. Among other things, the local media, including this newspaper, must vigorously report when crimes occur. We suggest also posting fliers in prominent places every time there is an attack, as well as rigging the call boxes over campus to flash when there's an incident — or perhaps changing the light color from blue to red for the 48-hour period.

But even more importantly, it is imperative to educate the student body about their rights and responsibilities, particularly in the case of sex crimes.

Sexual assault is never permissible, nor is it acceptable. No one has the right of unfettered sexual access to another's body. There must be strong encouragement for victims to come forward and vigorous education for all students that sexual assault of any sort is emotionally destructive, hurtful, illegal and abhorrent. Those who commit such heinous crimes should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, and students, many of whom are just feeling out their independence, should understand in absolute terms that no means no.

The flags are a good starting point, but the campus community has done precious little to prevent sexual assaults from both without and within. This has to change.

Birthday greetings to Nader's students

Imagine this: Ralph Nader comes to campus three times within a month, and his presence sparks a grassroots student movement.

No, we're not talking about the Green Party.

Thirty-two years and a few days ago, Nader and his Raiders visited the University and told students that they needed to get involved in politics.

"Anybody who is proud to be a member of the silent majority has resigned from democracy, and that's nothing to be proud of," he told the Emerald on Oct. 12, 1970.

Instead of ending their civic involvement, University students immediately created the Oregon Public Interest Research Group (later to become OSPIRG, with the "S" being added for "Student").

In order to receive funding, OSPIRG needed to get 50 percent of the entire student body to sign a petition supporting the new group.

Within two weeks of canvassing, OSPIRG collected 7,744 names — more than the 50 percent needed. On March 9, 1971, the State Board of Higher Education approved the establishment and funding of OSPIRG at OUS schools.

Today in Portland, OSPIRG is celebrating its 30th birthday. For better or worse, OSPIRG receives many dollars in student funds and works on a variety of issues and campaigns. Happy birthday.

Editorial policy

These editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com.

Sickening strategy

Picture this: Aerosolized VX and sarin nerve gas descends on Navy ships. Biological and chemical agents are released over thousands of civilians. A germ able to wipe out a country's wheat crop is stockpiled in secret.

What dastardly fiend is responsible? Iraq? Libya? North Korea? al-Qaida? No. The culprit is none other than our own government.

From 1962 to 1973, the Department of Defense planned 134 tests under Project 112, a chemical and biological weapons "vulnerability-testing program," the Los Angeles Times reported. Earlier this year, the Pentagon admitted for the first time that some of the tests used real chemical and biological weapons, not harmless stimulants.

In all, 37 secret tests were conducted in California, Alaska, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland and Utah. Land tests in Alaska and Hawaii used artillery shells filled with sarin and VX gas — the same deadly stuff our government claims Saddam Hussein has been stockpiling. Navy trials off the coast of Florida, California and Hawaii tested the ability of ships and crew to perform under biological and chemical warfare. The code name for the sea tests Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense — "SHAD" for short. The Pentagon has said that both the crew and the team disseminating nerve gas wore protective gear and went through decontamination, according to the New York Times.

But the crew of ships exposed to biological agents wore no such protection. In effect, these sailors were guinea pigs. Last Thursday on CNN, Navy vets George Brocklebank and Robert Bates told the Senate Armed Forces Subcommittee on Personnel how their ships sailed through mysterious mists released from planes. When Brocklebank asked the men who boarded his ship wearing funny suits what was going on,



Peter Utsey Emerald

they told him to mind his own business. That was in 1965. Thirty-seven years later, he found out the truth.

That cloud encountered by the ship contained *Bacillus globigii*, a member of the anthrax family. Considered harmless at the time, it was later found to infect people with weak immune systems.

The Pentagon also admitted that 1,000 civilians might have been exposed to such germs in Oahu alone. How many people got sick? They did not keep track.

"I hear the sense of distress in your voices, that your government has let you down," said Senator Max Cleland, who chaired Thursday's hearing. Cleland can empathize. He lost both legs and his right arm to a grenade in Vietnam and felt disaffection at the government's shabby treatment of disabled vets. Rather than give up, he worked to change the system and eventually headed the Veterans Administration.

With war against Iraq looming ahead, Cleland offered these words: "What an incredible irony that we are here focused on weapons of mass destruction in another country ... and we're having to pull like teeth from our own government information about

what we did to our own people."

One test occurred near Yeehaw Junction. No, it's not a code name for the Pentagon, but a remote Florida town where our military tested wheat rust — a fungus not toxic to humans. Instead, it was developed to target Russia's wheat crop. In case of war, we were prepared to kill millions of civilians.

The Cold War has ended, but our bad habits are hard to kick. In 2000, the London Observer reported that Congress was pressuring Columbia to eradicate coca plants using the deadly fungus *Fusarium oxysporum*, or Agent Green, as a condition for military aid. This fungus project employed many veterans of the Soviet germ warfare program. Fortunately, President Clinton retracted this condition, as it violated the treaties against biological warfare.

When our enemies begin to adopt our freedoms and liberties, we win. When we begin to adopt their evil tactics and disregard the value of human life, we lose. And we become our own worst enemy.

Contact the columnist at philiphuang@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Philip Huang
 A different light

Letters to the editor

Poll shows bias

Furthering the Emerald's tradition of independent journalism (read: independent of conservative thought), the author of the Oct. 9 column ("Where's the dissent for war on Iraq?") stated:

"A Vietnamesque murkiness surrounds the issue as reflected in a recent poll that found public support for military action has cooled in recent weeks."

Neither the source of this information nor the raw numbers are cited, leaving the average reader perplexed. As such, one can only assume that the author is referring to a recent poll conducted by The New York Times. The first question of this report was slanted, asking voters whether they would be more likely to vote for a congressional candidate because of their positions on the economy or foreign policy.

When confronted by a vacuous term such as "foreign policy," I'm sure that the average liberal is dumbstruck; most reasonable people are, too.

The Times further asked voters if they approved of U.S. military action in Iraq; 67 percent responded affirmatively. Dissatis-

fied with this result, the paper of record asked its group whether they would still approve of military action if there were substantial military casualties or substantial Iraqi civilian casualties. Only then did support for military action cool.

I would direct readers to a recent Fox News-Opinion Dynamics poll conducted among 900 (as opposed to 564 for the Times poll) registered voters which resulted in a good 66 percent of voters favoring military action.

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Grassroots birthday party

Senator Wayne Morse (1900-1974) believed in the power of people and democracy. Join us on Sunday, Oct. 20, to celebrate the 102nd anniversary of his birth.

Re-ignite the senator's fiery spirit by demonstrating what you are doing to carry on his legacy. The Wayne Morse Youth

Program, is hosting this all-ages event from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Wayne Morse Park at 595 Crest Drive. We will sing "Happy Birthday" at 1 p.m. and invite you and your family to join us.

We will provide spaces for free speech, music, as well as card tables and bulletin boards for people and organizations to display their materials. From 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., we will be taping a video directory of grassroots people and organizations entitled "GRASS ROOTS: The Real Homeland Security!"

In addition, we will set up a small studio in the senator's office to videotape people with personal stories about the senator. So join us; bring the kids, old folks and dogs. The Willamette Wildlife Rehabilitation Center will host an open house, and there will be plenty of room for the dogs to run off leash in the meadow.

Email morsenow@efn.org or call the Glenwood Clubhouse at 741-0209 with your questions or suggestions. Remember, as Morse would remind us, "Free Speech — use it or lose it!" "Dissent is patriotic," and "We the people" means it's up to us."

Eileen Erdelt
 program director
 Wayne Morse Youth Program