

Another terrorist attack on Americans

Are we winning the war?

This editorial appeared in the San Jose Mercury News on Wednesday.

The most confounding aspect of the war on terror is that there is no way to gauge how well it's going.

The victory over the Taliban and the capture of scores of al-Qaeda leaders have certainly bought anxious Americans some safety. But the barbaric attack in Saudi Arabia on Monday is a reminder that America may not have the upper hand in the war against a ruthless enemy that lurks in the shadows and strikes unexpectedly.

To make lasting inroads in the war on terror, America's efforts on security and intelligence won't suffice. The country will also need a foreign policy that addresses the issues that have made the cause of the terrorists popular with so many disaffected young Muslims around the world. That's something the Bush administration has yet to grasp.

Monday's attack had all the hallmarks of al-Qaeda: a despicable act of mass murder, carefully orchestrated for maximum destruction and psychological impact. It provides new evidence that the radical anti-Americanism that led to the Sept. 11 attacks continues to thrive in many parts of the world.

President Bush promised that the killers "will learn the meaning of American justice." It's the kind of rhetoric that plays well at home. Unfortunately, defeating terrorism will be far more complicated.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, America's policies — from a unilateral war in Iraq to an unbalanced approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — have fueled a growing resentment of American power. They are turning an increasing number of young men from Karachi to Riyadh into killers. The terrorists have even found new recruits in middle-class neighborhoods of small-town England.

Further, the Bush administration's go-it-alone attitude and its emphasis on military might over diplomacy have alienated allies, whose continued help will be necessary to hunt down terrorists.

To its credit, the administration is moving in the right direction on at least one diplomatic front. U.S. troops plan to leave Saudi Arabia, one of the most fertile breeding grounds for terrorists. With their departure, America will be further away from a conflict between the country's conservative monarchy and its even more conservative Islamic clerics who have long incited terrorists.

The promise of troop withdrawals wasn't enough to prevent Monday's attack, whose target was not just America but the Saudi regime itself. Nor will peace in the Middle East, nor stability in Afghanistan and Iraq mean an end to terrorism. There are fanatics who will continue to kill wantonly, no matter what.

But unless America works quickly to resolve these issues in cooperation with other nations, the radicals will continue to earn the sympathy of millions around the world, and dozens of new recruits will be ready to take the place of every al-Qaeda operative that is captured or killed.

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Attacks in Saudi Arabia

Chronology of attacks on Westerners:

- 1995:**
Riyadh
Five Americans, two Indians killed, 60 wounded in explosion at car park.
- 1996:**
Khobar
19 U.S. soldiers killed, 400 wounded when bomb explodes in fuel truck.
- 2001:**
Khobar
Two foreigners killed in attack.
- 2002:**
Riyadh
British man, German man killed in separate car bomb incidents.

2003:
Riyadh
February: British man shot dead
May 12: Suicide car bombs at Westerners' housing compounds kill, injure many



Americans must remain vigilant against hate

This editorial appeared in the Dallas Morning News on Wednesday.

Americans, stand firm. We must prevail in the war against terrorism. Monday's bomb blast in Saudi Arabia, which killed at least eight Americans and many more Saudis, reminds us that the battle continues against those who slay innocents in the name of religion or some other excuse. Iraq was only one chapter in a larger war against those whose faith is hate, as President Bush aptly put it after the bombings.

Saudi leaders regret that "American and Saudi blood run together" on their soil. But Saudi leaders should not be surprised that blood ran across their homeland. The stealth invasion has all the markings of al-Qaeda, whose roots run deep into Saudi soil.

The Saudi government has allowed the venomous form of Islam known as Wahhabism to spread from Saudi mosques and inspire al-Qaeda terrorists. Some even say Saudi royals finance Wahhabism. Whatever the reality, this much is clear: Saudi Arabia must do a better job of controlling terrorist cells.

That said, the U.S. needs partners in the Arab world — for its own interest. From President Bush to U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Robert Jordan, the U.S. must keep working with the Saudis and other Arab nations. They can help us identify new waves of hate attacks.

What's more, as the United States pushes for change within the Persian Gulf, the region itself can improve. As Kuwaiti political scientist Shafeeq Ghabra told the Dallas Morning News' Editorial Board on Tuesday, "The issue is reform and change in the region."

President Bush also must keep pushing for a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. The faster Israel feels secure and the sooner Palestinians get land, the quicker the Mideast can grow stable. And the speedier that reality arrives, the more quickly hatred against the U.S. can diminish.

Secretary of State Colin Powell was right to continue with his mission to Saudi Arabia, which the terrorists certainly timed their attacks around. The United States cannot flinch in the face of terror. This campaign will be long. It will be bloody. But it must end. And freedom, not hate, must prevail.

Distributed by Knight Ridder/Tribune Information Services.

The trouble with Saudi Arabia

This editorial appeared in the Chicago Tribune on Thursday.

Monday's terrorist bombing in Riyadh is but one more reminder of the fatal economic and political contradictions that riddle Saudi Arabia and its relations with the United States.

Saudi Arabia is one of the most repressive and controlling governments in the world — supposedly run according to a strict reading of the Koran — and a fertile ground for terrorist organizations. It is one of America's closest allies in the Middle East, but also one of the home bases of al-Qaeda and 15 of the terrorists involved in the Sept. 11 attacks. Saudis live atop an ocean of oil while their per capita income and standard of living continually shrivel.

The United States has done the Saudis a couple of grand favors in recent weeks. The American-led coalition removed the regime of Saddam Hussein, which posed a military threat to Saudi Arabia. After the fall of Baghdad, the United States announced that it would withdraw nearly all U.S. troops from Saudi soil. The presence of those troops has been a source of seething anger from some Islamic groups in the country; the United States was prepared to remove the provocation.

And yet, the Saudis were powerless to prevent the terrorist attack on a housing complex in the capital that left at least 34 people dead, including seven Americans.

As FBI investigators sift through the rubble for clues or explanations, the United States must go beyond the decision on its troops and re-examine its entire relationship with this very troubled and troublesome ally. Because Saudi Arabia controls 25 percent of the known reserves of oil, America has treated it like the proverbial 400-pound gorilla that dare not be challenged.

Saudi Arabia sustains a regime of repression and cruelty, along with groups of religious fanatics and terrorists that threaten the ruling Saud clan as much as they threaten the United States.

Broad corruption and retrograde social policies — such as excluding women from all facets of society except as child bearers — have stifled the economic development of Saudi Arabia despite its gushers of oil. Unemployment is rampant. Between 1981 and 1997, per-capita income dropped from \$19,000 to \$7,300 in constant dollars. Add the fact that nearly half the booming population is under 14, and you have the ingredients of an economic and political explosion.

Confronted with Saudi repression and ineffectiveness in dealing with terrorist groups, the tendency of the United States, including the current administration, has been to look the other way. The mantra has been that its oil makes Saudi Arabia an indispensable ally, warts and all.

The Saudis need U.S. petrodollars as much as the United States needs Saudi oil. The United States is hardly as helpless as some presume. And as the Iraq war showed, the United States has other allies in the area capable and willing to cooperate in regional defense.

The United States must approach its relationship with Saudi Arabia in sober terms. It must demand cooperation from the Saudis in rooting out the terrorist groups that operate there and it must force the Saudi regime to understand that its repression breeds domestic instability and terrorism. The sooner the current pantomime of amicable relations and perpetual smiles is replaced with a more realistic appraisal of mutual interests, the sooner both countries will move toward a truly constructive relationship.

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It's hard seeing disgusting acts of heterosexuals, too

Guest commentary

Oh Vincent Martorano, don't I know, don't I feel for you, what an issue, let me extend a hand of comfort to you.

Just yesterday, I saw two heterosexuals walking down the street here in this little town of Bend, Ore. Walking hand in hand wasn't bad enough, it wasn't a minute before the guy leaned over and kissed that girl right on the lips, right on the street, right in front of me. I would have barfed on the spot had it not been for the fact that I hadn't eaten in a while, and I had nothing to barf.

Again, they had a dance here recently in the high school. Oh Vini, you wouldn't believe it, high school girls and boys were actually dancing with one another, holding each other in sexually expressive ways. I was outraged.

Now I am as liberal as the next guy, but I have to tell you I think it is disgusting when I see males and females behaving like that. If they

want to have sex and babies, that's their business, but it over-populates my planet and all those new babies are breathing my air. What is a guy to do?

I have written legislators and complained but to no avail. Most think that heterosexuals by right ought to have the same rights as homosexuals, and if I think it is OK for homosexuals to have the right to kiss in public, then I must allow heterosexuals to do the same thing.

Well, if I must let them do those disgusting things, then they could at least have the decency to do it someplace where I don't have to look at them. I understand they are even being allowed to marry one another, and it is sanctioned by the state. I would think that the state would have better things to spend its time and money on than sanctioning such filth.

It's a cruel world, Vini, and I just don't know where it will all end.

Keep the faith.

Thomas Davis lives in Bend.

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