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Words vs. war

Fire and fury like the world has never seen. Those are decidedly not diplomatic words—those are fighting words. Words that President Trump spoke about continued threats from North Korea.

Trump said if Kim Jong-Un's regime persisted with its threats against the United States, North Korea would suffer the harshest military reaction ever seen by mankind.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson walked back Trump's comments. He said that Americans can sleep easy at night, that there is no credible threat of a Korean ballistic nuclear weapon hitting the U.S.

Those are the two sides of the current American foreign policy coin: tit for tat and diplomacy. Trump threatens a rain of military might while the nation's top diplomat seeks to lower the tension. Unfortunately, Trump's words ring too much like the Soviet Union's Krushchev's "We will bury you" speech at the height of the cold war. Secretary of State Tillerson tried to calm the world upon his return from a visit to Asia.

Though he was chosen to lead the State Department due to his experience as a globe-trotting CEO of Exxon Mobil, he does not have the training, education or background that delicate situations such as North Korea need. Even with his limitations, we prefer Tillerson's diplomacy over Trump's bellicosity.

The West can believe that no man, especially a leader, would ever take the drastic step of starting a war of nukes. The problem is that Kim Jong-Un is an unknown quantity: would he—could he—order a missile tipped with a nuclear weapon be launched against Guam or some point in the western United States?

Until our intelligence sources can say, without a doubt, that Jong-Un is

not the irrational child he appears to be and does not have his finger poised over the launch button, we need to opt for safety and security.

After Trump's 'fire and fury' remarks the North Korea regime threatened to hurl a missile at Guam's Andersen Air Force Base and its 6,000 military personnel.

The tit for tat bluster serves no purpose. It is anyone's guess which audience Jong-Un is playing to since he has so few allies; he might be playing to the hometown crowd. Nothing whips up patriotic frenzy like warning against an enemy. Trump is playing to his base, which doesn't tend to shy away from a fight. Words matter and war-mongering words matter more since they make other countries in east Asia nervous and uncertain which camp to gravitate to: America and the West, or China.

Some decry the lack of results from diplomacy, but as long as two sides are talking to each other they are not warring against each other. The key is talking to each other, not at each other. The United States sat down at a table with a delegation from North Vietnam for years at a chateau outside Paris. Negotiations eventually bore fruit, but it was an arduous journey.

In the early 1970s American diplomats purposely portrayed President Richard Nixon as a madman who was capable of anything so the Soviets and Vietnamese better deal with him before he did something rash. That strategy worked partly because both the Soviets and Chinese needed something from the U.S. North Korea needs nothing from America except respect and a promise not to invade. That seems an easy program to follow. It's better than the unpalatable alternative.

—LAZ

our opinion

Writer gets inclusion right

To the Editor:

Thank you Eric Howald for your thoughtful, compassionate and well written column (*Why inclusivity matters*) in the Aug. 4th issue of the *Keizertimes*. It was in stark contrast to the guest opinion of L. Brent Bozell, III and Tim Graham, right next to it.

And thank you for all the ways you are obviously contributing to make our community more welcoming and comfortable for everyone. Some

letters

people say you can't legislate behavior. But we do that all the time with laws regulating driving, drinking and smoking, and other abusive or dangerous behaviors. As you pointed out, words

matter. Laws, policies and leadership matter. I believe we can make a difference day by day, person by person, by treating our neighbors and even strangers in the community with respect and consideration. Thank you for setting a great example.

Kathy Lincoln Keizer



Rex Tillerson ineffectual at State

By MICHAEL GERSON

If Cabinet members are to be judged by the gap between expectation and performance, Rex Tillerson is among the worst. He was supposed to be one of the adults in the room, a steady force. But Tillerson has managed to be both ineffectual and destabilizing—unfamiliar with the workings of government, unwilling to provide inspirational leadership, disconnected from American values and seemingly hostile to the department in his care.

Who would want to be known as the secretary of state who retreated from the promotion of justice and democracy? Yet this is exactly what Tillerson seems to do.

To a certain kind of corporate mind, a statement of organizational purpose—following a bottom-up, 360-degree, consultant-driven review process—is a big deal. The one currently under consideration at the State Department (according to an internal email obtained by my fellow *Washington Post* columnist Josh Rogin): "We promote the security, prosperity and interests of the American people globally." In contrast, the previous version called for "a peaceful, prosperous, just and democratic world."

Let's set aside the offensive clunkiness of the new statement. No, let's not. Organizations like corporations have statements of purpose. Institutions like the State Department have traditions, values and missions. Tillerson's new purpose statement could be adopted by any country in the world with the change of one adjective—the "Russian" people or the "Belgian" people.

other views

This involves a crude reductionism. Exxon Mobil may measure its success in interests and profits. But America is a nation dedicated to the principle that all are created equal. If our country does not stand for a "just and democratic" world, who will?

This sad and serious shift—begun in Donald Trump's inaugural address—has been carried forward by Tillerson. In his first remarks to State Department employees, the new secretary of state said that the promotion of American values "creates obstacles" in pursuit of American interests. The administration's proposed budget essentially zeroes out democracy promotion funding. Tillerson refused (against tradition) to personally unveil the State Department's annual human rights report. The impression that America no longer cares about human rights has filtered down to third-rate despots everywhere.

Every American president since World War II has believed that our nation benefits from the spread of economic and political freedom. Oppressive regimes are more likely to seek destabilizing weapons and to harbor terrorists. Democratic nations are more peaceful and more likely to engage in trade. Democratization (for the most part) cannot be imposed, but it can be encouraged, unless that great, defining national mission doesn't fit in the PowerPoint presentation.

Meanwhile, Tillerson's organizational review has been employed as an excuse to avoid making key hires. He complains that the government is "not a highly disciplined organi-

zation." And surely there is room to consolidate proliferating State Department bureaus and to rationalize management structures. But under what theory of reorganization would the State Department not have assistant secretaries covering Europe, East Asia, Latin America and the rest? Not a single assistant secretary position has been permanently filled.

Tillerson's aloofness, his public criticisms of the department and his support for drastic budget cuts (including for embassy security) have naturally had an effect on morale. And why is morale valuable? As secretary of state, George Shultz motivated (much of) a naturally skeptical department to implement Ronald Reagan's foreign policy vision. As secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice motivated (much of) a naturally skeptical department to support President George W. Bush's freedom agenda.

If the Trump administration continues to treat professional staff as the "deep state" enemy, the department will be in a mix of despair and revolt. Bureaucracies cannot be reorganized or threatened into effectiveness. They must be led and inspired. People must know that loyalty goes both ways. They must believe that the ultimate goal is to strengthen, not undermine, the institution they have dedicated their lives to serve.

As of now, there is no reason for State Department employees to believe this. In Trump world, tearing down institutions is a mark of virtue. This type of radicalism was once familiar on the hard left ("burn, baby, burn"). It may be more effective in the hands of a bland capitalist.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

Worried for the United States

By GENE H. McINTYRE

Millions of American voters were willing to forgive Donald J. Trump for all they knew about him before he was a candidate, yet, they voted for him anyway. Hope can spring eternal but the evidence from the views of Trump and his advisors over his six month tenure leaves those trying to remain objective about him with dismay, as the Oval Office has become a "black hole" of credibility crises that worsens nearly every hour of every day.

Most recently, former Press Secretary Sean Spicer denied he was aware of the retracted Fox News story on slain Democratic National Committee staffer Seth Rich even though it was well known that he attended a meeting on the subject. President Trump's lawyer, Jay Sekulow, denied that the president was involved in the writing of Donald Trump Junior's statement on Russia (while we now know that the president dictated every word of it). President Trump claims that he received a call from the leader of the Boy Scouts praising his speech to the Boy Scouts at their jamboree—a matter even the White House soon refuted.

Since President Trump and his inner circle of advisors continue daily to mislead the American public about everything from crowd sizes to campaign meetings to what was said by the Boy Scout leadership, announce totally untrue and proven untrue claims like the one about "Obama wiretapped

my phones" and 3 million illegal immigrants voted for Hillary Clinton, and then blast reporters for so-called "fake news" explained by "alternative facts" then why should any American believe anything coming directly from the president or those he requires to carry his unfounded and mendacious messages to the public?

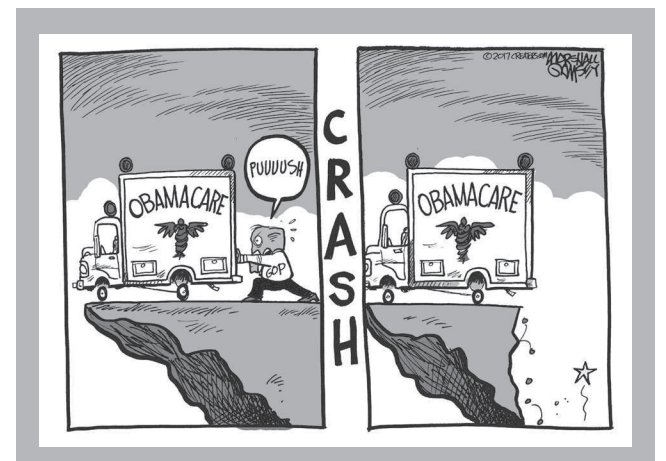
President Trump has accumulated a virtual mountain of pernicious comments he's delivered to Americans as well as other persons throughout the world. Hence, this writer is not confident in the state of Trump's mental health. It was hoped that once he assumed the responsibilities of president he would adopt the related responsibilities; unfortunately, a fully functioning, stable and steady-course mind continues to elude him.

What worries this writer is the fate of my nation with Trump holding its highest public office. At his job as president, Trump continuously lies by setting the most horrible of examples but also using his authority as president to require obe-

dience through pledges and acts of loyalty to him rather than the nation. Thereby, persons under him must suspend their beliefs and values while a sustained democracy with truth at its core and an informed citizenry becomes a national casualty.

The hitch is that what is now going on at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. is fundamentally unhealthy and increasingly contrary to a freedom-loving people who, by increasing numbers, don't trust government any more. Mendacity must be recognized as bad, evil and destructive to a nation's wherewithal and ability to survive intact with a viable future. What's going on is that Trump is not just lying to the press but lying through it, creating an authoritarian regime where the people are fed misinformation they know is not true as we move ever in the direction of those countries we held in contempt, laughing at its awful shenanigans and death throes.

(Gene McIntyre lives in Keizer.)



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