

## OPINION

## A Murderous Tyrant's Grim End

An ending that justified intervention

BY DONALD KAUL

Like any good liberal I thought that Muammar Gaddafi, after being captured by rebel forces, should have been read his Miranda rights and taken directly to jail to await trial by a jury of his peers. After being indicted, of course.

As a human being, however, I didn't recoil from the images of his terrible death. There's something deeply, and almost atavistically satisfying, in seeing a murderous tyrant meet the end he deserves.

I recall pictures of his fellow miscreants Saddam Hussein and Hosni Mubarak in court looking meek and frail. You almost felt sorry for them.

There was none of that with Gaddafi. In a scene almost too Hollywood to be true, he was dragged from his hiding



place in a sewer pipe, spread-eagled on the hood of a truck and pummeled by an angry mob of his victims while begging for mercy. As far as we know, he was then executed without ceremony.

But his final humiliation wasn't yet complete. His corpse was taken from place to place so that the people he'd oppressed for more than 42 years could see, at long last, that their nemesis was truly dead. There were stories of Libyans punching the body as they filed past, even bouncing his head up and down where he lay.

That is Shakespearean in its dramatic irony.

It reminded me of a picture I saw more than 65 years ago. The vividness I carry with me even today.

It was a grainy newspaper photo of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, along with his mistress and several henchmen, hanging upside down, their arms reaching toward the ground at a gas station near Milan. As Italy fell, they had been captured by partisans and thus dispatched. It was at once horrible and fascinating.

Although it goes against the grain of my enlightened liberalism, I can't rid myself of the notion that there are certain crimes — mainly war crimes — that are so heinous, so incomprehensibly cruel and irredeemably evil, that justice isn't enough. Vengeance is demanded.

I was a skeptic about our intervention in Libya at the beginning, simply on the basis of our sorry track record in the Middle East. Involvement in yet another endless war wasn't called for.

I changed my mind when it became apparent that we weren't putting troops at risk. I think this ending justifies President Barack Obama's decision.

Not everyone feels that way. Some Republicans (who wouldn't credit Obama if he single-handedly found a cure for cancer) still say that the war didn't involve our national interest, and we should have stayed out of it, and the humanitarian crisis be damned.

Gaddafi was a financier of terrorism throughout the world. He engineered the killing of U.S. citizens in the Lockerbie bombing as well as other terrorist at-

tacks. He offered handsome cash awards to the families of suicide bombers all over the world. Getting rid of him wasn't in our national interest? Gimme a break.

There's a legitimate question as to whether Gaddafi's death will lead to a more democratic Libya, one that is a force for peace in the region.

I tend to be of the persuasion that nothing that happens in the Middle East makes things better. But Gaddafi's death may be an exception.

Besides being a tyrant, Gaddafi was also a benevolent dictator, one who provided health care, education, and other benefits to his people. They are well placed to begin to govern themselves.

It's a shot. When you get a chance to have one less Gaddafi in the world, you should take it.

If I were President Obama, I'd have a picture of Qaddafi's last moments blown up to poster size and sent to Bashar al-Assad of Syria and Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen. As a friendly reminder.

*OtherWords columnist Donald Kaul lives in Ann Arbor, Mich.*

## A Big Debt of Gratitude to Our Troops

Ending the quagmire of war in Iraq

BY MARC H. MORIAL

Last month, President Obama announced that the remaining 39,000 U.S. service men and women in Iraq will be back on U.S. soil by the end of the year. This essentially brings to a close a nearly decade-long war that the President opposed from the start and vowed to end. This is welcome news for our troops and their families who have sacrificed so much in what has been increasingly viewed as an ill-advised and costly military mistake.

The nation owes a big debt of gratitude to the more than one million Americans who have been deployed to Iraq since the start of the war in March 2003. This includes more than 4,480 who died on the battlefield and more than 32,000 who were wounded. Now that the war is ending, we must do everything in our power to ensure that the support our returning vets need to



rebuild their lives, and the jobs they need to support their families, are waiting for them when they come home.

In addition to the human toll, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have also been a drain on the U.S. economy.

At a cost of more than \$800 billion, including billions lost, unaccounted for or stolen, the Iraq War has been a major contributor to the nation's ballooning debt and deficit. It has also diverted funding that could have been used to create jobs and repair America's crumbling infrastructure. As the President said, "Over the past decade, we spent a trillion dollars on war, borrowed heavily from overseas, and invested too little in the greatest source of our national strength -- our own people. Now, the nation we need to build is our own."

We could not agree more. In addition to withdrawing our troops, we should also accelerate Iraq's economic independence. Iraq is an oil-rich nation that has traditionally stifled the growth of small businesses and a vibrant middle class due to a culture of rampant corruption and bureaucratic red-tape. It is clear that if Iraq wants to move forward, it must change that

culture from within, and not on the backs of the American taxpayer.

The money we have wasted in the war and in rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure could be better spent here in America, rebuilding schools, roads, bridges, community centers, libraries and equipping our young people and returning veterans with the skills they need to enter the world of work.

It is unconscionable that any man or woman who goes abroad to fight our wars has to come home and fight for a job. But sadly that is the case. While overall unemployment remains unacceptably high at 9.1 percent, post-9/11 veterans suffer from a jobless rate of nearly 13 percent. That is why the President's American Jobs Act includes a \$5,600 tax credit for businesses that hire veterans who have been unemployed for six months or longer.

The President deserves our thanks for ensuring that our troops will be home for the holidays. Now it is up to Congress to honor their service and every American who wants to work by passing the American Jobs Act now.

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The Portland Observer Established 1970

USPS 959-680

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Portland, OR 97211

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER: Charles H. Washington

EDITOR: Michael Leighton

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER: Mark Washington

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Neufeldt

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