

The Sentinel

OPINION

LETTERS WELCOME

The Smoky Mountain Sentinel welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be typed or neatly handwritten and no longer than 400 to 500 words. Letters must be signed and must include a telephone number for verification. Letters that cannot be confirmed with the writer cannot be printed.

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Hammas in power: What it means

By John R. Cassady, LTC U.S. Army, Ret.

Imagine it's an October morning and you live in the Mid-East somewhere near Gaza. You've taken your child to the nearby school bus stop to meet the bus. When the bus arrives and the doors open, you watch your child scramble up the steps hurrying to find a seat near friends. As the doors close, you wave and glance at the military escort vehicle in front of the school bus.

The vehicles slowly pull away and continue their journey toward the Regional School.

The bus driver focuses his attention on the road and the leading escort vehicle ahead. In the background the sounds of happy children fill the school bus. In the distance the bus driver notices a passenger vehicle coming towards his bus in an opposite lane. His hands tighten on the steering wheel as the approaching passenger vehicle careens erratically towards the small convoy. The bus driver immediately slows down and swerves away from the oncoming explosive laden passenger vehicle. The last thing he remembers is a huge explosion when the military escort vehicle blocks the passenger vehicle from impacting head-on with the school bus. The military escort did their job well. They prevented the Hammas suicide bomber from colliding head-on with the school bus. One person in the jeep was killed and two were seriously injured. Six school children were moderately injured.

The event described happened on October 29, 1998. From 1994 to 2004 approximately sixty murderous incidents were perpetrated by Hammas operatives. The results of these incidents were 430 men, women and children murdered and over 2543 others injured. The terrorist organization known as Hammas was becoming more proficient at their policy of terror and mayhem. Today Hammas has replaced the corrupt Fatah party of the late Yassir Arafat in the Palestinian government. Some International Affairs scholars have described these events as a situation going from bad to worse.

Hammas is an acronym for Arabic words meaning the Islamic Resistance Movement. Their traditional position is against the Middle East Peace process. It's an organization devoted to the destruction of the "Zionist entity" (Israel) through Jihad (Holy War). Hammas considers the existence of the nation state of Israel an affront to Islam. They call for "an Islamic awakening" in their fight against Israel. As such, they fall into the framework of the many extremist Muslim terrorist groups with Imperialist ambitions and dreams of restoring the caliphate (religious and secular heads of Islam) in a world dominated by their rule. Also, like many other such organizations, they trace their roots to the modern fundamentalist movement of the Egyptian born Muslim Brotherhood.

The fact that Hammas recently won a "huge majority" in the Palestinian parliamentary elections is indicative of the corruption and distrust of the long time ruling Fatah Party and, to what one author calls, "the first people in history to embrace terror and genocide as a way of life ... the sickest culture on the face of the earth." Since 1989 Hammas terrorists were trained and welcomed in the Sudan. They've also maintained close relations and received considerable support from Syria. Currently, Damascus serves as the headquarters and planning center for Hammas. Orders to launch operations usually come from the Damascus headquarters. Like many other terrorist groups, Hammas doesn't exist in a vacuum. They've links with other Islamist terrorist organizations world-wide, including al Qaeda and Hizbullah. Indeed, Hammas and al Qaeda at

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times have combined financial networks. Hammas has benefited in financial and technical support filtered through Hizbullah and directly from Iran. Their American fund raising operations are intertwined with the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), a Saudi based charity operating world wide associated with al Qaeda. The Virginia based offices of the IIRO was used to funnel donations to Hammas. Links with the Basque Separatists (ETA) in Spain and the FARC in Columbia have also been reported. A Hammas operative in the U.S. helped provide the components for the bomb used in the first World Trade Center attack. Taking full advantage of American civil liberties, Hammas pioneered the formation of an infrastructure to support terror. Major organizations representing American Muslims, including the Muslim Arab Youth Association and the American Muslim Council, have held conferences where Hammas leaders were featured. These speakers called for the destruction of Israel and distributed anti-Semitic materials. The Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF) based in Richardson, Texas, with offices around the country, was also connected to supporting and fundraising for terrorist organizations. The American network extended North into Canada. The Canadians didn't consider Hammas a terrorist entity until November of 2002. Meanwhile, Hammas raised hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in Canada. Hammas has also been found to be one of several Islamist organizations developing an infrastructure for terror and criminal activities in the Tri-Border region of South America, where Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina geographically meet.

In a rally held in January 2003, Hammas announced their intentions to target the United States. They've attempted to improve the lethality of their attacks with chemical weapons. Their operatives have tried to design chemical warheads for the QAASAM rockets frequently fired into Israel. These area-type weapons are manufactured in their workshops and are similar to the Russian Katyushas rockets. They've discovered that by immersing bomb components, such as ball-bearing shrapnel, into rat poison they can maximize victim's bleeding. With these grim facts in mind, examine some comments attributed to the newly appointed Hammas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh at a recent Palestinian Legislative Council Meeting. According to transcripts provided by the Middle East Media Research Institute, PM Haniyeh said "Allah be praised ... The Koran is our constitution ... The Prophet Muhammad is our model ... Jihad is our path ..." and "Death for the sake of Allah is our most lofty aspiration ..." His comments were enthusiastically received and chanted back by the so-called Legislators. Can anyone mistake the aims of Hammas in power?

Middle-agers read this



Dwight Otwell

From the porch

Since I entered what is politely termed middle-age some time ago, I thought it appropriate that I share some of the things we should know by the time we reach that time of life that at one time was shrouded in mystery.

When I was 12-years-old, I thought middle age was when I was between five and eight years old. However, when I was in my teens, I thought of middle age as someone over 30 and old age as someone over 45. It's all a point of view.

These tidbits of wisdom were sent to me quite a few months ago. The timing is right to publish them before I enter that period of life known as old age. I bet I'll only go through that door if you pull my fingers from the door sill as I kick and scream. Anyway, here are some things you should know by the time you are middle-aged:

- If you're too open-minded, your brains will fall out.
- Age is a very high price to pay for maturity.
- Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity.

- If you must choose two evils, pick the one you've never tried before.
- The best way to do housework is to sweep the room with a glance.
- Not one shred of evidence supports the notion that life is serious.
- For every action, there is an equal and opposite government program.
- Bills travel through the mail at twice the speed of checks.
- A conscience is what hurts when all of your other parts feel good.
- A balanced diet is a cookie in each hand.
- Middle age is when broadness of the mind and narrowness of the waist change places.
- Opportunities always look bigger going away than coming toward you.
- Experience is a wonderful thing. It enables you to recognize a mistake.
- By the time you can make ends meet, they move the ends.
- Someone who thinks logically provides a nice contrast to the real world.

From Sourwood Cove

Bad boys smoking

It all started long ago and far away and I was there.

Boys, age 8 to 10, were anxious to be grown-up and one way to emulate real men was to smoke. Little was said about smoking being detrimental to one's health back then except an occasional humorous reference by some adults to cigarettes as coffin nails.

We would smoke just about anything, including pine straw, oak leaves, rabbit tobacco, corn silks and monkey cigars. All agreed that corn silk was the smoothest and best-tasting. Monkey cigars were pods (about the size and shape of large green bean) that grew on catalpa trees. When the pods had dried, the ends were cut off with our Barlow pocket knives. The inside material would burn like a cigar.

Cigarettes were usually rolled in torn-off pieces of brown paper bags. Pipe smoking, Huckleberry Finn style, was in pipes fashioned from red or white corn cobs. The stems were made from a section of reed and the preferred grafting tool was again the treasured and trusty Barlow.

The smokes were lit by strike-anywhere matches. A brisk strike on the pants would ignite them — not just anywhere — but by lifting a leg and pulling the match down the

thigh from butt to knee across the taut fabric. Overalls or dungarees worked best. That was a technique learned from the big boys, as were a lot of other things - good, bad, true and false.

Smoking for us was a social affair, involving two or more in that exciting and daunting adventure. Inhaling was purely accidental, always enhancing the fun when someone went into a temporary convulsion. At age 12 to 14 we graduated to real tobacco. It was still an occasional, sneaking event.

We didn't dare steal more than one cigarette at a time from an adult for fear that they would be missed from the pack. There were times when five-cent, or nickle bags of Bull Durham, roll-your-own tobacco, was smoked, but Bull Durham was not much different from the junk we had started on. It was dry and harsh and thought to be floor sweepings from the cigarette factories.

Eventually, we graduated to "tailor made" cigarettes that came 20 to a pack. Some of the brand names were Avalon, Raleigh, Chesterfield, Old Gold, Lucky Strike and Camel. Debate ranged far and wide among our smoking club as to the merit of different brands. I remember when one boy, whose parents kept him away

from us "bad boys", was discovered to be sneaking and smoking (solo) Camels. Since his father operated a country store, the kid could steal any brand he chose. That settled our debate once and for all! Camels had to be the superior smoke preferred by discriminating connoisseurs of fine tobaccos. And yes, we would "Walk a mile for a camel."

Most of the gang wound up in military service during World War II. Even "Lucky Strike Green" went to war — probably an advertising gimmick — along with all other brands.

Cigarettes were pushed by all tobacco companies and often provided free or at very low cost. At age 18 the boys were finally real men, that lit-up with fancy new Zippo lighters. Zippos would ignite and burn even in a fierce, howling wind storm.

You can see in old movie footage and photos just how many GI's smoked, that includes many surviving veterans. Drugs pushed by tobacco corporations worked very well on that "Greatest Generation", and no doubt eventually caused more deaths of servicemen than all the combat losses combined.

— Clarence Newton

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No amnesty for illegal aliens

Dear Editor:

In 1986, we granted amnesty to 2.7 million illegal aliens who were within our borders. This was supposed to solve our illegal immigration problem. Predictably, it only made the problem worse. Today, there are between 11 million and 20 million illegals in our country. And the number will continue to increase if we grant them amnesty.

The only solution is to demand that our federal government enforces our immigration laws. It certainly is not doing that today. We have troops all over the world protecting other nations. Let's bring some of them home and beef up security of our southern border.

Next we must enforce laws pertaining to

document fraud and the hiring of illegals. If we do so, many illegals will leave our country because no one will hire them. Also, we must cancel granting automatic citizenship to infants born to illegals, a violation of our 14th Amendment. We then should begin deporting the remaining illegals and encourage them to apply for legal entry and eventual citizenship.

What we must not do is to reward illegals with amnesty for breaking our laws and compromising our security and sovereignty.

Sincerely,
Eugene E. King
Thousand Oaks, CA

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