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VIEWPOINTS

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Jason Snyder, Media Relations

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TAKE OUR WORD

Strikes against terrorism shows guts

TOPIC

Our Military retaliates against terrorist attacks on U.S. Embassies.

OUR OPINION

Despite doubts, U.S. citizens and interests need to be protected.

Almost immediately after our military's recent missile attacks in Sudan and Afghanistan, the media and the public have accused the President of ordering these attacks to distract us from his current domestic problems.

But these same critics might try to remember that these were in retaliation for terrorist attacks that were specifically focused on the U.S. Government. American citizens were killed and American property was destroyed.

Many find it hard to believe, but there are individuals and groups all over the world who don't like us very much. In some of these people, that dislike has grown into outright hatred. Then there are men like Osama bin Laden, who is using his personal fortune to declare war on our country.

In this post-Cold War society, threats to national security are not as clear cut as they were before. The president used to have a hot line to Moscow, so problems could be discussed before there was an international incident. But with groups such as bin Laden's, there is no line of communication, no established diplomatic policy.

To help combat a threat of this nature, normal diplomatic means can't be used. Retaliation should be as swift and as decisive as possible. The point of these attacks in Afghanistan and Sudan was not simply the flexing of our military muscle, but a psychological threat to those who would infringe on the personal safety of our citizens.

According to the State Department, there are more than 3 million U.S. citizens who reside abroad. This does not include government and military personnel and only counts people in major metropolitan areas.

Counting these people, that number creeps over four million. This is a significant number of peo-

ple, who, although they do not reside within our borders, still deserve our protection, especially from radical terrorist organizations.

Unlike most of the world, terrorism is not a threat we live with every day. Violence for religious or political beliefs is relatively rare in our country. But there are millions in other places that live in fear of random violence because of their religion or political views.

Democrats and Republicans criticize each other constantly, but they don't fire bombs at each other's houses.

As Southerners and Americans, we tend to live a somewhat sheltered existence. There isn't an absence of trash cans on the Horsehoe for fear of bombs being put in them, and officers with sub-machine guns don't patrol Five Points. In many places, these are constant reminders to what has happened and what could happen.

But as the most prosperous and powerful country in the world, we have to accept the fact that our country and its citizens are a target for many different groups. America represents arrogance, ignorance and the horrors of capitalism to millions worldwide.

Ronald Reagan called the Soviet Union the "Evil Empire," but to many, we are that empire.

This is especially true in developing countries where American money is helping to boost the economy, but American values are seen as corrupting the local culture.

But no matter our stature on the world stage, American interests, and especially American citizens, must be protected. In many ways, terrorists are just like the playground bully. If you stand up to them, they think twice about picking on you again. But acquiesce, and they will attack you again and again.



college press EXCHANGE

Mormons take fun out of polygamy

In a time when the president is getting more action than Ron Jeremy, U.S. Embassies are being blown up more than the President, the year 2000 bug could send the world into another Stone Age (or early Bronze Age), some of us are struggling on other, more "multiple" issues.



KURT JOHNSON columnist

Well, it recessed for a while when people forgot there was a state called Utah. Everybody thought there was just a Great Salt Lake in its place. But then, all of a sudden the Utah Jazz were playing the Bulls in the NBA Championship Finals, and we realized that, "hey, there's a place called Utah!" That's when this problem of polygamy was revived. The problem can be traced back some hundred years ago, when a guy named Joseph Smith decided he wanted to start a new religion that involved chickens and ear wax.

However, this was not considered "kosher" in the organized states at the time, so he traveled west and founded Utah and the Mormon religion. Here's an interesting tidbit: there were no cars at the time, so he rode a bicycle out to this new land. That's why some Mormons today ride bikes now instead of drive cars—they are paying homage to that long, dirty bike ride to the "promise land."

Anyway, he found out there were no chickens in this new land and he didn't have enough ear wax to fulfill his master plan, so for whatever reason, he concocted the idea of polygamy. I mean, really, why on Earth would you want more than one spouse? Yes, I can see the whole male "ménage-a-trois" fantasies come into focus, but after the amazing sexual things you could do to each other, some which you thought to be mere theory, what's the use? After that, it's no fun.

The reason newly-recognized Utah has had a resurgence in this problem is they have made a few laws saying you can't have more than one spouse, you can't involve family members in the concept of incest, and you can't use chickens in ear wax rituals. So one might think this would kill the whole Mormon religion, but a few feisty Mormons said, "Hell no!" They were going to be rebels and have 15 wives and make their 15-year-old daughter marry her uncle.

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But you know, I think the state was doing these guys a favor. I mean, I've heard people complain and complain about having one spouse. But having two?
Husband: "Honey, I'm home!"
Wife 1: "Darling, my bike broke down today, and I'm pregnant with our seventh child."
Wife 2: "Darling, I accidentally-on-purpose spent \$750 on shoes today, oh, and I'm pregnant with our fifth child."

Wife 3: "Darling, I got fired from my job, caught the bathroom on fire, accidentally threw your golf clubs in the trash can, drank the rest of your beer, and got pregnant by your boss, which will be our third kid."
Husband (crumbles to the floor and starts helligiously crying): "Calgone, take me away!"
See, the real problem with polygamy is that those who involve themselves in it, will go insane. Also, they take up available women that other single, non-polygamical guys might have a shot at.
I don't want some guy having 20 wives when I'm struggling just to get one. Yo, I'm into religious freedom and all that jazz, but when it interferes with my love life, then something has got to be done. I mean, come on man, everybody's got to have a fair chance. I'm really a nice guy, really.

Today's media losing sight of original ideals

WILLIAM FOLKS columnist

When the Bill of Rights was enacted in 1791, the framers of our Constitution probably thought they'd succeeded in establishing a viable counterbalance to the flaws of the government. The free press was to be a living, vigilant mechanism for our society's defense and self-correction, and was wisely guaranteed as such in the First Amendment. It was to be our instrument. "The press was to serve the governed, not the governors," wrote Supreme Court Justice Black in 1971. "The government's power to censor the press was abolished so that the press would remain forever free to censor the government." Today, members of the mass media still bear this objective responsibility; not to the president, or to the members of Congress, but to you and I, and to all Americans. Yet, never before in the 222-year history of this nation has the Fourth Estate, composed of all journalists, strayed so far from this ideal. Never before have the self-serving agendas of Presidents, politicians, lawyers and big businessmen so recklessly interfered with the functioning of a fair and free press.

The American mind, once genuinely respected and honestly approached, is now utterly and irreverently dismissed as being incompetent. From trustworthy, well-informed citizens, we have swiftly and shamefully been reduced to hapless targets, voluntary victims of fraudulent claims and blatant misrepresentations perpetrated by our "media culture." Far from serving its Constitutional duty as our watchdog, the mass media of today seems more focused on fighting for the intruders table scraps. Sound fatalistic? Consider the following excerpt from John F. Kennedy Jr.'s May 1998 George editorial: "The proliferation of media means that power has shifted away from elected representatives to unelected commentators," Kennedy writes, "yet regular folks have no option to address that change other than just tuning out." Tuning out? The "unelected commentators" would never allow for that sort of individualistic defiance. Alternatively, they offer "Poggate 1998," a made-for-television sex scandal starring our President, Bill Clinton, and a 21-year-old White House intern named Monica Lewinsky. For almost eight months now, the Tim Russert's, Eleanor Clift's, John McLaughlin's, and Pat Buchanan's of the world have hijacked our airwaves with some of the shoddiest, most pre-

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renhensibly self-indulgent "reporting" the world has ever seen. With each of the four major networks supporting their exploits, these "journalists" have wielded absolute omniscience over a situation they know nothing about. They have turned what was essentially a legitimate investigation into a failed Arkansas land deal into the biggest, most disgusting spectacle of the decade. Insight has been replaced by speculation and we have breathed in every second of the debauchery. The Fourth Estate is our only remaining agent to combat government infidelity, and we as citizens must take real responsibility for it's failings and real action to bring it back into line. The one freedom the press is not guaranteed by the First Amendment is the freedom to forsake the public it serves, that is, if we allow it to do so. President Clinton, if he indeed broke the law, should be impeached. Logically, it's quite simple. He lied and should be punished, and it shouldn't make one iota of difference whether 70 or even 100 percent of us think he's "doing a good job". The sins of President Clinton are merely a media playground, and the more sinister and substantial evils lie in how we have followed the whole process, or, rather, how we have been led. Maybe one day in our near future a new press corps will emerge, one comprised of ethical, moral, and responsible journalists who will reclaim the profession's lost respectability. Maybe then the American people can reinvest their trust in the Fourth Estate as a respectable profession, not as the bitterly vindictive industry it has become. Until that day, the concept of an accountable mass media serving the American citizenry with fairness and integrity is dead. It is up to each of us to revive it.

The Gamecock

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The Gamecock is the student newspaper of The University of South Carolina and is published Monday, Wednesday and Friday during the fall and spring semesters and five times during the summer with the exception of university holidays and exam periods. Opinions expressed in The Gamecock are those of the editors or author and not those of The University of South Carolina. The Board of Student Publications and Communications is the publisher of The Gamecock. The Department of Student Media is the newspaper's parent organization.

Table with columns: WHO WE ARE (Editor in Chief, Managing Editor, Viewpoints Editor, News Editors, Features Editor, Editorial Assistant, Sports Editors, Photo Editors, Online Editor, Student Media, Director of Student Media, Advertising Manager, Classified Ad Manager, Business Manager, Creative Director) and HOW TO REACH US (All area codes are 803, Editor, Viewpoints, News, Etc., Sports, Online, Student Media, Advertising, Classified, Fax, Office)

Got something to say? Are you just full of insightful and interesting opinions, but with no outlet in which to let them be known? Well, fret no more! Write columns for The Gamecock. New writers meeting at 7 p.m. TONIGHT in the Russell House, room 203.

The Gamecock Take our word.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Gamecock will try to print all letters received; letters should be 250-500 words and must include full name, professional title or year and major if a student. (Hard copy letters must be personally delivered by the author to The Gamecock's room in Russell House room 333. Good letters must include the author's phone number. The Gamecock reserves the right to edit all letters for style, possible libel or space limitations. Names will not be withheld for any circumstance.)