

MARGULIES
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Bush: leave Noriega alone

George Bush has worked himself into the same hole that has already buried a couple of recent presidents. It's the situation Americans hate most - when we go interfere in some other country's business, but we don't interfere enough to win, which is the worst of both worlds. It happened with Lyndon Johnson (Vietnam) and Jimmy Carter (Iran) both. Give Ronald Reagan credit, at least he was smart enough to pick on a country we could handle - Grenada (pop. 86,000, smaller than Cleveland); We sent in 7,000 soldiers backed by ships, planes, tanks and missiles and finally beat somebody in a fair fight.

So now Bush is getting grief from all the mad-dog right-wingers who think we should have unleashed Chiang Kai-shek and Ollie North both against Gen. Noriega, which is what you would expect from the likes of Jesse Helms. And a few opportunist Democrats have joined the chorus, looking like the hypocrites they are, but at least most have the grace to either stay silent or to criticize Bush from an isolationist point of view.

Let me take a bold moral stance here and come right out against the assassination of foreign leaders. I know, I know, it takes monumental courage to go against conventional wisdom in this alarming fashion, but let me make my case.

Reason Numero Uno not to assassinate your foreign leader, no matter how repellent he or she may be: IT'S WRONG. Call me quaint, call me old-fashioned, but folks, it is wrong. The United States of America has no God-given right to run around offing the leaders of other countries: Our government is in the hands of people who can't run HUD and the Pentagon honestly. What right do they have to decide whether some fellow in another country lives or dies? None.

I don't pay taxes so some collection of self-deluding fanatics at the CIA or the NSA, who don't have to answer to the people who are paying their salaries, can get together and decide if some guy in another country should die. I've read the Constitution. Right there in the preamble it states the purposes for which the United States of America is ordained and established: to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, ensure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity. It nowhere adds "and to kill any foreign leaders we don't like."

People always make such dumb arguments about this, like, "What about Hitler? Think how much better off the world would have been if somebody had assassinated Hitler?" You don't know that: No one does. That's the



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trouble with trying to play God when you're not in charge of the script. Hitler believed in astrology and made a lot of stupid decisions, frequently ignored the advice of his general staff, got himself into a two-front war and generally was a substantial help in doing in the Third Reich. Suppose Hitler had been assassinated and some perfectly rational organizational genius, say Albert Speer, had taken over in Hitler's stead and had run the whole operation in a saner, more effective way? No one can guarantee that wouldn't have been the result. One of the great rules of history is: things can always get worse.

The Soviet Union has just endorsed a plan to give the World Court a stronger role in the arbitration of long-standing international disputes. That's the right direction, that's the sane direction, that's the way to build a system of security based on political and legal guarantees that will actually work in the world. I don't know how you feel about losing moral leadership to the Soviet Union - they take the high road, we take the low road - but I think it's like lemon in the eye and none of us ever voted for anyone who said he was going to do that.

Our track record in this area strongly suggests rule Numero Two for not assassinating your foreign leader: IT'S DUMB. Recall the cheery occasion on which we cooperated in the assassination of Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam, a thoroughly corrupt and despicable little ally of ours, on the theory that whoever replaced him was bound to be better. He had several replacements in the ensuing years, none of them better. Pinochet was not an improvement on Allende, the military junta was not an improvement on Jobo Arbenz, etc., etc., etc. Supporting Pol Pot of Cambodia is not going to turn out to be a great idea either, is it?

A further wrinkle in the IT'S DUMB rule is that those who assassinate others are apt to be assassinated themselves: Perhaps it will never be known for certain who killed John F. Kennedy and why, but of the many scenarios advanced for that assassination, the one that claims Castro had it done in retaliation for all the times Kennedy tried to have Castro assassinated makes as much sense as any other. (I still lean toward the pedestrian premise that Lee Harvey Oswald killed Kennedy to get

attention.)

One might, if one were of an optimistic disposition, think the Bush Administration and the CIA would be especially wary about getting involved in the offing of Gen. Noriega - he was for many years the CIA's man; in fact, Noriega was on Bush's payroll when Bush headed the CIA. Don't you think we should have some sense of shame about our own role in having helped foist this nasty piece of work on the people of Panama? Haven't we done enough harm to this tiny country already by putting our big feet in where no one asked?

What reason do we have to assume that the folks behind the latest coup would have been better than Noriega? What were they? Ambitious military officers who thought they weren't getting a large enough cut of the drug money?

And the final part of the IT'S DUMB reason not to kill Noriega is that, in case you haven't noticed, we have a truly humongous image problem with our neighbors to the South: For some reason (the historical record comes to mind) they think we interfere in their business all the time and they resent the hell out of it. They like having us step in just about as much as we would appreciate having Roberto D'Aubuisson come tell us who to vote for here. And every time we do it, we increase that resentment and create opportunities there for our enemies.

And, amazing to report, our neighbors to the South actually do quite well without our interference: Remember the peace conference of the five Central American presidents in Honduras last summer that decided to disband the contras, the American-made army of mercenary "freedom fighters" Oliver North doted on? They got secure borders and free elections in Nicaragua quite nicely on their own, didn't they? When the Panamanians get good and sick of the nasty little dictator we have helped foist on them, they'll get rid of him on their own, thanks. And if they ask us for help, we should probably help. But it's not our place to lurk about helping to plot coups and assassinations.

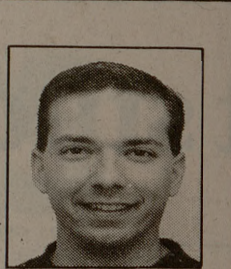
'Twas two months before Christmas

"It's beginning to look a lot like..."

NOOOOO! 'Tis not the season to be jolly - at least not yet. But don't try to tell all the major marketers this, because they think Christmas starts in August. It all started right about the time



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Juliette bought a new bikini at the "end of summer sale of the century." The bikinis are on the aisle right next to the inflatable reindeers and fire-resistant Christmas trees. Why has Christmas become so commercialized?

It's all Santa's fault. You know him - the fat jolly guy with the belly and the beard? He got all those little kiddies excited about presents, and the idea just took off. So here we are sweating bullets (literally - it's October) about buying presents for everyone, charging to the limit, and ending up feeling depressed before Christmas even starts!

Take a trip to the nearest shopping mall, and see for yourself. All that's missing is Santa and his eight tiny reindeer. Excuse us, aren't there still 67 shopping days left until dad and grandma ferociously rip the ornate wrapping off of their presents that they will return anyway? By the way, save your receipts.

Sixty-seven days seems like a lifetime to us. But then again, if you calculate all of the time it takes to roast chestnuts, buy wrapping paper and ribbons, send Christmas cards, put lights on the outside of the house, decorate the dorm room, take down the decorations in the dorm room, pick up the McDonaldland gift certificates for the mailman, chop down the Christmas tree, take last year's Christmas tree to the dumpster, schedule time around school to watch the Grinch, Rudolph, Frosty, Charlie Brown and, our personal favorite, Scrooge - it may take 67 days.

And what about the holiday grub? It isn't even close to Thanksgiving yet, and there are turkeys EVERYWHERE. The supermarket looks like a turkey farm. So the next time you take a trip to the store, grab some cranberries

and some Stove-top before supplies run out. And for those of you who haven't forgotten Halloween, don't forget candy for the trick-or-treaters.

Even music has found its place in all this pre-Christmas hype. Saunter into the nearest record

store and you will find the latest holiday tunes by no other than New Kids on the Block and even Perry Como. Be the first on your block or in your dorm to own one of these priceless goodies. They make nice stocking stuffers too!

And it won't be too long before all of the beautiful scotch pines arrive. Endless forests of trees will be at your fingertips. Tall ones, short ones, fat ones, skinny ones - all bound for your nearest Christmas tree dealer. And they always arrive AT LEAST one month early, so by the time Christmas comes, your tree ends up looking like Charlie Brown's, with the tip dragging on the floor and pine needles all over the carpet and the cat.

After serious thought (and bargain shopping) we've come to the stunning realization that Christmas is being EXPLOITED. All of the materialistic Scrooges out there are taking away from the true spirit of the holiday. How appropriate the colors are - red for love, green for money. We need the abominable snowman to come eat all of those materialistic marketers. Where's Rudolph when you need him?

Christmas is a special holiday worth waiting for. So lets put all of the trees and ornaments and Santas and reindeer and whining children out of our minds for now. Their time will come. Let's get through Halloween first.

Halloween? Do they sell Scrooge or Santa suits?

Juliette Rizzo and Damon Arhos are senior journalism majors and columnists for The Battalion

Mail Call

Puerto Ricans say thanks

EDITOR:

The Puerto Rican Student Association would like to thank Texas A&M students, faculty and staff for their cooperation and support with the Hurricane Hugo Relief Fund in September. We greatly appreciate their attention to such an important event.

Because of their efforts and donations, the Puerto Rican Student Association was able to raise \$2,500 for the people of Puerto Rico. Please accept our sincerest gratitude and thanks.

Lisa Perez
President, PRSA

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.



MARGULIES
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"Hey, what would OKTOBERFEST be without the traditional oompah band?..."

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