

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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PEGE DESIGN • LINDSYE FORSON

Not to be taken literally Kerry took the president's words out of context



ADAM
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In an interview that aired Aug. 30, President Bush told Matt Lauer, "I don't think you can win (the war on terrorism). But you can create conditions so that those who use terror are less acceptable in parts of the world."

Heavy coverage of the statement for the rest of the week brought proof of a liberal bias in some parts of the media, while unmasking the true ignorance of Sen. John Kerry's presidential campaign. Perhaps if anyone had analyzed Bush's comments more than momentarily, they would have understood what he truly means: his is a different kind of war. It is a war to preserve the good of humanity, fought against an unknown enemy. Unfortunately, bad news is good news for the elite media and the president "admitting the failure" of his strongest campaign issue seemed too good to pass up.

The Charlotte Observer ran a story covering Bush's remark, under the headline "Bush: War not Winnable." The article explains that, "Taken at their face value, Bush's words would put him closer to the positions of the European allies, who do not consider the war winnable." The Observer's biggest mistake was taking the president's words at face value. In keeping with a tradition starting with Socrates, people have learned to think on a much deeper level, to question the true meaning of words.

Bush's stance has by no means moved closer to those of his European counterparts, who have often called his method of fighting this war barbaric and arrogant. Bush still believes democracy will prevail

over terrorism and totalitarianism, and assures the American people that "we are winning and we will win," as he stated on the record repeatedly Aug. 31.

Secondly, it doesn't take much thought to understand that the president was not losing hope or admitting defeat, but rather explaining the different type of ending this war will have. As John McCain said, "What he meant was, we're never going to have a peace signing on the Missouri," in reference to how World War II ended in the Pacific. Sen. McCain, like others, is making the point that a dramatic, victorious ending to the War on Terror may be absent from the history books, but that is not say there will be no victory.

Kerry heard the same thing the media reported about Bush's statement and saw a chance to exploit the president's supposed lack of confidence in a most ignorant fashion. Phil Singer, a spokesman for Kerry, inferred that, "The president has gone from mission accomplished to mission miscalculated to mission impossible on the war on terror." Once again, the president's words have been taken out of context by his opponents in an attempt to weaken his stance on the war.

Kerry's running mate, Sen. John Edwards took the ignorance to even greater heights, saying, "The war on terrorism is absolutely winnable," on ABC's Nightline. For Kerry and Edwards to run on that platform is absurd. It would be like a district attorney candidate saying, "I will win the war on crime," in a campaign speech. One cannot absolutely and forever win such wars because they are not actually wars with definitive beginnings and ends.

Like the war on crime and the war on poverty, the war on terror is being fought against an unknown enemy. There will be no actual battle grounds with two armies

trying to take control of a certain area. It is not a conventional hot war between two powerful countries. It is not a cold war, like with the former U.S.S.R., where no actual fighting occurs.

This is a different kind of war, the outcome of which will determine the fate of the civilized world. The enemy is not one country, but rather people in countries all over the world. There will be no day where the war on terrorism comes to a close forever. All Bush did in his interview with Lauer was to openly state this fact.

His remark did not deserve the media attention it received because it was not late-breaking news. The president did not admit failure or defeat, and has foreseen neither throughout his entire presidency thus far. The war can be won, just not on the level that so many expect. Americans should not lose faith in their leader and his will to protect them now because of such an unimportant remark being blown way out of proportion.

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BRANDI DUNN • THE BATTALION

Privatizing social security only correct course of action



MIKE
WALTERS

Aristotle once remarked, "The ideal situation is that all families should own property." While this seems to be agreeable to most Americans, the idea is fundamentally different from a dictatorship where one's land, possessions and life are owned by a leader or, in

the case of communism, the state. Aristotle's notion is a necessity for a free country.

The Social Security program tries to play it both ways. By taking money from each paycheck, the government says that this is your money, only you'll get it back later, at a time of their choosing. By seizing your money in any arbitrary manner, the government fails to live up to the promise of a system based on reason and freedom.

Recently, President Bush has been talking about privatizing Social Security. This is the only

right thing to do with a system that is wrong in principle and failing in practice. "Ownership brings security and dignity and independence," Bush told GOP convention-goers in New York. "In all these proposals, we seek to provide not just a government program, but a path to greater opportunity, more freedom and more control over your own life."

Bush's plan would allow workers to keep a portion of their Social Security taxes and place it into private accounts containing stocks, bonds or other securities. Current retirees and those nearing retirement would not lose any benefits. In addition, Lifetime Savings Accounts would be created to allow Americans to collect funds tax-free.

Naturally, such a bold plan has its critics. "It's a Trojan horse," Gene Sperling, head of former President Clinton's National Economic Council and adviser to Democratic nominee John Kerry, told The LA Times. "They're trying to get through the gate with rhetoric that implies this would help the middle class save more. But that promise is hollow and the only thing inside is yet another opportunity for those who already have wealth to see their wealth compound tax-free, and shift more of our tax burden to the work of the middle class."

As college students, most non-economics majors are hard-pressed to decide whether this plan will succeed, since the details are based on assumptions and projections that may not pan out. However, the question all Aggies should be able to answer is, "Which presents the moral choice?" It's been said that man is the "rational animal," and since man does not possess claws or instinct to scratch his livelihood from nature, he must use his mind to create tools and jobs to thrive. In short, a man's mind is his tool and key to survival.

Money, which is a tool used to represent the effort of man's mind that enables him to work, stands at the end of a line tied to man's survival. It is for this reason that theft is such a crime — it attempts to rob man of his ability to live, which is why it's almost as serious as murder. Given this, it should be clear that the only moral choice is to let the person who earns the money keep the money.

Most people are probably capable of saving their money for retirement in a responsible manner. They can invest

in certain funds or stocks, which have the potential for both gain and loss. Education is an even better alternative, as it's much more guaranteed to enrich knowledge and future bank accounts.

Americans must recognize that the government isn't responsible for solving all of their problems. As adults, we should be capable of taking care of ourselves. For those who don't wish to accept that responsibility, they alone must bear the consequences of their poor choices.

That doesn't mean there won't be people who want to help those who have made poor choices or are the victims of unlucky circumstances. This is the reason for charities, which allow individuals to donate or personally volunteer. To believe that man must be forced to be charitable through taxation is to possess a low esteem of human generosity, and a twisted sense of righteousness to believe that people must be forced to help others at the point of a gun and a paycheck seizure.

Preserving the freedom of choice is the only moral action here, and Bush's plan seems to be a step in the right direction.

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Putin must reform approach in order to curb terrorism



JONATHAN
SMITH

On Sept. 1, a group of Chechen rebels took an entire school in Beslan, Russia hostage. More than 1,000 Russian children and adults were held until Sept. 3, when the school was taken back after a long struggle. The high casualty rate that resulted showed

the world that Russia is not prepared to deal with terrorist threats in the beginning of the 21st century.

During those defining moments, the Russian government's poor decisions quickly turned the crisis into its worst-case scenario. The Russian Spetsnaz, or elite forces, failed to prepare a plan to storm the school and were taken by surprise when a bomb went off in the school and ended the standoff. The result of this poor procedure was 10 hours of violent struggle that ended with the death of 40 percent of the hostages and the injury of another 40 percent.

Chester Dunning, a history professor at Texas A&M, criticized the Spetsnaz "for slow, stupid, poor tactics, low measures of safety and indifference to loss of innocent life."

In fact, two of the elite squads, the Alfa and the Vypfel, did not even fare well in the combat, which pitted the traditional expertise of the Spetsnaz against the hostage-takers, as both groups suffered unprecedented casualties.

The Chechens were so well trained that the Kremlin and Putin are reexamining possible connections to Muslim extremist groups such as al-Qaida.

Dunning said he sees other clues indicating ties to al-Qaida. When al-Qaida is involved he added the "United States feels uncomfortable criticizing Russia's heavy hand in the Caucasus." He also said the connections help the Kremlin by making "requests for more money seem defensible...even prudent."

To many, the Beslan crisis shows that Russia has many expensive changes to make if it wishes to better defend its citizens from terror. The poor coordination, planning and training of the Russian special forces must be dealt with. "The Russian officer class still belongs to the generation educated in waging total war on the plains of Europe, rather than the carefully calibrated art of a small amount of firepower," according to the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Russia should work to emulate the transformation that the U.S. military has gone through since the Cold War; a transformation that al-

lowed America to wage successful campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Russia might also have to change its policies regarding Chechnya, even though the last 10 years of despicable acts on both sides (such as the killing of children by Chechen's or the carpet bombing of cities by the Russians) have made peace an increasingly hard goal to achieve.

How has Putin dealt with the exploding terrorist problem in his country since the hostage crisis? Primarily, he offered \$10 million for information about Chechen rebel leaders Shamil Basayev and Aslan Maskhadov. Maskhadov was elected president of Chechnya in 1997 and Basayev is a Chechen field commander. The capture of both men might make Russia safer, but more must be done to reform Russia's way of dealing with terrorism.

In this quest for a new method, Putin followed President Bush's lead and revealed a doctrine stating that Moscow planned to launch preemptive strikes on terrorist bases "in any region of the world," according to the British Broadcasting Company. Dunning said this statement is probably a bluff because "in truth, the Russians would have great difficulty projecting power far beyond their borders."

Putin went one step further than Bush when he made a power grab and introduced new measures this week that would end direct election of governors in Russia's 89 regions. Putin apparently believes this will make Russia stronger, but this tactic does not seem to be as much about terrorism, as it is about solidifying the state's power in a moment of crisis. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell directly criticized these moves, telling the BBC, "I hope... that the government of the Russian Federation will not conclude that the only answer to terrorism is to increase the power of the Kremlin."

The problem within Russia is much deeper than Putin admits. His recent power grab shows his priorities aren't what they need to be. In the words of Dunning, "all in all, the forces of defense and repression have suffered serious budget problems and serious personnel problems." Until Putin reforms his tools of fighting terrorism, Russian citizens will be in constant danger of terrorist attacks.

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