



- A publication of Mennonite Central Committee
- March–April 2004
- Volume XXXVI
- No. 2

FEAR OF VULNERABILITY

Naming the Fears Behind U.S. Security Policies

A Viable Security Strategy?

BY J. DARYL BYLER

Is shifting our sense of vulnerability to others a viable security strategy?

In his State of the Union address in late January, President Bush seemed to dance between kindling and calming the fears of many U.S. Americans.

“Twenty-eight months have passed since September the 11th, 2001—over two years without an attack on American soil,” the president reported. “It is tempting to believe that the danger is behind us. That hope is understandable, comforting—and false,” he warned.

But the president also assured his listeners: “By our will and courage, this danger will be defeated.”

By reminding the American people that there is much to fear, but that our fears can be overcome through strength, the president seemed to be building his case for further increases in military and homeland security spending.

In this issue of the *Washington Memo*, we acknowledge that most of us feel more vulnerable since Sept. 11. But we also ask whether heavy-handed U.S. responses can possibly improve global security. In many cases, they only seem to increase the hardship for those in the United States and abroad who are already the most vulnerable.

Is shifting our sense of vulnerability to others a viable security strategy?

In this issue, Lora Steiner notes that U.S. military aid to Colombia has failed to fix the U.S. drug problem. Rather it has intensified hardships for many Colombians (pg. 3). David Whettstone writes about new immigration practices that target certain people groups (pg. 4). Bethany Spicher examines how burgeoning U.S. military spending places life-giving domestic programs at risk (pg. 5). Martin Shupack analyzes two generally positive U.S. responses—a greater commitment to HIV/AIDS and foreign development assistance (pg. 6). And Father Yousif Thomas Mirkis, a Catholic priest in Baghdad, writes about how the U.S. occupation of his country has increased the sense of insecurity for Iraqis (pg. 7).

A viable security strategy must make *all* people—not only the most powerful and privileged—feel safer. A viable strategy dare not neglect “the least of these” (Matthew 25:40,45). It will require respect for all human life—for all are created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26). Finally, it will point all people to God in whom our ultimate security rests (Psalm 112:7). ■

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BY J. DARYL BYLER

The national sense of vulnerability has sparked security spending unparalleled since World War II.

Fault Line: What Do We Do With Jesus?

Across the street from the MCC Washington Office, construction workers labor 24/7 to enhance security at the U.S. Supreme Court and Capitol. For many, the prospect of additional Sept. 11-like attacks is not a question of “if” but “when.”

The national sense of vulnerability has sparked security spending unparalleled since World War II. The annual military budget has shot up more than \$150 billion since Sept. 11. The president’s 2005 budget calls for another hefty increase.

Amidst this climate of fear and aggressive U.S. response, a simple question divides the church: “What do we do with Jesus?” What do we do with the things he taught? With the way he responded to violence?

How can such a simple question divide the church? Perhaps it should not surprise us. Jesus himself said that he would create fault lines in the family (Matthew 10:34–39).

Most Anabaptists would agree that Jesus is the standard for the church’s life and teaching. We are to love and feed our enemies. We overcome evil with good. We do not go to war.

But the issue that divides our congregations is whether God also intends for Jesus to be the standard toward which the nations are called. Is the way of Jesus only for the church? Or is Jesus also for the nations?

Some would say that, of course, the church is the primary bearer of the standard of Jesus. But God also expects institutions,

corporations and governments to increasingly move toward policies and practices that reflect compassion, mutuality, nonviolence and justice.

Others would say that it is pointless for the church to waste energy witnessing to governments about nonviolence because God has given governments a different code of conduct—based on something other than the life and teachings of Jesus. Indeed, the church has plenty enough work simply getting its own act together without telling governments what to do!

So why not just focus on the part of the equation on which we agree—that Jesus is the standard for the church? Why worry about witnessing to government?

We do so, in part, because our sisters and brothers around the globe regularly call on U.S. Christians to speak to the U.S. government about how its policies and practices have life and death results in their countries.

Witnessing to government has also been our theological trajectory as an Anabaptist community during the past 50 years. This view is rooted in fresh biblical understandings about the implications of Jesus being both “head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18) and “head of every ruler and authority” (Colossians 2:10).

Indeed, the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (1995) leans in this direction. Article 23 of the Confession begins with a focus on the church’s life and practice: “We witness to the nations by being that ‘city on a hill’ which demonstrates the way of Christ.” But it continues: “We also witness by being ambassadors for Christ, calling the nations . . . to move toward justice, peace, and compassion for all people.”

So let us give our primary attention to being a faithful church—living like Jesus. But let us also remember that Jesus was critical of the misuse of government power (Mark 10:42) and engaged the rulers of his day (John 19:10–11).

Especially in a time when our nation feels vulnerable and is tempted to respond violently, the church will do well to point our governing authorities in a better direction. ■

WASHINGTON MEMO is written by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office staff. It interprets national legislation and policy, seeking to reflect biblical concerns for justice and peace as represented in the work and statements of MCC U.S. and Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

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Washington Memo (USPS 130-310) is published bi-monthly by Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, PA. Periodical postage paid at Akron, PA. This issue went to press February 13, 2004.

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE: Washington Memo subscription rates are \$10 for one year; \$18 for two years. Send request and check to MCC, PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500. For address changes, send your old address with your new address to MCC. Allow 2–4 weeks for address change. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MCC, PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501.

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Just Say Know

In the 1970s, when President Nixon called for a “War on Drugs,” he was concerned about increased tolerance of drug use. He strengthened laws, set up the Drug Enforcement Agency, and allocated funds for drug education and treatment.

These days, the government’s efforts to curb illegal drug use include everything from television programming to foreign policy. In 2003, the United States government spent nearly \$20 billion on the War on Drugs, or about \$600 per second. State governments are estimated to have spent at least that much. In an attempt to “get tough on crime,” many states have instituted mandatory minimum sentences for first-time offenders, causing prisons to overflow while funding for treatment programs lags.

In 2000, when the government began Plan Colombia, one of the goals of the program was to eradicate the drug industry in Latin America by fumigating and destroying coca crops. But despite more spending and tougher laws, drug use in the United States has remained stable over the past decade. The quantity and quality of cocaine has remained unchanged. When coca acreage decreases in one region or country, it usually increases in another, as the laws of supply and demand take precedent over any other law.

Meanwhile, the United States sinks deeper into the mire of Colombia’s decades-long civil war. The recent kidnapping of Justapaz worker Juan Castilla Urueta and the allegations against Justapaz founder Ricardo Esquivia demonstrate the perils of working for peace in Colombia. Colombian

churches have continued to request that North American churches stand in solidarity with them, through prayer, by learning about Colombia and its churches, and by advocating against further military aid. The international outpouring of support that Esquivia has received in the past few weeks prompted him to say, “This experience has reaffirmed my belief: Our security is found in community.”

Very few people would argue that substance abuse—including tobacco and alcohol—isn’t a problem in the United States. But the facts might lead one to ask: Are we losing this war? Is it time for something different?

“The Lord gives wisdom,” says Proverbs 2:6, “from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” No one has a sure solution to this problem. But asking for wisdom and understanding is a start. ■

BY LORA STEINER

Despite more spending and tougher laws, drug use in the United States has remained stable over the past decade. Meanwhile, the country sinks deeper into the mire of Colombia’s decades-long civil war.

CAPITAL QUOTES

“It’s hard to pick the ugliest pig in this sty.”

—Senator John McCain (R-AZ), complaining that the recently-passed \$820 billion appropriations bill was rife with special-interest spending.

“President Bush got at least one thing right on Tuesday night when he said ‘Americans are proving once again to be the hardest working people in the world.’ Those who are fortunate enough to be employed often have to work long hours, or string together two and three jobs to make ends meet.”

—Bob Herbert, commentary on the State of the Union address, *The New York Times*.

“When they drop all this coverage, are these kids just supposed to not have problems?”

—Kathye Smith, mother of an eight-year-old whose health insurance was cut, along with thousands of others’ in 22 states, because of budget shortfalls.

Pontius’ Puddle



Come Fly with Me

BY DAVID M. WHETTSTONE

Citizens from 27 countries, including Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore and most European nations, are exempted from the US VISIT program. As a result, a focus is placed on people from Africa, Asia, and Central and South America.

Air travel is symbolic freedom for most privileged U.S. Americans. More than 100 million fly each year. Add foreign travelers to that number. Could terrorists be among so many people? How should the government protect us?

Through the U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US VISIT) program, customs officials can now take digital fingerprints and photographs of foreigners entering the United States. They will be able to check identities, criminal backgrounds and terrorist watch lists in seconds.

This process now takes place at 115 airports and 14 seaports. It covers 24 million travelers and later will be expanded to 50 land-crossings. However, citizens from 27 countries, including Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore and most European nations, are exempted if they are visiting as tourists for fewer than 90 days. As a result, a focus is placed on people from Africa, Asia, and Central and South America.

Others already see this policy as discriminatory. In reaction, Brazil has implemented the same program for U.S. Americans. Perhaps if checks were universally applied, concerns regarding discrimination would at least be partially addressed.

By the summer of 2004, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) wants to test and implement the Computer Assisted Passenger Prescreening System II (CAPPS II), a system to assess and assign an individual's "risk" to air safety. So far, most airlines have declined to voluntarily provide the information that is needed. However, three airlines have shared passenger information without the public's knowledge.

Under CAPPS II, airlines would have to collect and pass along to the TSA each person's name, address, phone number and date of birth. The TSA would then run this information through commercial and later government databases. It claims that no profiles (standing records) would be kept, but checks would be repeated.

Critics argue:

- A terrorist could evade CAPPS II through identity theft, presenting a driver's license with his or her own photo but with the name, address, phone number and date of birth of an innocent person.
- CAPPS II may result in racial profiling if credit ratings are part of the data used. Credit scores are virtual statements about an individual's reliability, often made by a small group of private corporations whose criteria have been subjected to little accountability. Persons of color have historically had "lower" credit scores and less "extensive" credit records. As a result, they could be miscategorized as risky.
- The TSA is not required to reveal the sources of records by which a passenger's risk score is made. There would be no public notification or oversight of which medical, religious, political, racial or new data sources are used.

Will CAPPS II prove to be effective? Should it apply to other modes of travel? Are there creative alternatives that would provide security? So far, no new ideas are forthcoming.

Most travelers do not doubt the need for aviation security. Procedures should be fair, unintrusive and respectful of privacy. Sadly, past incidences of profiling stir suspicions for some. Yet others believe strangers, particularly travelers, to be dangerous.

Menno Simons said, "All those born of God are called into one body and are prepared by love to serve their neighbors." Throughout history, Mennonites have indeed placed a high value on extending hospitality to others. Our government's new security policies and our society's efforts to combat fear create a new context. Yet we must somehow continue to welcome immigrants, students, fellow citizens and other sojourners to come and go in peace. ■

Bread or Bombs?

Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? (Matthew 7:9)

The Appalachian region of Kentucky, with its fertile mountains, lively culture and troubled history, is once again facing adversity. After a century of exploitation by timbering and mining companies close to home, Kentucky's new troubles come from farther east—in the nation's capital.

Kentucky's federally funded child care assistance program has a waiting list of 3,466 families. The wait hits especially hard for parents just off welfare, whose minimum wage jobs can't pay someone to keep the kids. Combined with the lack of good employment, safe housing and reliable transportation, the child care shortage adds up to widespread poverty for working families.

And Kentucky's not the only state. Only one in seven U.S. children eligible for child care assistance currently receives it; in the last three years, 23 states have cut children from their rolls. It's not just child care, either. Facing staggering deficits, states have also sacrificed health care, housing assistance, job training and education.

As a result, homelessness and hunger are on the rise. Forty-three million people have no health insurance. It takes an hourly salary of \$15.21, triple the federal minimum wage, to afford fair market rent for a two-bedroom apartment, when paying 30 percent of income for housing.

Meanwhile, Congress—preoccupied with military spending and tax cuts—neglected to renew last year's public assistance, child nutrition and affordable housing legislation; offering stones, not bread, to the country's 32 million people in poverty, including 11.7 million children.

However, it seems there were plenty of dollars to fund last year's nearly \$400 billion military budget. In addition, Congress managed to find \$150 billion to fight and occupy Iraq. The result? More bombs, less bread for Iraq's 24 million people—more than half of whom are under 18.

How could we have spent last year's \$376 billion military budget (not counting nuclear spending) more wisely?

- One week of military spending (\$7 billion) equals a year of child care for 1.2 million kids.
- One day of military spending (\$1 billion) equals a year of health coverage for 732,064 children.
- One hour (\$43 million) of military spending equals a year of pre-school for 6,483 kids.
- One minute (\$715,917) of military spending equals immunization for 1,120 children.

As it is, the kids in Kentucky get stones. The children of Iraq get bombs. Sounds like the makings of a hungry, violent world. ■

BY BETHANY SPICHER

Congress—preoccupied with military spending and tax cuts—neglected to renew last year's public assistance, child nutrition and affordable housing legislation; offering stones, not bread, to the country's 32 million people in poverty.

PARTNER STORY

No Wage or Low Wage?

Here in Letcher County (Ky.) there are no manufacturing jobs. There are no factories. So if you work, it's at a fast food restaurant or in the service industry. And what you find is this cycle of jobs that are minimal in pay with no benefits. Parents have to go to food banks to feed their families. It's interesting that in 1950 a family of four could live on one minimum wage salary, and today you need at least two and a half or three for that to happen. And that does not mean two spouses can work and live on that, because then you need child care, so that takes a huge chunk away. So you need three spouses in one family. I don't know any families with three spouses.

—adapted from an interview with Jim and Ellie Heubner, MCC Appalachia.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on MCC's work in Kentucky and Washington, D.C., see "A Voice on the Hill," a 28-minute video highlighting advocacy that grows out of service. Available to borrow from any MCC office.

Aid and AIDS: Promises and Questions

BY MARTIN SHUPACK

While serious concerns exist about the president's new aid and AIDS programs, they seem to reflect something of the biblical insight that when part of the body suffers, all do.

As President Bush has traveled the world to promote the “war on terrorism,” he has discovered that people living in Latin America, Asia and Africa experience different vulnerabilities than he does. They fear unemployment, poverty, disease, violent crime, lack of education and loss of basic human dignity.

Perhaps something of their message has gotten through to the president. His administration has made new commitments to address the global HIV/AIDS pandemic and to increase development assistance. The president says he understands that poverty and despair can be a breeding ground for terrorists.

Over a year ago, President Bush committed \$15 billion for global HIV/AIDS from 2004 to 2008. The president must be held accountable to ensure this money, at a minimum, is actually provided.

The president has also pledged to increase foreign development aid by 50 percent, from roughly \$10 billion to \$15 billion annually. The new money will go into a Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). Congress provided \$1 billion for the MCA for 2004. By 2006, \$5 billion annually is supposed to go into this account, without decreasing traditional development assistance.

Questions abound, however. Will President Bush push for—and Congress appropriate—this large an increase at a time of record budget deficits? Will the neediest countries be excluded from these funds because they fail to meet the program’s strict eligibility requirements? Will MCA aid pressure developing countries to adopt economic policies not in their best interests? For example, much MCA aid may go for programs that privatize essential public services like water and open countries to U.S. imports and trans-national corporations. Such actions may not alleviate poverty or promote authentic development. Finally, will the president and Congress take MCA funds from other humanitarian and development aid accounts, rather than increasing the total resources available?

Even if development aid is raised to \$15 billion annually, this is still less than one-tenth of 1 percent of U.S. wealth (Gross Domestic Product). The United Nations and many churches have called for wealthy countries to give seven-tenths of 1 percent of their GDP to aid impoverished countries.

While serious concerns exist about the president’s new aid and AIDS programs, they represent more promising responses to the new U.S. feeling of vulnerability. They seem to reflect something of the biblical insight that when part of the body suffers, all do. But these initiatives will do little good for anyone’s security unless they are carried out with genuine wisdom. ■

PARTNER STORY

Vulnerability Breeds Violence

I am very afraid of violence. We are scared to walk on the streets at night, or even sometimes in the middle of the day. I am also afraid of my children growing up to be violent, like the young people I see looking for drugs. There are mothers who, in desperation, send their children out to rob or to sell drugs. I pray all the time that I will never have to do something like that, and that I will never leave the gospel. The violence in the street, I believe, comes from the fact that people don’t have enough to eat. There is a lot of unemployment. Also, many people don’t have God in their lives, and they want to live the easy life without responsibility.

—Lucineide, of Recife, Brazil, as shared with MCCer Aileen Carroll.

U.S. Occupation Heightens Iraqi Sense of Vulnerability

Iraqis are facing a very strange situation with the U.S. occupation. The United States is very smart with bombing, but what about occupation? Can people always build a wall? Where?

I know Americans now control Iraq. Maybe they do not want to interfere in the situations where we feel vulnerable because they also feel susceptible. On the vulnerability issue, the Americans say, "This is your issue, not ours."

But we say, "What can we do, we are occupied?" The other day near my house an eighteen-year-old boy was being kidnapped near a group of American soldiers. But when they were asked to help, they said that it is not their business. This is vulnerability.

We feel this vulnerability. The Americans have no policy for occupation. They are not following the Geneva Conventions. We are coming out of 35 years of political repression. Islam is unable to solve the problem. But now with the occupation, the country is reverting back to tribal systems. Muslim society gets its security from tribal systems. But because Christians rely on civil protection, we have less security. Christians have different denominations, but not tribes.

This is vulnerability in society. It is related to fear, insecurity, hunger and our extreme climate.

For me, the summit of vulnerability is the future. What if you do not have any security for the future? What if you have no confidence that tomorrow you will have food? For centuries our society, our culture, has been one which cannot speak adequately about the future. If you ask people about their future and their dreams, their only response is to say that they hope things will get better.

This is vulnerability. But what can we do about it? My answer is culture. Culture and education. I say, "You have pushed bombs, but now we need to push education." ■

IN OTHER'S WORDS

BY FATHER YOUSIF THOMAS MIRKIS

Father Yousif Thomas Mirkis is a Dominican priest at St. Joseph Cathedral in Baghdad. He is also editor of Christian Thought magazine.

If you ask Iraqi people about their future and their dreams, their only response is to say that they hope things will get better.

MCC WASHINGTON OFFICE SPRING SEMINAR

"No One Shall Make Them Afraid: A Biblical Response to U.S. Security Policy," March 28-30, explores alternatives to the current "war on terrorism" from an Anabaptist perspective and invites participants to share their visions for true security. Workshops include U.S. military policy, global economic insecurity, the politics of oil, food and farming, immigration, and civil liberties. The \$75 registration fee includes all materials and two meals, and lodging costs are extra. Scholarship money is available. Contact the Washington Office or visit www.mcc.org/washington for more information.



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SOUND THE TRUMPET!

ISSUE	SUMMARY	ADVOCACY NEEDED
RACIAL PROFILING	Racial profiling is the practice of using race, ethnicity, national origin or religion as the primary factor in deciding who is subject to law enforcement investigations. <i>The End Racial Profiling Act of 2004</i> seeks to: define racial profiling and ban it; provide a legal remedy to those harmed by the practice, and provide funding to police departments to establish data collection programs and other police reforms.	Ask your representative and senators to cosponsor or support the <i>End Racial Profiling Act of 2004</i> .

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Conscientious Objection Lobby Day

Lobbying for Conscience's Sake, May 14, is an effort to educate Congress about conscientious objection and to advocate against a military draft. Participants are invited to meet with congressional staff in Washington, D.C. or to visit their legislators' offices at home. To register online, visit www.nisbco.org. Sponsored by the Center on Conscience & War, National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund and the MCC Washington Office.

Anti-poverty Mobilization

Join Call to Renewal in its effort to ensure that poverty is addressed as a moral and religious issue in the 2004 elections at Pentecost 2004: A Call to Unity, May 23-25, Washington, D.C. This national mobilization promises to bring together Christians across the theological and political spectrum around the biblical imperative to overcome poverty. Contact Call to Renewal at (202) 328-8745 or visit www.calltorenewal.org.