

Bibi Agonistes

Things are not always as they appear in the Middle East. Appearances can also deceive whenever an Israeli prime minister and a U.S. president get together in Washington.

During their two-hour meeting at the White House on Monday, it appeared as though Barack Obama and Benjamin Netanyahu were bosom buddies. Netanyahu, especially, praised the new president and claimed agreement with Obama that, as a first priority, Iran must be stopped from possessing nuclear weapons.

A "senior official traveling with the prime minister" (one of those euphemisms required to disguise who is really speaking) told a small group of reporters and columnists following the White House meeting that, for the first time since the creation of Zionism, Jews and Arabs see eye-to-eye concerning the strategic threat a nuclear Iran would present. "This goal supersedes anything else," said the official. In response to questions, the official acknowledged that Arab leaders say one thing to their friends and something quite different to their enemies.

President Obama invoked an end-of-the-year timeline for diplomacy with Iran to work. This would seem to give Iran a green light to pursue its nuclear bomb for the next seven months. At the end of December when we in the West learn that Iran has been stringing us along and using diplomacy as a delaying tactic, what then? Will it be Israel that bombs the nuclear sites, or will it be one or more of those Arab nations supposedly of one mind in opposition to a nuclear Iran?

It's a safe bet to put your money on Israel doing the dirty work and suffering the usual condemnation — accompanied by more terrorist attacks from Hamas and Hezbollah — from the United States, the United Nations and the European Union, the latter two seeing nothing worth fighting to preserve.

A more sobering assessment has come from RAND, a nonprofit research corporation. In a new report entitled "Dangerous But Not Omnipotent: Exploring the Reach and Limitations of Iranian Power in the Middle East," prepared for the U.S. Air Force, RAND dismisses hopes that bilateral talks between the United States and Iran will alter Tehran's behavior. It calls such hopes "unrealistic" and advocates a broad international effort that would lever-



Cal Thomas

age incentives and punishment based on Iran's response. This has been tried before and has mostly proved ineffective because there are countries that do not abide by economic boycotts.

The senior Israeli official noted that while Israel has lived up to its obligations and commitments — especially when it has come to relinquishing land taken from enemies who launched attacks from that land, and who would do so again if they get it back — the Palestinian side has not. Does this not beg the question as to why any future promises should be believed when every previous promise has been broken?

Yes, for 60 years, Arab leaders have been captured by their own propaganda, as one member of the Israeli delegation told me. So how do you reverse that, I asked, and when can the world expect to see them stop publishing textbooks, delivering sermons and printing cartoons in state-owned newspapers that equate Jews with pigs and monkeys and call for their destruction? He couldn't say.

If there is to be a Palestinian state, what kind of state will it be? Would it be allowed to have an army, or a "police force" that would effectively serve as an army? Surely Israel could not stand for another armed force in its neighborhood. Would a Palestinian state be permitted to have an airport and overland access to countries that might supply it with terrorists and weapons?

A recent Washington Times editorial put it well: "The Obama administration should focus less on creating a Palestinian state and more on helping Palestinians earn the right to statehood." That is exactly the right order.

In 1996, Netanyahu came to Washington for the first time as prime minister to meet with President Clinton. I recall him warning the Clinton administration that the greatest threat facing Israel is the arming of Iran with nuclear weapons. He was a prophet then and that prophecy is now on the verge of coming true.

In a rebuke to the president's commitment to diplomacy, Iran conducted a missile test within hours after Netanyahu left Washington for Israel. If Iran gets a nuclear bomb, everything will change in the Middle East. Whatever dim prospects for peace there may be will come unraveled. That's why stopping Iran's nuclear ambitions trumps a Palestinian state and everything else.

Quotations of the day

By The Associated Press

"We demand this trial be held again and a death penalty issued."

— Qais About Ali Khutri al-Janabi, head of a prominent Sunni clan in Iraq where an Iraqi girl was raped and killed by ex-U.S. soldier Steven Dale Green. Green was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

"The weather just is not clearing up ..."

— NASA Mission Control to the crew of the space shuttle Atlantis on stormy weather in Florida preventing a landing on the first try.

"It is important that victory becomes a victory for all Sri Lankans."

— U.N. Secretary-General chief of staff Vijay Nambiar urging the Sri Lankan government to try to heal ethnic divisions in the wake of the nation's civil war.

"He's young. He's cool. He's hip ... he's got all the qualities America likes in a celebrity, so of course he's going to be popular. But this is not American Idol. This is serious ... and we are going to take them on."

— Republican Party Chairman Michael Steele addressing state party chairmen regarding President Barack Obama.

Letters to the Editor policy

GALLUP — The Independent encourages letters to the editor, which are published twice weekly — Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Letters must include writer's name, address and phone number although only the name and community of residence will be published.

Letters may not exceed 500 words. Letters may be edited for space and clarity. The Independent may choose not to print any letter for any reason.

Anyone may submit a letter, and there is no charge for publication.

Letters may be mailed, delivered in person, faxed or e-mailed to: Editor, The Independent, P.O. Box 1210, Gallup, New Mexico 87305, (505) 722-5750 (fax); editorialgallup@yahoo.com (e-mail).

Independent opinion

Maintenance is not the responsibility of the golf pro

We have to give credit to Mayor Harry Mendoza. He has finally figured out how to solve the maintenance problems plaguing the city's golf course for the past decade. As usual, Mendoza's logic is warped — maintenance is not the responsibility of the golf pro.

We would never have thought the way to make the course playable was to simply getting rid of the golf pro position, which has nothing to do with growing grass. With that decision, area golfers can now go to bed and know that on July 1 — the first day when there will be no golf pro on the course — they will wake up to a course that will be the envy of any town in America.

We can't wait until their next session when they vote to do away with the city manager position to get rid of the smell from the wastewater treatment plant. Well, Herrera's performance stinks, but that won't get rid of the wastewater smell.

We thought that the blame for the conditions at the golf course should be placed at the feet of the course's greens superintendent, Bob Weekes. He says he's an agronomist, yes?

It was Weekes who promised to us three years ago he had all the answers and that he would give the town a golf course we all could be proud of? Maintenance is not the responsibility of the golf pro.

And wasn't he the one who spent more than \$100,000 of our tax money on things like a security camera system, the paving of the course parking lot, and the purchase of walk-behind mowers that have never been used and numerous other items

that are basically still in the boxes they came in. The amount of money that Weekes has wasted in his three years here is unbelievable. And we still don't have grass.

It's Weekes who has been lying to city officials that people — such as Tom Noe — who have come in and suggested other, cheaper ways to improve the course really don't know what they are talking about. Like Herrera, who says, "don't bother us with facts."

It's been our position that Weekes has managed to keep the support of fellow incompetent city officials by convincing them that his lies are the truth and that he knows more about what the course needs than the golfers who have been sending letters to the city government pleading with them to get rid of Weekes and hiring someone who isn't a snake oil salesman in his spare time. Maintenance is not the responsibility of the golf pro.

We have to believe that the actions of Mendoza and Herrera to manipulate the City Council to eliminate the golf pro position are based on some kind of logic — warped as it is — because otherwise we would have to think that what people are saying about their real reason is correct.

But who could believe that the mayor and his hand-picked incompetent manager are so petty, so vindictive, and so stupid that they would think that by getting rid of the golf pro position, they can stop the Independent from writing articles and editorials critical of the way the golf course is being run? Maintenance is not the responsibility of the golf pro.

Do they actually think that the sole reason the Independent has been printing story after story about the deplorable conditions at the golf course is because this information is being leaked to us by the golf pro? We have a golf course and a superintendent that suck.

We realize that Mendoza and Herrera aren't golfers, but do they really believe that people who go to the course can't see the lack of grass on the fairways, the excess water on many fairways, the sand traps on greens, the dead greens, creeping bare spots and the prairie dogs? Weekes says there is no problem. Sorry, the people who play the course and complain to us regularly, you guys don't know what a good course is.

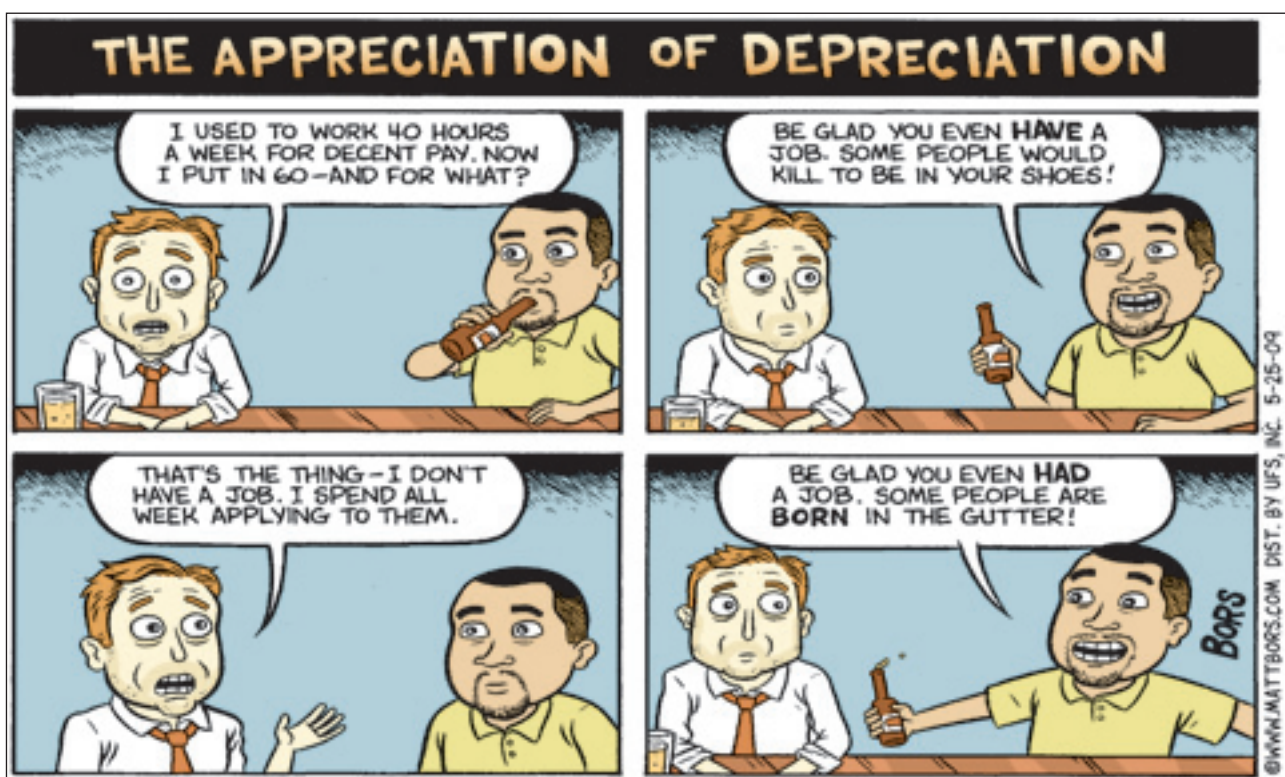
Do they actually think that getting rid of the golf pro position will mean that the effort by the Independent and area golfers to bring attention to the problems at the course will cease? Maintenance is not the responsibility of the golf pro.

If they think this, they are stupider than we thought.

The fact is that Gallupians aren't stupid and this recent action only proves what we have been saying for months — the Mendoza administration is clueless on how to run a city government.

Weekes lies, Herrera is stupid, Mendoza is vindictive and the council is so green they don't have the confidence to stand up and say enough is enough.

Now is the time for the council to take a stand, put the golf pro job back before July 1, fire Weekes and get rid of Herrera.



Anaya is a good choice for a stimulus funds traffic cop

It should be good news that \$1.8 billion-plus in federal stimulus money is headed our way. But we can't help but wonder whose pockets will fill up.

So I found it comforting that former Gov. Toney Anaya is director of the newly created and temporary Office of Recovery and Reinvestment. Anaya is more traffic cop than watchdog, but it's in his nature to be a stickler.

I don't welcome Anaya's reappearance in state government out of dewy-eyed sentiment. Back when he was attorney general, Anaya was the sworn enemy of a certain electric utility I served as spokesperson. Anaya made my life more difficult, and that was as it should be, said my friends in the press.

Anaya has mellowed over the years, but it's his abrasive side that makes me glad to see the guy. Like him or not, Anaya is his own man. He's not a good old boy or a back slapper.

"In New Mexico," he once said, "whether it's in the business community or the political community, people are very chummy, very buddy-buddy, and they like to make a lot of decisions based on friendship. I don't like to make decisions on that basis."

As a crusading attorney general, he once filed charges against two men a former co-worker described as "tried and true wheelhorses in the state Democratic stable," for allegedly benefiting from an elaborate insurance scheme involving the state employ-

All She Wrote

Sherry Robinson



ment office. One of the men had given Anaya his political start; the other was a good friend of Anaya's brother. Anaya admitted later it was painful to pursue the case but felt it had to be done.

(I'm not naming names here because in Tony Hillerman's journalism ethics class at UNM I learned that there's an informal statute of limitations on bringing up misdeeds that are far in the past.)

Three words usually used to describe Anaya are "intense," "workaholic," and "disciplined." (There are some other words, but they're not printable.) A lawyer who knew him once said, "Toney is the kind of guy who shaves on weekends."

When Anaya ran for governor in the early 1980s, his three-and-a-half year campaign was the longest and most expensive (nearly \$1 million) the state had seen. In office from 1983 through 1986, he was a liberal operating against a backdrop of Ronald Reagan's popularity. So, given his personality and his politics, it was a contro-

versial tenure.

Anaya established new standards for honesty in state government. One of my sharpest memories of the period is this one: After learning that a New Mexico Magazine staffer was accepting freebies from the tourism industry in return for favorable coverage, Anaya was so furious, he himself wrote the news release announcing the staffer's firing.

However, a U.S. Attorney carried on a long, politically motivated and well publicized investigation of Anaya. It wasted a lot of taxpayer money and found nothing but did succeed in casting a shadow over the man and his family. Anaya said in later interviews that his lowest ebb in office was seeing his daughter come home from school in tears because of cruel remarks made to her about her dad.

Reading over some old interviews with Anaya, I'm surprised now how open and candid the man was with the media, even though he wasn't treated particularly well. In one of the more dubious journalistic exercises, two reporters (one of whom is now Taxation and Revenue Secretary) asked Anaya a lot of highly personal questions and then submitted his answers to several psychologists for analysis. It backfired on the reporters and the shrinks.

Anaya's new duties include keeping a lid on administrative costs, making spending recommendations and establishing a transparent reporting system. This is a good job for Toney Anaya.

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John K. Zollinger
Chairman
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Robert C. Zollinger
Publisher

Barry Helfner
Managing Editor

THE GALLUP INDEPENDENT CO. Gallup, NM 87305 (505) 863-6811 FAX (505) 722-5750
Grants-Milan: Toll-Free (505) 287-9226

Additional News Offices

DINE BUREAU Window Rock, AZ 86515

Karen Francis (505) 876-7238 • Kate Hahn (505) 876-6666 Fax (505) 876-3437

GRANTS/MILAN/CIBOLA BUREAU Grants, NM 87020

Jim Tiffin (505) 283-4569 Fax (505) 287-4660 • Helen Davis (505) 287-5627 Fax (505) 285-4678

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The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

-Isaiah 35:1