

`Why can't Bush give NASA all the funds it needs?' Series: Letters

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Editor: Does anyone have their priorities straight?

When a recent letter writer complained about government spending on space exploration, did she realize the small cost on the whole of an Earth-to-Mars mission? For instance, a moon-to-Mars mission will only be a fraction of the cost to produce President Bush's Stealth line of bombers. A very small fraction I might add. No one seems to complain when the government would like to spend upward of \$750-billion on a line of planes, but when NASA needs a few billion to launch a space station, start a moon colony and eventually land on Mars, everyone seems to say it costs too much for what it's worth. This notion that space exploration is useless has been proved wrong time and time again and it should finally be laid to rest. For instance scientists found out about how and why the ``greenhouse`` effect works by studying Venus.

Studying the moon has told us much about the actual age of the Earth itself. And finally, the study of Mars may help to teach us how to conserve our environment since it is believed that Mars once had rivers. Are we headed to the same fate that Mars suffered? Let's go there and find out.

Why can't President Bush give NASA all the funds it needs and use the money he saves from not implementing a line of Stealth aircraft on the homeless, the drug problem, etc.?

Let's pull together for the space program. There's much to know, much more to learn about our future and what we can do to ensure a safe one. Is there anyone else who would rather see an American flag on Mars, rather than the military's death plane? Is there anyone else who is sane? Shane Sokol, Clearwater Newt Gingrich

Editor: Re: Newt Gingrich: GDP's bare-knuckles battler, July 27.

The Democrats are fools if they believe that the average voter is smarter than Newt Gingrich. Gingrich has them pegged correctly. They need some very simple reason to vote against someone. That is the sum of their entire effort during the pre-election weeks. It takes time, thought and some reading to find a reason to vote for someone.

I sure wish the other half of our voters would register and vote. It may well be that the wrong half is voting.

There seems to be a great many adults in this country who still insist that Reagan was a great leader. He was, in truth, a great reader. The media used to say, ``The president said today`` while they should have reported, ``the president read today`` They never would let him say anything. Ray Hill, St. Petersburg Thinking about flags

Editor: A year in jail for burning the flag? Gimme a break! Maybe we should do as Tom Stimus suggests on his Sarasota billboard. Deport or shoot flag burners.

What about Joseph Hazelwood, the captain of the Exxon Valdez? Should we shoot him? How about the little girl I just saw tossing a wad of Kleenex on the ground without even thinking twice? The world is her wastebasket. Her parents don't teach her otherwise. (I know because they were with her at the time.) Should we deport her?

Three hundred years from now (or maybe sooner) as America's youngsters sit in our libraries studying something that was called a ``whooping crane`` or an ``oak leaf`` while they breathe through their tiny nose filters and clutch their precious water ration coupons, we can be thankful for all of the beautiful flags we've managed to protect. (All for the sake of God and country.)

Did your sons and daughters and husbands and wives die in foreign wars for the flag? Or did they die for a country of individuals? Was it a country of bull-headed, free-spirited, opinionated people from every nationality and every walk of life that they gave their lives for, or was it the \$20 piece of cloth you bought at Sears?

Where are our priorities? Where have they gone?

Let's add some flag burners to our overcrowded jails. That makes sense. Or better yet, let's just shoot 'em or deport 'em. Why don't we just shoot anyone who doesn't happen to see things our way? Let's bomb a few abortion clinics for the right to live. That's it, that's the ticket.

The next time you use your aerosol deodorant, (which, by the way, does wonders for the ozone layer) or you dump your ashtray in the parking lot, or your kid dumps his convenience store big gulp cup in the sea oats at the beach, think about burning flags. Think about if you had your druthers, which you would rather do without if someone made you choose. One less flag, or one less country? Deborah Cashion Klein, Dunedin Spotlight on Cuba

Editor: In recent weeks we have been inundated with propaganda and rhetoric from Fidel Castro in Havana concerning his so-called commitment to stop the flow of drugs through his country. Based on this rhetoric alone, and not on any credible change in Castro's behavior, some in this country have bolted from the starting gate in a race to change our policies toward Cuba.

Although the dictator's new line was being embraced, a careful look at the facts contradicts what Castro said.

With elections in Poland, the tearing down of the fence between Hungary and Austria and the effects of glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union, there clearly is a wave of freedom crossing the globe. The 1990s may in fact be the decade of democracy. Yet, Castro continues to dampen hopes for freedom and democracy with his totalitarian policies.

Last week Congress took the opportunity to react to Castro's rhetoric and the Cuban people's struggle for freedom.

I introduced and the Senate passed legislation that represents a tremendous victory for the Cuban people in their struggle for freedom.

First, we sent a message to Castro that the Congress of the United States believes that the Cuban people should have the opportunity to express their views on their country's political future, and that the communist party should allow a plebiscite by a secret yes/no ballot. We all know that a hypocritical tyrant like Castro will not respond to our call for a referendum. But this vote nevertheless helps to return Cuba to our national agenda and focus world attention on the failures of the Castro regime.

Second, I authored an amendment that closed a loophole in our trade embargo with Cuba, making it unlawful for foreign subsidiaries of U.S. corporations to trade with Cuba. While most Americans believe that there is no trade between the U.S. and Cuba, \$250-million per year has been contributed to the Cuban economy by foreign subsidiaries since relaxing the embargo in 1975. There is no justification for allowing Castro this economic lifeline.

Bob Graham and I also proposed that the National Drug Policy Director William Bennett report to Congress the full degree of Castro's participation in drug trafficking. Our Senate colleagues joined us in support of this measure to make known the serious gap between rhetoric and reality regarding Castro's ``crackdown`` on drugs.

The United States must continue to keep the spotlight on Castro's isolationist regime and expose his deceptive propaganda campaign. Our objective should be to put the pressure on Castro and not permit him to use the U.S. to maintain his economic and political stronghold on the people of Cuba.

Last week marked a victory for the people of Cuba as the Senate focused on their fight for freedom and democracy. Sen. Connie Mack, Washington, D.C. Another power source urged

Editor: Your readers need to know that their lives are endangered by the use of plutonium-238 in the power pack of the Galileo probe to Jupiter, scheduled to go in October on the shuttle Atlantis.

Plutonium-238 is the most toxic substance known to humanity. Any accident involving the shuttle and/or the probe, on launch or later, could scatter the deadly particles, minute ingestion of which can cause cancer and death.

Other power sources for the probe are available. Why play Russian roulette with the population of the east coast of Florida, if not also a wider area?

So, let your congressman and the two Florida senators know your concern and ask them to pressure NASA and the Department of Energy to postpone the Galileo probe and find another power source. Joseph W. Bell, Lakeland 'Enough is enough'

Editor: Enough is enough! Instead of the constant nitpicking and back biting that the St. Petersburg Times is carrying on over the nomination of Mel Sembler and Joseph Zappala to ambassadorships, why can't your readers be told of some of the attributes of these gentlemen? Why aren't they told of the honorable ways these men conduct their businesses? Why aren't they told how these men came to be so successful and respected, not only in business, but in the community at large?

You only inform the public of the money these two gave to the Bush for President Campaign, not the years of hard work

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gaining support for their ideal of a presidency for Bush, which we may not all have supported, but a lofty ideal just the same. And, they saw it through to fruition!

Have you informed your readers of their philanthropies? Is it because Mr. Sembler was the founder of Straight, Inc., the drug rehabilitation program which your paper considers "controversial," but to which thousands of parents now give thanks for saving their children? Is it because Mr. Zappala has been a president of Straight, Inc.? Somehow I think your teeth are showing.

Why haven't you pointed out that Mel Sembler was a past president of the International Council of Shopping Centers? He traveled worldwide in this capacity, giving speeches to men of consequence and is well thought of as an articulate speaker and a credit to his industry.

Why are these men being subjected to degradation by their own community's newspaper instead of being extolled for the recognition and economic good they can bring to the Tampa Bay region? We all should have pride that two outstanding men have been picked from our community to serve in very important posts.

Neither of these men needs a job which will take them far from their friends and the closeness of their families. They will be facing the danger that all foreign service people face today. Financially, I am sure they would be much better off at home. Why then? Honor, of course.

The political aspect of the appointments is as old as this country. Instead of using that aspect to tear down, why not build on the honor I am sure each of these men feel and the pride in them that most of this community feels. Don't turn that honor and pride into ashes. Both of these men will serve their country well. I hope the St. Petersburg Times will support their endeavors in Australia and Spain in the future and will wish them well. Roy S. Siegle, St. Petersburg Beach
Pinellas Housing Now

Editor: Everyday, I am even more outraged as the HUD scandal, filled with corruption and graft, ever widens. As program manager for Advocates for a Shelter/Action Committee which housed and fed 220 women and 148 children, and gave 20,593 showers to people living on the street without any federal assistance on \$18,266.38 in contributions last year, I am asking the citizens of Pinellas County to join "Pinellas Housing Now."

Together we can say no to any more golf and country clubs financed with the small HUD budget. Together with the homeless and poor we can go to Washington in October, joining with others around the country, and with one voice say we need money to rebuild our cities and then assume the responsibility to make sure these funds are wisely spent.

The horrible waste must stop. We must find creative ways to take off the boards and turn abandoned buildings into homes, and shut down the crack houses. We must explore all means of addressing the affordable housing crisis, and relearn the meaning of the word "frugality." Please join "Pinellas Housing Now," and together we can turn the tide.
Niki Everitt, Pinellas Housing Now Coordinator Clearwater An avoidable tragedy?

Editor: The tragedy that should never have happened.

The execution of Lt. Col. William Higgins, allegedly at this time, raises many provocative questions that evoke few answers and we must look back in time to gain a perspective as to why such a tragedy was allowed to occur.

It is beyond belief that an officer of such high rank would be officially assigned as a U.N. observer in an area noted for terrorist activity when one of lesser rank would have been equally effective and a not-so-high profile to target.

It is equally unbelievable that an officer with such credentials would expose himself to the dangers of terrorism by traveling alone in a Jeep, in an area as remote as has been reported at the time of his capture.

And in addition, perhaps we should question the verve of the Israelis, whose penchant for commando raids go on unabated and whose activities in the past have made Americans vulnerable as its part in the Iran-Contra scandal will attest to. For it's time now to take note of that familiar credo: "Protect me from my friends, I will take care of my enemies."

Be that as it may, the fact remains that one of our best, along with eight others, have languished in captivity these many years and it took a tragedy of this type to again remind us that eight forgotten Americans are still held hostage and that the casualties may increase now that the enemy has again been aroused by the overzealousness of a militaristic friend.
Edward G. DiPanni, Clearwater

Editor: The world is finding out again how vicious the Arabs can be. They can capture and kill Americans whenever they feel like it. They feel that power is the only way. The world can stop Iran if for once everyone would cooperate. All they have to do is refuse to buy Iran's oil. By doing this Iran must go bankrupt. Leo Applebaum, St. Petersburg

Editor: Some time ago the United States was accused of being a paper tiger. That was an overstatement. We are more like a tissue paper pussy cat.

The apparent murder of Col. Higgins makes me wonder what Barry Goldwater or Harry Truman would have done. If our

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current administration were in power during World War II we never would have used our nuclear potential and we probably would still be at war.

Nobody can tell me that many residents of Lebanon are not aware of the location of the terrorists. A warning to those residents to come forward with the information or face destruction of entire cities might put an end to Middle East terrorism. Shades of Harry Truman!

Our current administration should familiarize themselves with the case of Admiral Decatur and the Barbary Pirate States in the year 1815. In those days we were a nation of men, not wimps. Paul Sass, Palm Harbor Faith in the revolution

Editor: Re: Nicaraguans celebrate amid economic ruins, July 19, by Robert Collier on the Nicaraguan celebration of the 10th anniversary of their revolution was a sound analysis except for its failure to attribute at least part of the cause of the economic disaster to the U.S. trade embargo and the Contra war. The Reagan administration first established and the Bush administration renewed the embargo on April 21 even though we cannot imagine how anyone could claim that ``the policies and actions of the government of Nicaragua constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States`` - the words of the executive order that first put the embargo into effect on May 1, 1985.

Collier expresses surprise that ``the average Nicaraguan worker (can) . . . still fervently support the government responsible for the economic collapse.`` We believe Nicaraguans are more discerning in this instance than Mr. Collier. They know full well that in spite of errors in judgment by their own leader, the government primarily responsible for their misery is in Washington, not Managua.

The U.S.-sponsored Contra terror has never assumed it could overthrow the Sandinista government militarily; indeed it has consistently sought to avoid confrontation with the military. Instead, its efforts have been to break down the social and economic infrastructure and to terrorize farmers and villagers. The trade embargo is an important complement to the Contras' destruction, rendering replacement of transportation, food crops, materiel and maintenance of productive capacity largely impossible. Though our policies and efforts in ``low profile combat`` have been highly successful in destroying the Nicaraguan economy, they have failed to undercut the people's continuing faith in the eventual triumph of their revolution.

If our government sincerely wanted to help the people of Nicaragua we would lift the trade embargo, ban covert interference in the Nicaragua political process, and make an honest effort to stop the continuing murders, kidnapping and attacks by roving bands of Contras on farm cooperatives and hydroelectric plants.

We urge the St. Petersburg Times to keep its readers better informed about Contra activities in Nicaragua and to monitor the Nicaraguan election process with more perceptive scrutiny than Robert Collier showed in his analysis. Clark and Pat Bouwman, St. Petersburg More about AIPAC

Editor: Re: AIPAC not a PAC, Aug. 1, Letters to the editor.

While it is true that AIPAC avoids endorsing candidates and does not raise or spend money directly in partisan campaigns (thus it is not a PAC), the American Israel Public Affairs Committee is far more powerful than the benign ``disseminating information`` group that the letter writers claim it is. I wonder if the letter writers are familiar with former Illinois congressman Paul Findley's best selling 1985 book, They Dare to Speak out - People and Institutions Confront Israel's Lobby. Findley, who served in Congress for 22 years, paints a picture of AIPAC as being ``the pre-eminent power in Washington lobbying.`` He goes on to say that ``It is no overstatement to say that AIPAC has effectively gained control of virtually all of Capitol Hill's action on Middle East policy. House and Senate members consider AIPAC to be the direct Capitol Hill representative of a political force that can make or break their chances at election time.`` Findley quotes former congressman Pete McCloskey of California as saying that AIPAC ``terrorizes`` any member of Congress who criticizes Israeli policy or who votes for pro-Arab legislation. Findley himself blames AIPAC for his defeat in the 1984 election stating that AIPAC poured time and money into his opponent's campaign because he questioned U.S. policy toward Israel. For those interested in learning more about AIPAC and other pro-Israeli lobbying groups on Capitol Hill I would highly recommend Findley's book. Ken Smith, St. Petersburg Enforce bumper sticker law

Editor: It was a pleasure to read the recent AP article mentioning that the law in Florida against offensive bumper stickers had reduced the number of cars adorned with them. A \$500 fine and 60 days in jail seems an adequate penalty if the law is enforced. The article stated that drivers are being cited for displaying offensive stickers, but the stickers are still evident on many cars in the Tampa Bay area.

The damage these stickers create is obvious. They are not funny. I suggest that stricter law enforcement be utilized against them. For adults to display such stickers on a vehicle where young and impressionable children can see them is a shameful reality that must be stopped. Barry Slesman, Spring Hill

[Illustration]

BLACK AND WHITE PHOTO, (7); BLACK AND WHITE CARTOON, Don Addis; Caption: Newt Gingrich; Fidel Castro; Mel Sembler; Joseph Zappala; Lt. Col. William Higgins ; Harry Truman; Paul Findley; Neighbors talk about how they will spend the PSC approved refund from Florida Power Corp.

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