



**David Lias**  
*Between The Lines*

## Sit back and watch the latest fiasco unfold

"I would immediately close Guantanamo Bay, move all the prisoners to Fort Leavenworth (an army base in Kansas) and truly expedite the judicial proceedings in their cases."

If you guessed that Barack Obama made that statement, you'd be wrong.

Sen. John McCain said this in March 2007 during the start of his bid for the presidency.

McCain eventually won the Republican nomination and faced Barack Obama in November 2008. When we went to the polls back then, we voters knew that both McCain and Obama had clearly stated that they intended to close Guantanamo, and likely move the prisoners that are housed there to the mainland.

I can't recall any of us being too upset with this stance taken by both McCain and Obama. Don't remember seeing any news clips of screaming protestors at campaign rallies, demanding that Guantanamo remain open.

So, I have to admit to being a bit puzzled by the reaction coming from some camps after it was revealed this week that President Obama hopes to transfer at least 100 prisoners from Guantanamo to a currently empty prison in Illinois. The nearly vacant Thomson Correctional Center in the western Illinois farming town of Thomson is the latest potential candidate being evaluated to hold the detainees.

Suddenly, some members of Congress are horrified by the notion, including our own Sen. John Thune.

"Moving dangerous terrorists from a secure location in Cuba into the heartland of the United States is an irresponsible move that could endanger American lives. Instead of holding the terrorists outside the United States, President Obama has decided to move the Guantanamo detainees to a location only 450 miles from Sioux Falls," Thune said in a press statement his office released Dec. 15.

"It is a waste of taxpayer resources to move terrorists from the secure facility at Guantanamo, and it increases the risk that a federal judge may order an al Qaeda terrorist to be freed into American communities and neighborhoods," the senator said. "This flawed decision appears to be designed to appease the left wing of the Democrat party rather than to achieve an important national security objective."

This "flawed decision" is also part of the package this nation voted for, unless we all were secretly hoping that either McCain or Obama would go back on his campaign promises after being elected chief executive.

Sen. Thune needs to, well, chill a bit. And, he needs to stop spouting utter nonsense.

Moving Guantanamo detainees "only 450 miles from Sioux Falls" doesn't mean they may one day "be freed into American communities and neighborhoods."

Instead of swallowing political rhetoric, here are some facts for all of us to consider as we watch this issue likely get blown way out of proportion:

- Convicted terrorists already are held in U.S. prisons. Federal Bureau of Prisons director Harley Lappin said more than 340 international and domestic terrorists currently are incarcerated. Lappin said the bureau already works with federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to assess threats.

- Northwestern University law professor Joseph Margulies, who has represented detainees, agreed that moving them to a U.S. prison would not affect any risk of a terrorist attack. Chicago has been on guard against terrorism since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. In Michigan, Standish residents scoffed at the notion of their town, population 1,500, as a terrorist target. Residents of Thomson, a village of about 450 people, did too. If Chicago is a terrorist target, they say, it's because it's a big city and not because detainees would be locked up in Illinois.

- Detainees would be overseen by the military and would not mingle with other federal inmates, said Bureau of Prisons spokeswoman Felicia Ponce. If Thomson is chosen, the bureau would buy the prison and lease a "small" portion of it to the Department of Defense to house the detainees. The remainder would be operated as a high-security prison with between 1,500 and 1,600 inmates, Lappin said.

- Lappin also said Monday there would be a "limited" number of detainees and they would be in Department of Defense custody. The Michigan prison, which closed Oct. 31 because of budget cuts, has a capacity of about 600.

- And no, moving prisoners to U.S. soil doesn't mean we will suddenly be overrun by friends and family members of terrorists who decide to stop by to visit them on their way to blow up Mt. Rushmore (I picked the Shrine to Democracy since Sen. Thune has already painted a big red terrorist bull's eye on Sioux Falls). The Department of Defense does not allow detainees to have visitors. Phil Carter, deputy assistant secretary of defense for detainee policy, said detainees' only visitors at Guantanamo Bay are attorneys, the Red Cross and diplomatic and law enforcement personnel.

We can foresee this idea eventually turning into a fiasco, despite the fact that it is something that we've known would eventually happen. We're sure the same ilk that has revealed in the Tea Parties and the town halls and screamed about death panels and socialism will be crying that we're all about to die if detainees are moved from Cuba to our mainland.

That's fine. I mean, they have the right to do that. It would be nice, however, if they would explain why Guantanamo prisoners would instantly plunge us into danger, while the 340 convicted terrorists imprisoned in the U.S. are, well, not a problem.



## Bob's research reveals source of nation's nickname

In light of the fact that we are fighting in two wars, and that necessitates huge quantities of food and supplies to be sent to our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, I wondered how all of those thousands of boxes of food-stuffs were identified. No doubt "U.S." is on each one — meaning the United States or "Uncle Sam."

My research turned up an interesting tidbit on the origin of "Uncle Sam." At the beginning of the War of 1812-15, Elbert Anderson, a prosperous broker and contractor living in York City, worked out an agreement with the Secretary of War to supply the United States Army with all its rations. He advertised for sealed bids for 2,000 barrels of prime pork and 3,000 barrels of prime beef.



**Bob Karolevitz**  
*Writer At Large*

Low bidders turned out to be Ebenezer and Samuel Wilson, the owners of a successful packing house in Troy, New York.

Samuel Wilson was a much-liked figure in Troy. Everybody called him "Uncle Sam," but the fact that his initials and those of the United States were the same was not a matter of interest....

Until.... An employee of the Wilson firm noticed that the cask of meat being readied for

Elbert Anderson were stamped "E.A. - U.S."

Now at this time the United States was not normally referred to as "U.S." So, when the workman asked a friend what the initials stood for, he was told they represented the names of the buyers and sellers of the meat. Elbert Anderson and Uncle Sam (Wilson, of course.)

In this manner, the story goes, began the life of the Uncle Sam symbol.

A descendant of the origi-

nal Uncle Sam described his ancestor in these words: "In form and carriage he greatly resembled Abraham Lincoln. He was tall, well preserved and the type of well-to-do gentleman of his day. He had high cheek bones, was clean shaven, and wore his grey hair long."

Before the advent of Uncle Sam, the nickname used in connection with the United States was "Brother Jonathan." However, the new designation struck the public fancy more! And, so it is that "Uncle Sam" today represents the United States in the company of such opposite numbers as John Bull, Marianne, and the Russian Bear.

Now you know the rest of the story!

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## Oh, rest beside the weary road...

"And you, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow, look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing, and ever o'er its babble sounds, the blessed angels sing... Oh rest beside the weary road and hear the angels sing!" — *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* by Edmund H. Sears

With admiration and awe, I observe the woman two rows ahead and three seats over from where I am sitting at a holiday concert. Decorated like a spruce, she is adorned from head to toe with bells and bows.

Embodied with Christmas spirit, she flutters about musically as her arms move in airy waves and her head turns with gentle precision as though she is leading a grand chorus of angels.

Knitted into her sweater is a star illuminating a brightly colored manger scene. Her festive red shoes, trimmed in sparkling gold, coordinate with a cherry

### MyStory YourStory



**Paula Damon**  
*Columnist*

shoulder purse and a shimmering crimson skirt that flows to her ankles.

She jingles, too, with a bracelet of bells on her wrist, a string of bells around her neck and a cluster of bells dangling from each ear. Even hairpins she has so painstakingly placed make her gray locks dazzle.

It appears that this woman has donned every Christmas item from a vast collection of festive holiday apparel. I imagine there is nothing left in her closet now darkened, save everyday stuff sulking in drab browns, grays and blues.

Her jewelry box, too, has become a velvet-lined wasteland, emptied of every Rudolph pin that flashes and holly berry necklace that glimmers.

This woman reminds me

of my one and only Christmas pendant that I have left waiting silently somewhere in a dresser drawer.

She inspires memories of elementary school teachers, who every year on the last day before Christmas vacation applied the same festive merrymaking as this woman, for whom I am so grateful.

She is a walking Christmas card — a moving yuletide carol aglow with 'tis the season joy written in a code understood throughout the ages.

Such holiday spirit, gaudy yet graceful, chases away my gloom brought on by winter's darkness and embodies a light recognized by generations.

I love this Christmas lady, her glad and golden garb reminds me that Christmas, once again, is calling to set

me free.

Her spirit sings to me, "And you, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow, look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing, and ever o'er its babble sounds, the blessed angels sing... Oh rest beside the weary road and hear the angels sing!"

A resident of Southeast South Dakota, Paula Damon is a national award-winning columnist. Her columns have won first-place in National Federation of Press Women, South Dakota Press Women and Iowa Press Women Communications Contests. In the 2009 South Dakota Press Women Communications Contest, Paula's columns took three first-place awards. To contact Paula, email pauladamon@iwi.net, follow her blog at [www.my-story-your-story.blogspot.com](http://www.my-story-your-story.blogspot.com) and find her on Facebook.

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The Plain Talk encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

- Please limit letters to 350 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view.

Letters are edited with brevity and clarity.

- In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the Plain Talk will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

- Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted.

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