

*February 17*



Contempt covers shame.



## Obama OKs 17, 000 More Afghanistan Troops

## Obama KOs 17, 000 More Afghanistan Troops

Choose your headline. Either way, 8,000 Marines and 9,000 Army. Busy day for O., 'cause he also signs the "stimulus" bill, aka GOLP (Great Oligarchy Looting Plan).

Of the former, he says "There is no more solemn duty as president than the decision to deploy our armed forces into harm's way." Nor a more slalom duty either, given that oh so slippery slope. Or did he mean Salomon? No, they were eaten by Travelers, then absorbed into Citigroup, then blew up with their mortgage bond trading arm, Long Term Capital Management. If memory serves. Though it was so long ago – 1998 or thereabouts. Before, before, before.

*It will all, as the British say, end in tears.*



*February 18*

Lulin approaches. On the 24th, the comet will come within 38 million miles of us, nearer than Mars.



In this photo by Alex Roca of Hortonedá, Spain, Lulin, on the left, passes the 4th-magnitude star Theta Virginis.

Lulin stands to get brighter yet, visible with binoculars to those who find themselves in a place without too much ambient light.

## **Obama's War on Terror May Resemble Bush's in Some Areas**

WASHINGTON — Even as it pulls back from harsh interrogations and other sharply debated aspects of George W. Bush's "war on terrorism," the Obama administration is quietly signaling continued support for other major elements of its predecessor's approach to fighting Al Qaeda.

In little-noticed [!] confirmation testimony recently, Obama nominees endorsed continuing the C.I.A.'s program of transferring prisoners to other countries without legal rights, and indefinitely detaining terrorism suspects without trials even if they were arrested far from a war zone.

The administration has also embraced the Bush legal team's arguments that a

lawsuit by former C.I.A. detainees should be shut down based on the “state secrets” doctrine. It has also left the door open to resuming military commission trials.

And earlier this month, after a British court cited pressure by the United States in declining to release information about the alleged torture of a detainee in American custody, the Obama administration issued a statement thanking the British government “for its continued commitment to protect sensitive national security information.”

These and other signs suggest that the administration’s changes may turn out to be less sweeping than many had hoped or feared — prompting growing worry among civil liberties groups and a sense of vindication among supporters of Bush-era policies....

...Within days of his inauguration, Mr. Obama thrilled civil liberties groups when he issued executive orders promising less secrecy, restricting C.I.A. interrogators to Army Field Manual techniques, shuttering [?!] the agency’s secret prisons, ordering the prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, closed within a year and halting military commission trials.

But in more recent weeks, things have become murkier....

*Muddy water,*

*Let stand*

*Becomes clear.*

Said a certain sage of the Warring States period.

*February 21*

## **Obama Expands Missile Strikes Inside Pakistan**

And this from the *Globe and Mail*:

### **Unmanned Drone Prowls Over the Lonely Prairie**

WINNIPEG – Famed for prowling the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq, a remote-control Predator aircraft took flight over the wheat fields of South Dakota yesterday, the first in a network of surveillance drones that could soon patrol the American border with Canada from Maine to Washington state.

For now, the South Dakota drone will be confined to a 370-kilometre stretch



along the Manitoba border to test how it holds up to Prairie winters. By 2010, however, U.S. border officials hope to see the \$10.5-million unmanned aircraft monitoring both sides of the B.C. border during the Winter Olympics.

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...Already the agency has established five bases to act as launch sites for the drones in Bellingham, Wash., Great Falls, Mont., Grand Forks, N.D., Detroit and Plattsburgh, N.Y.

The plan, called the Northern Border Air Wing, is a holdover from the 9/11 Commission Report, which recommended that the United States shore up security along borders with Mexico and Canada....

...Five Predator drones currently patrol the Mexican border, and border officials give the aircraft partial credit for stopping more than 4,000 illegal immigrants and 8,000 kilograms of marijuana from crossing the southern boundary.

With a range of 5,900 kilometres and a maximum speed of more than 450 km/h, a single Predator will be capable of scouring a vast portion of the 9,000-km Canada-U.S. border. Sensors fastened to the plane's belly will take both infrared and HD video of anything within a 40-km radius....



Damian Dovarganes / AP

Lt. Col. Kirby R. Colas, commander of the 196th Reconnaissance Squadron, stands in front of a MQ-1 Predator

Still, the Predator evolves:

“The **MQ-9 Reaper** (originally the **Predator B**) is an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) developed by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (GA-ASI) for use by the United States Air Force, the United States Navy, and the British Royal Air Force. The MQ-9 is the first hunter-killer UAV designed for long-endurance, high-altitude surveillance.

“The MQ-9 is a larger and more capable aircraft than the earlier MQ-1 Predator. It can use MQ-1’s ground systems. The MQ-9 has a 950-shaft horsepower-turboprop engine, far more powerful than the Predator’s [wimpy] 119 hp (89 kW) piston engine. The increase in power allows the Reaper to carry 15 times more ordnance and cruise at three times the speed of the MQ-1.



MQ-9 Reaper in Afghanistan

“In 2008 the New York [!] Air National Guard 174th Fighter Wing began to transition from F-16 piloted planes to MQ-9 Reaper drones, which are capable of remote controlled or autonomous flight, becoming the first all-robot attack squadron.

“Retired U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff General T. Michael Moseley said, ‘We’ve moved from using UAVs primarily in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance roles before Operation Iraqi Freedom, to a true hunter-killer role with the Reaper.’”

Or, as Blue Öyster Cult chanté back in the day:

*All our times have come*

*Here but now they're gone*

*Seasons don't fear the reaper*

*Nor do the wind, the sun or the rain*

*We can be like they are*

*Come on baby*

*Don't fear the reaper*

*Baby take my hand*

*Don't fear the reaper*

*We'll be able to fly*

*Don't fear the reaper*

*Baby I'm your man...*

And bookending this a.m.'s online *Times* masthead:



Whilst yesterday Citigroup shares fell 56 cents to \$1.95.

And the reaper of "nationalization" gets ready to swing his (well-honed) scythe.

*February 22*



*February 23*



Stockholm-based Tham + Vidgard Hansson Arkitekter has designed a hotel hidden in the trees, to be located in Harads, Sweden.



Aluminum structures will be hung around tree trunks and clad in mirrored glass. The units will be accessible by rope ladder or rope bridge, each providing accommodation for two people including a living room, double bed, small kitchen, bathroom and roof terrace.



Tomorrow a.m., around 1 a.m. EST, comet Lulin makes its closest approach to us this pass through – about 38 million miles. Lulin and Saturn will converge in Leo only 2° apart, while four of the latter's moons transit its visible surface...

### *February 25*

Fold yourself into reality's inseam.

### *February 26*

*Nixon's army, Mitchell's law*

*Ain't no match for people's war!*

Even as that chant echoed around you lo these many years past, you remember thinking silently: People's war? Say wha'?

And now, as ever, we are where we are.

## **Obama Plans Major Shifts in Spending \$3.5 Trillion Budget Sets New Priorities as Big Deficits Loom**



Doug Mills/The New York Times

Office of Management and Budget director Peter R. Orszag with chairwoman of the Council of Economic Advisers Christina D. Romer at the White House on Thursday.

Wooaaaa – better grab that podium, Pete. And what is the *Times* trying to tell us with these evermore Titanic-style framings? Particularly when paired with iceberg words like “loom”? Or was the camera actually straight, and the room keeling?

***February 27***

*Scroll of Wonders, Scroll of Blunders, where will you roll now?*

All will be reviled.