

By Robert S. Dudney

Money for Nothing

"The Air Force has lost confidence in the Expeditionary Combat Support System (ECSS) and has canceled the program. After spending more than a billion dollars, the Air Force determined that the ECSS program has not yielded any significant military capability. ... From what we know to date, this case appears to be one of the most egregious examples of mismanagement in recent memory. We believe that the public and the taxpayers deserve a clear explanation of how the Air Force came to spend more than a billion dollars without receiving any significant military capability, who will be held accountable, and what steps the department is taking to ensure that this will not happen again."—*Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Senate Armed Services Committee, letter to Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta, Dec. 5.*

Washington Post Goes to War

"Obviously, those who serve, or served, their country deserve generous health benefits. But Tricare goes well beyond that. The service is free for Active Duty service members and their families except for some prescription copayments. For retirees under the age of 65, many of whom are in the work force and eligible for employer-provided benefits, Tricare costs at most \$1,000 per year out of pocket—less than a fifth of civilian plans, according to the Congressional Budget Office."—*Editorial, Washington Post, Dec. 3.*

New Generation

"We're already looking at what defines the sixth generation [fighter]. It'll be some kind of game-changing ability. Don't yet know what it is, but we're out there looking at it carefully. ... We're trying to decide what [a sixth generation technology] is. We're looking at technologies that hold promise to potentially define sixth gen, but we haven't said, 'That's it, we're going down that path.'"—*Gen. G. Michael Hostage III, head of Air Combat Command, remarks at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, as reported in Air Force Times, Nov. 30.*

Destroying Villages To Save Them

"To Save Congo, Let It Fall Apart."—

Actual headline on op-ed in the New York Times, Nov. 30.

The Dumbo View ...

"We've crossed a line ... from using drones against known terrorists to using them more broadly against whole groups of militants. It plays into the narrative that portrays the United States as an enemy of Islam. ... We're in danger of creating more enemies than we are removing."—*Robert L. Grenier, a former CIA station chief in Pakistan, questioning use of remotely piloted aircraft to kill terrorists, Los Angeles Times, Dec. 2.*

... and the Smart View

"The drones are not machines that make decisions on their own. They are not robots. They are piloted; the pilots are simply thousands of miles away. The fact that those pilots are safe and they are not engaged in a 'fair fight,' which troubles some critics, has always struck me as positive. As an American, I do not like putting our military personnel at unnecessary risk."—*Former White House counterterror advisor Richard A. Clarke, op-ed New York Daily News, Dec. 2.*

Under the Big Top

"By the third siren, I wasn't scared at all, just fascinated by it. It was all surreal, the notion that rockets were being fired towards me, and that I wasn't really in danger."—*Ossie Ravid, Tel Aviv resident, referring to the work of Israel's "Iron Dome" anti-missile defense system in the recent Gaza-Israel violence, Washington Post, Dec. 3.*

Al Qaeda for Optimists ...

"I do believe that, on the present course, there will come a tipping point—a tipping point at which so many of the leaders and operatives of al Qaeda and its affiliates have been killed or captured and the group is no longer able to attempt or launch a strategic attack against the United States, such that al Qaeda as we know it, the organization that our Congress authorized the military to pursue in 2001, has been effectively destroyed. At that point we must be able to say to ourselves that our efforts should no longer be considered an 'armed conflict' against al Qaeda and its associ-

ated forces, rather a counterterrorism effort against individuals who are the scattered remains of al Qaeda ... for which the law enforcement and intelligence resources of our government are principally responsible."—*Jeh C. Johnson, then DOD general counsel, speech in Oxford, UK, Nov. 30.*

... and for Pessimists

"You have a well developed infrastructure [of al Qaeda in Iraq] that is only getting stronger. It's not like the 'underwear bomber,' where al Qaeda enlists amateurs in sophisticated terrorist operations. You're talking about people with experience. Perhaps not the 'A Team,' but close to it."—*Bruce Hoffman, former CIA counterterrorism expert and now Georgetown University professor, Washington Post, Dec. 3.*

Syria's Red Line

"This is a red line for the United States. I'm not going to telegraph in any specifics what we would do in the event of credible evidence that the Assad regime has resorted to using chemical weapons against their own people. But suffice it to say, we are certainly planning to take action if that eventuality were to occur."—*Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, press conference in Prague, Czech Republic, Dec. 3.*

Doing Less With More

"All through the George W. Bush and first Obama terms, we witnessed dramatic growth in the Pentagon's 'base' budget, adding about \$1 trillion to planned DOD spending for nonwar basics—that is, not including the additional monies spent on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. With 44 percent more money, the Navy's fleet shrank by 10 percent; with a budget 43 percent larger, the Air Force's air combat fleet shrank 51 percent. ... The Army grew by a grand total of two brigade combat teams as its base budget grew 53 percent in real terms. How on earth is a Pentagon that permits most of its forces to shrink and age with increased budgets?—*Winslow T. Wheeler, director of the Straus Military Reform Project, op-ed in ForeignPolicy.com, Nov. 30.*