

### Ripe For Bamboozlement

"All these newspapers used to have foreign bureaus. Now, they don't. They call us to explain to them what's happening in Moscow and Cairo. Most of the outlets are reporting on world events from Washington. The average reporter we talk to is 27 years old, and their only reporting experience consists of being around political campaigns. That's a sea change. They literally know nothing."—*National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes, on how the White House took advantage of gullible reporters to "sell" the Iranian nuclear deal, quoted in New York Times Magazine, May 8.*

### Arc of History

"My career started here [Europe] in a Cold War trying to keep the peace. ... My career is now ending here trying to prevent a Cold War and continue to keep the peace."—*USAF Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, at a ceremony marking his retirement after 39 years in uniform, May 3, Stuttgart, Germany.*

### Unintended Consequences

"The investigation determined that all members of both the ground force and the AC-130 aircrew were unaware that the aircraft was firing on a medical facility. ... As I talked to each of these individuals that were involved, their intention was true. They were absolutely trying to do the right thing. They were trying to support our Afghan partners. There was no intention on any of their parts to take a short cut, or to violate any rules that were laid out for them. And they were attempting to do the right thing."—*Army Gen. Joseph L. Votel, US Central Command, results of a probe into 2015 strike on Doctors Without Borders clinic in Afghanistan, DOD press briefing, April 29.*

### Touchy, Touchy

"They sit together, scheme, and say that Iran must not hold war games in the Persian Gulf. What a foolish remark! They [US forces] come here from the other side of the globe and stage war games. What are you doing here? Go back to the Bay of Pigs. Go and hold exercises there. What are you doing in the Persian Gulf? The Persian Gulf

is our home."—*Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, remarks criticizing the US military presence in the Middle East, reported by AP, May 2.*

### Don't Bet on It

"The stunning success of the Air Force in dominating its domain since the 1991 Gulf War has created two looming problems for the service leadership: The Air Force no longer has any substantive experience in how to fight and win in a highly contested environment, and its current airmen have never experienced serious losses of people and machines in air combat. The very profession of arms in air combat—'to fly, fight, and win' in Air Force parlance—may be at risk. The Air Force's immense success resulting from the courage, skill, and technological superiority of American airmen has now perversely made the service much less ready to fight the next big war."—*Retired Army Lt. Gen. David W. Barno and Nora Bensahel of American University, in "War on the Rocks," May 3. Barno was head of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan 2003-05.*

### Of Farmers and Strategists

"Attacking orthodoxy, convention, and unquestioned assumptions in pursuit of a competitive edge—that's a good thing. What's wrongheaded, though, is the premise of the modern defense debate. The presumption seems to be that, just as farmers must plow the fields and rotate crops every year to get better results, so military thinkers must turn over fundamental military concepts on a regular basis. The belief that intellectual advances will inevitably deliver a better understanding of complex phenomenon is a tenet of faith—and one of the biggest blind spots—in the modern world."—*James Jay Carafano, Heritage Foundation vice president for national security, The National Interest, May 4.*

### Biggy Smalls

"In the olden days, we'd say, 'I need a stealth bomber to get through that [dense enemy air defenses].' Now we might say, I need a stealth bomber that's equipped with ... Gremlins [small drones] .... I need a stealth bomber

that's going to get close, and then it's going to drop a whole bunch of smalls. Some are decoys, some are jammers, some are [ISR] looking for where the SAMs are. Some of them are kamikaze airplanes that are going to kamikaze into those SAMs, and they're cheap. You have maybe 100 or 1,000 surface-to-air missiles, but we're going to hit you with 10,000 smalls. ... That's why we want smalls. ... Suddenly, we're overwhelming their radars, and it's all cheap stuff."—*USAF Col. Travis Burdine, division chief, RPA operations, referring to DARPA's Gremlin Project, quoted in flightglobal.com, May 3.*

### Fool's Errand

"The deployment of 250 additional US military forces to Syria is a welcome development but one that is long overdue and ultimately insufficient. Another reluctant step down the dangerous road of gradual escalation will not undo the damage in Syria. ... While the Assad regime, together with Russia, Iran, and their proxies, has slaughtered Syrians with impunity and changed the military facts on the ground, the Administration has been on a fool's errand, pleading with Vladimir Putin to negotiate a political solution to the very hostilities he perpetuates."—*Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), statement on President Obama's decision to send a handful of US troops to Syria, April 25.*

### What Worries Gates

"One of the things that worries me ... is that he [Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump] doesn't appear to listen to people. He believes that he has all the answers, that he's the smartest man in the room. And I've worked with some ... very different presidents. Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush, Barack Obama. One of the things they all had in common was a willingness to listen to people who ... had experience and then make their own independent judgment. Now, they've gone in different directions, but they never assumed they had all the answers, and that's one of the things that troubles me."—*Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, ABC News' "This Week" broadcast, May 1.*