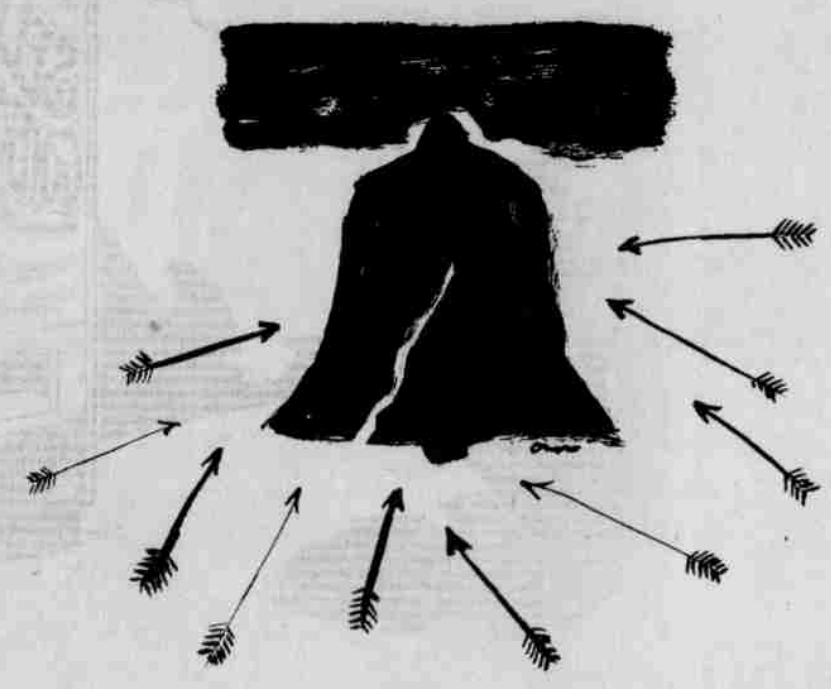
Keep up U.S. vigilance against terrorist acts on our forces.

Lessons from USS Cole

By Bert Useem



JOHN OVERMYER

The bombing of the USS Cole, killing at least 17 crew members, would seem to demonstrate once again the vulnerability of the U.S. military forces to terrorist attacks — different only in magnitude from the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon (241 U.S. servicemen killed) but on the par with the 1996 bombing of Khobar Towers, in Dharan, Saudi Arabia (17 servicemen killed).

But this criticism is naive and ahistoric.

The best anti-terrorism/force protection (AT/FP) practices cannot ensure success in warding off terrorist attacks. But defective organization increases manyfold the likelihood that such attempts will be made, and of casualties when they do occur. Terrorists are a reactive adversary: searching for vulnerabilities in existing defenses, acquiring new tactics and weapons, and looking for lines of least expectation.

For example, the on-site commander at Khobar focused his AT/FP efforts almost exclusively on preventing the penetration of the compound by a bomb on a vehicle – the terrorist tactic at Beirut that proved so costly. With this avenue cut off, the attackers used a truck bomb of such large magnitude that penetration was unnecessary. Its detonation, outside both the compound's perimeter and the designated standoff distance, pulverized one side of a housing unit. The security officer at Khobar would later comment that he did "not in any way, shape or form" expect the 5,000 pound bomb that was used.

The key point is that a closing off of most direct vulnerabilities provides some protection but does not eliminate the full spectrum of terrorist threats.

Following Khobar, the Department of Defense undertook a major effort to build AT/FP competency at all levels. AT/FP now is under the direction of a single office within the Joint Chiefs of Staff ("J-34"), which assists commanders in the field in AT/FP issues, channels resources toward anti-terrorism efforts, and establishes anti-terrorism strategic goals and standards.

Defense Department sites, both within and outside the U.S. borders, are inspected for their vulnerability to terrorist attack on a routine basis. Defense Department commanders and other personnel receive much more training and education in anti-terrorism than prior to Khobar. In short, before Khobar, there was no single core group within Defense Department with broad responsibility for force protection. Such an element — staffed with competent, motivated personnel — now exists. Force protection has been given much higher priority for funding, the formulation of policies and standards and technology development.

But the USS Cole did happen. Ironically, this demonstrates the partial success of the existing efforts. Apparently terrorists believe that the traditional venues are closed off to them. The point then is to further close off the newly discovered one. A more powerful explosive device, if used against the USS Cole, could have caused another Beirut in its magnitude. Anti-naval terrorism could well escalate, unless countermeasures are taken.

There are historical lessons to be learned. One is that terrorism tends to come in waves, rather than isolated incidents. Prior to both the Beirut and Khobar Tower bombings, there were smaller but still deadly attacks against local targets. In Beirut, 57 were killed in a bombing of the U.S. Embassy; in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, five were killed in the bombing of an Army office. The attack on the USS Cole could be the start of such a wave.

In addition, there are risks involved in establishing a military presence overseas, and there are additional risks from an increased presence in heretofore neglected countries such as Yemen to "engage" the populace and to gain allies (or at least neutrality) against the risk of attack on the Ugly American. When viewed in this manner, it seems ill-advised to inundate a sovereign country (Yemen) with FBI investigators as we are doing at the moment. The Saudi Royal Family still seethes from the indignity of flooding their country with FBI officials during the Khobar Towers probe. We must avoid pat, cookie-cutter solutions to complex issues.

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Tomorrow: Acel Moore takes the "Urban Perspectives"; Romancing the Vote; Do the Monster Mash.

A few words written in the dark cast new light on doomed sub

By Rachel Simon

We know him by his last words: "None of us can get to the surface."

He was Lt. Capt. Dmitry Kolesnikov, and he penned this note in the darkness of compartment 9 of the hapless Kursk submarine. As the Russian vessel lay atilt 350 feet beneath the Barents Sea, and as the surviving 23 of the 118-man crew crowded into the last place they would taste air, he inscribed his observations on a piece of paper. Then he, or someone, slipped his scrawled words into his pocket, where they became a message inside this 507-foot steel bottle. Last week, more than two months after the sub went belly-down onto the ocean floor, the world unfolded this letter, as it was plucked, along with his remains, from the sea.

Capt. Kolesnikov is no longer simply one more victim in a school of lost sailors. He is not just another of the consonant-heavy names we noted in our mid-August newspapers. And the Kursk is not just one more log on the Russian self-immolation pyre.

Now he is our witness.

Suddenly this has ceased being a news event about a doomed *them*. Suddenly we see 118 *we's*.

Who, we now wonder, was Capt. Kolesnikov? What was our watery Orpheus like before he descended to the underworld from which only his thoughts ever escaped?

He was a 27-year-old newlywed, married only this year to Olga, whose anguished face is now becoming as familiar to us as the photographs of her groom. Friendly and eager to help others, he was no stranger to the pen, nor to thoughts of death; when he had a premonition of his death before departing on the Kursk, he reportedly left his wife a crucifix, his dog tags and a love poem. "And when the time comes to die," he wrote then, "though I chase such thoughts away, I want time to whisper one thing: My darling, I love you."

Probably he did have the time to say — and write — such things (there were parts of his letter that were for his family's eyes only). This realization punctures the meager comfort we took at the thought that the crew died instantly. When there is enough oxygen left to compose a letter, there is enough time to contemplate drowning, or suffocation, or whatever unspeakable fate awaits. We now realize that the survivors of the initial explosion might well have had not just seconds, but hours or even days to whisper their good-byes to their loved ones and curse the buffoonery of the Russian navy.

All because of his written words.

This is not the first time history has made a famous author out of an ordinary person. Anne Frank's diary, written during her years in hiding from the Nazis, shook the world upon its publication. Yes, six million Jews had still perished in the Holocaust, but now we knew one of them: a brilliant, feisty teenager who had the same longings as every one of us. She may have spilled her ink only on the pages before her, but that ink has sent ripples across the decades.

"I am writing blindly," Capt. Kolesnikov scribbled, referring to the darkness in compartment 9. But he was not at all blind to the knowledge that his writing could be a fingerprint on a particular moment, a face that could stare down the lies. Maybe the pen isn't mightier than the sea, but that doesn't mean it cannot have a mighty legacy.

Rachel Simon's next book, about a year riding buses with her mentally retarded sister, is due out next year.

Candidates debate in online forum

Townhall eDebates on Quorum.org

Along with www.quorum.com, The Inquirer has cosponsored a series of e-debates with the candidates in four major elections. In the next week, we'll be running selections from the questions, the candidates' responses, and comments and contributions by readers.

Here is the schedule:

Tomorrow: N.J. Third Congressional District (H. James Saxton [R.] vs. Susan Bass Levin [D.]

Thursday, Nov. 2: Pennsylvania 13th Congressional District (Joseph M. Hoeffel [D.] vs. Stewart J. Greenleaf [R.])

Sunday, Nov. 5: U.S. Senate races in Pennsylvania (Rick Santorum [R.] vs. Ron Klink [D.]) and New Jersey (Robert D. Franks [R.] vs. Jon S. Corzine [D.])

Lucy and Desi shared their love and laughter on the small screen

By Alvin S. Felzenberg

Couples

Standout pairs who embody the 20th century

Whoever first observed that opposites attract had to be thinking of Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz.

Born in Jamestown, N.Y., Ball grew up in humble surroundings. Her father was a telephone lineman. He died when she was 4. Arnaz started life in luxury in Santiago, Cuba, the son of the mayor. At 16, he had his own car, boat and horses. After Fulgencio Batista seized power in 1933, Arnaz and his family moved to Miami, penniless.

Lucy was enticed into show business by an eccentric grandfather who encouraged her to imitate acts she had seen in vaudeville. She became a model, then an extra and stock player and eventually the star of so many second-rank films that she earned the title "Queen of the 'B's."

Desi used his flair for singing and dexterity with the guitar and drums to escape from menial jobs. His big break came when fellow Cuban and bandleader Xavier Cugat saw him perform and hired him. Arnaz's career took off when the conga routine he worked into a performance of Rogers and Hart's *Too Many Girls* stopped the show.

Ball and Arnaz met on the RKO set in 1940 during the filming of the musical. Each was initially put off by what they saw of each other in costume. All that changed when Desi asked if he could take her out to teach her the rhumba. They soon married. He was 23; she 28.

Friends said the tempestuous relationship could not last more than six months. Lucy gave it six weeks. Desi's prolonged tours with bands and military service increased the strain on the marriage. They filed for divorce, then reconciled.

In looking for ways to revitalize her career, Lucy stumbled onto a new medium that would change both their lives and transform show business: television. Lucy was starring in a radio comedy called *My Favorite Husband*. She agreed to move the show to television, with one condition: that Desi be cast as the male lead. To persuade the network that American audiences would warm to a skit about a Cuban bandleader and his brainy but batty wife, they took their act on tour. To handle the bookings and receipts, they formed a new company, Desilu.

Suddenly, Lucy and Desi were more than a talented couple. They became collaborators in front of the camera and shrewd entrepreneurs off. They hired supporting actors Vivian Vance (a Desi find) and William Frawley (a Lucy pick) and assembled a team of talented writers. Many credit Desi with the idea of filming the episodes with three cameras (now an industry staple), which made possible the lucrative rerun market.

I Love Lucy premiered Oct. 15, 1951. For close to a decade, it was the most popular show on television. The episode in which Lucy gave birth to Little Ricky drew an audience of 44 million, more than watched Dwight D. Eisehower's 1952 inauguration.

Lucy attributed the show's success to its writers' ability to take ordinary situations and exaggerate them. What actors brought, she maintained, was the ability to rehearse until they got it right. She held coworkers to the same standards of perfection she demanded of herself, often incurring the wrath of her guest stars.

As the couple's fame and ratings grew, Desilu evolved into a production company of the first order. At its peak, it was either producing or serving as the site for filming of some of the most popular shows on television.

Desi thrived in his role as producer. He shrugged off the offstage title of "Mr. Lucille Ball," indulging his weakness for gambling and women and descended into alcoholism. He and Lucy divorced in 1960.

After their marriage dissolved, Lucy and Desi began another and more enduring connection: Each became the other's best friend and fiercest protector. Desi advised her on future parts and shows. Lucy covered for her ex-husband's indiscretions and fretted over his health. After both remarried, they continued to talk every day and kept in view mementos of each other. All that seemed to have disappeared from their relationship that spanned nearly 50 years was their bickering. They never seemed to have fallen out of love.

Through their talent, the energy they invested in their work, and the synergy that bound them together, Lucy and Desi made millions laugh. Because of their foresight they will keep doing it well into the next millennium.

Alvin S. Felzenberg writes and lectures on the American presidency.



The cast of "I Love Lucy," (from left) Lucille Ball, Vivian Vance, Desi Arnaz and William Frawley in a scene from the TV show which ran from 1951 to 1966.

LECTURE

Infertility Over 35

Susan H. Black, M.D.
Saturday, November 11, 2000 • 9:00–10:30 a.m.
Philadelphia Marriott West, West Conshohocken, PA

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