

Congress struggles to limit torture and experts say harsh interrogation doesn't work

Congress is trying to bar the Central Intelligence Agency from using waterboarding and other harsh interrogation tactics that many argue are torture. Experts who have studied torture say that many of these kinds of tactics simply don't work.

By SHARON SCHMICKLE

When people who've undergone harsh interrogation find their way to treatment in Minnesota, a common theme in their therapy is guilt over names they spilled after they cracked.

"One thing they find so shameful about themselves is that they broke and they gave away names," said Douglas A. Johnson, executive director of the Center for Victims of Torture in Minneapolis.

But whose names? Menacing terrorists? Innocent bystanders?

The questions are central to heated debate in Washington where a bill before Congress would bar the Central Intelligence Agency from using waterboarding and other harsh interrogation tactics that many argue are torture.

The House passed the intelligence authorization bill last week. It would restrict American interrogators to tactics allowed in the U.S. Army Field Manual, which prohibits physical force. Minnesota's delegation split along party lines with Democrats supporting the bill.

Now the bill faces stiff opposition from Senate Republicans, with notable exceptions such as Sen. John McCain of Arizona, who was tortured as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam. On Friday, other Republicans used Senate procedural rules to block the bill, which President Bush has threatened to veto.



REUTERS

A U.S. Army guard stands in a corridor of cells in Camp Five, a detention facility at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, earlier this year.

Bush administration officials insisted last week that the CIA's interrogation methods have been "lawful," and they have extracted valuable intelligence from senior al-Qaeda terrorists, the Associated Press reported.

Sen. Christopher Bond, R-Mo., ranked CIA interrogations as one of the nation's best sources of intelligence in the war on terror.

continued on page 5

INSIDE

The CIA is in hot water for destroying videotapes of its interrogation of alleged terrorist Abu Zubaydah, but this case is prompting another debate: Was the information obtained from Zubaydah as important as President Bush and others assert? **page 6**

MINNPOST.WORLD President Bush signed legislation mandating an increase in fuel-economy standards, but critics doubt the administration's commitment to limit greenhouse-gas emissions. **page 2**

COMMUNITY VOICES
Note to Star Tribune's

Katherine Kersten: We're one nation, under gods. **page 8**

JAY WEINER Minnesota's Strongest Man feels strongly about performance-enhancing drugs. **page 3**

DELMA FRANCIS
Merry Christmas becomes

a less-standard greeting this time of year. **page 4**

DR. CRAIG BOWRON
Treat smoking as an addiction, not a habit. **page 6**

DON LEE A heavenly truce comes to the stage. **page 7**

MinnPost in Print, published weekdays at lunchtime, contains highlights of MinnPost.com — high-quality reporting by top Minnesota journalists of news that matters.

Promote your business or honor someone special with an ad in this space.
\$50 for members. Contact swaterman@minnpost.com.

MINNPOST.WORLD

Bush signs energy legislation, but critics have their doubts

By SUSAN ALBRIGHT

It was smiles all around Wednesday as Democratic leaders watched President Bush sign the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, thereby putting into motion the first mandated increase in U.S. fuel-economy standards in 32 years. The bipartisan bonhomie and congratulations were short-lived, however. Just hours later, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) denied California a waiver to put its more stringent vehicle-emissions curbs into place, thereby thwarting – as the Bush administration did at this month’s climate conference in Bali – any concrete targets for limiting U.S. greenhouse-gas emissions.

The compromise energy law requires automakers to reach a fleetwide average of 35 miles per gallon for U.S. cars and light trucks by 2020. It is widely seen as worth touting, despite compromises that dropped other standards as well as incentives for renewable technologies. By increasing vehicles’ fuel economy, it will have the effect of reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. It will also increase the efficiency of household appliances and mandate new labeling rules to help consumers compare products.

Follow-through is key to the law’s success, however, and some doubt the administration’s commitment to aggressively regulate. While applauding the new law, the Consumer Federation of America voiced its concerns. Implementation of the fuel-economy standards and the improvements in appliances’ efficiency “will be overseen by the very federal agencies that have been dragging their feet for decades,” wrote Mark Cooper, the federation’s director of research. “Both the National Highway Safety Administration and the Department of Energy have lost lawsuits in the past few years that accused them of failing to do their job properly in evaluating the value of energy savings.” The federation, he wrote, stands ready to “trust and verify” that the agencies “will act in good faith to



By KEVIN LAMARQUE, REUTERS
 President Bush, flanked by Energy Secretary Sam Bodman (left), House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., at the signing ceremony Wednesday for the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007.

implement aggressively the spirit and intent of the legislation” – a hopeful, if not confident, stance.

Legal battle
 Still, Wednesday’s signing would have been viewed with more pride had the EPA not, as the Washington Post, so soon thereafter overruled “the unanimous recommendation of the agency’s legal and technical staffs” in denying California’s proposed emissions regulations.

“The decision set in motion a legal battle that EPA’s lawyers expect to lose and demonstrated the Bush administration’s determination to oppose any mandatory measures specifically targeted at curbing global warming pollution,” the Post said. “A total of 18 states, representing 45 percent of the nation’s auto market, have either adopted or pledged to implement California’s proposed tailpipe emissions rules, which seek to cut vehicles’ greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent between 2009 and 2016.”

That target “would have translated into roughly 43 miles per gallon for cars and some light trucks and about 27 miles per gallon for heavier trucks and sport utility vehicles,” said The

New York Times, adding that if California and the other states had adopted the stringent standard, “it would have covered at least half of all vehicles sold in America.” Which is why the EPA’s action was so disappointing to anyone hoping for aggressive action to limit greenhouse-gas emissions.

Moreover, the EPA’s denial was a first. For 37 years it has been America’s leader in curbing air pollution; this is the first time it has been denied permission to adopt tougher rules than the federal government’s.

Top-down approach

Andrew C. Revkin noted in his Dot Earth blog at The New York Times that the Bush administration “touted its efforts to limit warming from greenhouse gases” at the recent Bali climate conference. And just a few years earlier, “the chief Bush administration negotiator, Harlan Watson, gave a speech holding out state actions as evidence of American initiative on climate. At those talks, in Milan in 2003, Mr. Watson listed a variety of initiatives begun by states and communities, which he said were like ‘laboratories

where new and creative ideas and methods can be applied and shared with others and inform federal policy – a truly bottom-up approach to addressing global climate change.’

“Now the dynamic seems to have flipped, at least when it comes to limiting carbon dioxide from motor vehicles.” The government instead asserts a top-down approach: Its standard cannot be exceeded. That means, practically speaking, that it’s back to the courts – where the EPA’s own attorneys predicted the government would lose.

According to the Los Angeles Times, California will lose no time in pressing its case: “‘Gov. Schwarzenegger and I are preparing to sue at the earliest possible moment,’ California Atty. Gen. Jerry Brown said, asserting that the Bush administration had no legal justification to deny the state’s request.” Stay tuned.

Susan Albright, a former editor of the Star Tribune’s editorial pages, writes about national and foreign developments.

Minnesota's Strongest Man feels strongly about performance-enhancing drugs



JAY WEINER

I will not make jokes about Dave Ostlund. I am smarter than that. Dave is 6 feet 7, 320 pounds and Minnesota's Strongest Man. He proved that in California last September and, finally, the evidence will be displayed nonstop on ESPN2 on Dec. 26.

Ostlund, a former Edina High and University of St. Thomas athlete, finished sixth out of the globe's 25 most powerful guys in this year's World's Strongest Man competition in Anaheim, Calif.

For that achievement, he pocketed a mere \$8,000, enough to cover Barry Bonds' legal bills for a day. But what's money when you can lift 820 pounds – Vikings Matt Birk, Tarvaris Jackson and Adrian Peterson combined – of weights to your hips, stand straight up, lock your knees and strain your veins so they pop out like rubber bands?

With a bar attached to a mini-SUV's rear end, Ostlund can lift it off the ground. In rapid succession, he can throw ten 60-pound kegs over a 16-foot-high-wall. Or, if you'd like, he waddles in the "duck walk barrel-carrying event" with a 500-pound weight between his legs.

"That actually looks kinda stupid," Ostlund said.

I have no opinion. Dave is

my friend. I've got Dave's back.

Face it, the world of sports is totally kablooey. Commissioners and congressmen, sociologists and statisticians, Roger Clemens and Sean Taylor turn baseball into a legal minefield, football into religion, and sports pages into tiny episodes of "Law and Order." You tell me which sport is "legitimate" and which is "trashy" or "made-for-TV."

Strong-man competition jaw-dropping fun to watch

The World's Strongest Man competition is pure jaw-dropping entertainment. It's all testosterone, all the time. Last man standing, no-way-I-can-do-that, primitive stuff.

"Ever heard of Milo?" Ostlund asked. "Milo and the bull?"

It's a legend-based-on-history that goes back to 500 B.C. Milo's dad bought him a bull calf. Milo lifted the bull. As the bull got bigger, Milo kept lifting and his strength increased.

Dave Ostlund is Edina's Milo. He played some football for the Hornets, but preferred the throwing events in track and field, shot put and discus. He liked weight lifting.

"Then I saw this competition on ESPN," said Ostlund, who has done some real estate appraising on the side. "I saw guys lifting rocks and pulling trucks. I got interested."

He was always tall, but only about 230 pounds in high

school. So, he lifted. He read body-building magazines. He lifted some more. He saw pages of advertisements for "supplements" in those muscle-bound, oiled-up magazines.

"It's easy to get drawn into supplements as the key to your progress," Ostlund said. "But, you know what? Most supplements don't do that much."

He acknowledges he bought supplements. Nothing illegal, but testosterone boosters that were, admittedly, "on the edge, borderline." Needless to say, there is no steroid testing at the World's Strongest Man competition. Ostlund wishes there were. He knows that testing doesn't sweep clean a sport. But it makes an event healthier, less bionic, less freakish, less suspect.

"Me, right now, I take protein powder, a multivitamin and salmon oil," he said. "If I could go back to being 16 and take

what I spent on supplements, I'd buy more meat and more eggs and more vegetables. That's what I'd do."

On Dec. 26, check out ESPN2, starting at 5 p.m. our time. Ostlund's in the fourth heat at 6:30 p.m., and then again in the finals, at 10 p.m. When you pick up that remote zapper, weigh this: It's 819.5 pounds lighter than what Minnesota Strong Man Dave Ostlund can lift.

Right now. Veins popping. No sweat.

Your ad here!



Your message can appear
in MinnPost in Print or online
at www.MinnPost.com
or both

Contact Sally Waterman, director of advertising,
at 612-455-6953 or swaterman@minnpost.com.

MinnPost in Print

MinnPost in Print includes highlights of MinnPost.com, a new daily providing high-quality journalism for people everywhere who care about Minnesota. MinnPost in Print is distributed at selected locations in the Twin Cities, but anyone can print a copy from a PDF available at www.minnpost.com. Visit the website for audio, videos and more stories.

We believe that high-quality journalism is not just a consumer good; it's a community asset that contributes to the health of our democracy and the quality of our lives. Please consider making a donation to MinnPost, a nonprofit enterprise.

Joel Kramer, CEO and editor

Contact us: info@minnpost.com • Advertising: swaterman@minnpost.com

'Merry Christmas' greeting still tricky in age of political correctness



DELMA FRANCIS

Merry Christmas! The exuberant greeting of the season used to bring me such joy — both to give and to receive.

But I almost never hear it — or utter it — anymore. The fear of offending a non-Christian has taken this pleasure from the season. I have become PC on the issue, I'm afraid.

I believe I am pretty strong in my faith (I never write Christmas with an X) but I would never deliberately belittle anyone else's by wishing someone I knew to be of another faith a merry Christmas. After all, Jesus is the reason for the season, and to force my belief in him on someone who believes he was a great man, but not the Messiah, would be tacky and insensitive.

Sadly, holiday greetings have inspired violence this season. Almost two weeks ago, three Jewish subway riders on New York's Q train were attacked by a rowdy group of 10 after Walter Adler responded to a wish of "Merry Christmas" with "Happy Hanukkah." And who came to their rescue? Hassan Askari, a Muslim student from Bangladesh.

Unbelievable. To quote Rodney King: "Can't we all just get along?"

Adler handled the Christmas greeting in a perfectly acceptable way by responding with his religion's greeting of the season. How do other non-Christians feel when they're wished a merry Christmas?

It depends whom you ask.

Marcia Zimmerman, senior rabbi of Temple Israel in Minneapolis said, "You feel clearly part of the minority population at this time of the year. It's a very important time for Christians, and I find beauty in the tradition." But how she feels when people wish her a merry Christmas depends on where she is at the time, Zimmerman said. "If I'm in a church as a visitor, OK, but if I'm in a grocery store or department store, there's an assumption there that we are all of one religion. We are of many traditions."

"My fellow Jews may or may not agree with me, but this is a huge, huge meaningful holiday for the majority," said Gail Rosenblum of Minneapolis, a former colleague of mine at the Star Tribune. "There is no meanness when someone says 'Merry Christmas.' It's an assumption (that I'm Christian). I just say 'Thank you. Have a happy holiday.'"

Rosenblum says she also doesn't mind receiving Christmas cards. "I have a love for the

season." She's come by that honestly. Her father's love for Christmas carols saved his life during World War II. Stationed onboard the troop carrier Leopoldville on Christmas Eve 1944, headed for the Battle of the Bulge, 19-year-old Sidney Rosenblum joined about 200 other soldiers on deck singing "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," "We Three Kings of Orient Are" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing."

A few minutes later, a little past 6 p.m., the bottom stern section of the ship was hit by a German torpedo, killing hundreds. If not for the lure of the Christmas music, Sidney Rosenblum would have been below deck, probably among the dead.

Life-saving Christmas carols

But beyond that amazing story, Rosenblum says she is secure enough in her faith that she doesn't get caught up in all the political correctness of Christmas greetings, adding, "I feel sorry for my Christian friends who get bogged down in saying, 'Happy holidays,' and calling parties holiday parties. They're Christmas parties. I can enjoy it without owning it."

I also worked with Mike Meyers, a Minneapolis atheist, who says he's unaffected by wishes

of a merry Christmas. "It doesn't mean anything. It's become a secular holiday. It hasn't mattered to me since I wanted a red bike under the tree."

"It doesn't bug me because we celebrate Christmas, just not the Jesus part," said Nicole Bue, an 18-year-old senior at Brooklyn Center High School whose grandfather is a Buddhist shaman. "My family doesn't have an official religion...we kind of observe our grandfather's beliefs out of respect, but my dad said it's up to us to decide" what religion to embrace.

Is Shruti Mathur, a Hindu from Wilmington, Del., bothered by being wished a merry Christmas? "It probably depends on my mood that day," she jokes.

Mathur, who grew up in Minnesota and worked at the Star Tribune, said her family celebrated the secular side of Christmas, with a decorated tree and gift-giving, but Christmas greetings do bother her in the sense that "it brings that sense of 'otherness.' You're just trying to make your place in the world, and someone else's opinion means more. But you balance it like everything else. There's no need to berate a drugstore clerk for saying, 'Merry Christmas.' Just wish it back."

Become a MinnPost Partner in Print

If you own or manage a location that has a lot of traffic over the lunch hour or in the afternoon, please sign up to be a MinnPost Partner in Print. All you need to do is commit to printing 10 or more copies each weekday on your own printer and make them available at no charge to your employees and/or customers. All Partners in Print will be recognized on the MinnPost.com website and in MinnPost in Print as space allows.

If you print 250 copies a day, we can put your own message on the bottom of the front page on your copies. For more information or to sign up, email Beth Thibodeau at bthibodeau@minnpost.com

MinnPost in Print



MinnPost Partners in Print

- Macalester College
- Eastside Food Cooperative
- Tunheim Partners
- Jewish Family & Children's Service of Minneapolis
- Padilla Speer Beardsley
- Open Book,
- Minneapolis Central Library
- PostNet-Richfield
- Campus Club, University of Minnesota
- Institute for Local Self-Reliance
- Minneapolis Club
- Postal Dispatch Business Center

Writer Eric Black to join MinnPost staff

Eric Black, a long-time Twin Cities newspaper reporter and more recently blogger, will join MinnPost Jan. 2 to report and write about politics and government, as well as other topics.

Black, a long-time Twin Cities newspaper reporter and more recently blogger, will join MinnPost on Jan. 2. Black, formerly of the Star Tribune, the Big Question blog, and the Minnesota Monitor, will write for MinnPost about the same topics he has covered for years. These include the politics and government of Minnesota and the United States, the historical background of topics in the news, international issues of war, peace and some of the various states of in-between.

Ericblackink.com, where Black's work has appeared since he left the Strib in June, will become a page within MinnPost.com. We MinnPosters look forward to an association that we believe will benefit MinnPost readers.

Asked to comment, Black replied: "What are you talking about? I don't give quotes. I get quotes. But I am excited to become part of MinnPost's thoughtful approach to news. Happy New Year everyone. See you in 2008."



Congress struggles to limit torture and experts say harsh interrogation doesn't work

continued from page 1

"This bill would tie the hands of our terror fighters," said a statement by Bond, vice chairman of the Intelligence Committee.

But Johnson insists those arguments don't square with the evidence he sees in Minneapolis where his center treats torture survivors from around the world. In that role, Johnson has been called several times to testify on Capitol Hill. Even while many members of Congress dispute Johnson's assertion that CIA tactics are torture, they have welcomed his expertise on interrogation.

Harsh interrogation definitely yields names and other information, Johnson agreed. "It works," he said.

But the information confessed is utterly unreliable, he said, and it can lead investigators in the wrong direction, endangering U.S. military forces and threatening national security.

In a panic to stop tough interrogation, many will spit out any name that comes to mind – innocent neighbors, cousins and friends – Johnson said.

"Our clients tell us to a person that they would have said anything the torturers wanted them to say," Johnson said. "They tell us, 'I named everyone I knew.'"

Johnson's observations are in line with an in-depth report

on interrogation which was issued last December by a science board for the National Defense Intelligence College.

"Most professionals believe that pain, coercion, and threats are counterproductive to the elicitation of good information," said a summary of the report, "Educing Information, Interrogation: Science and Art."

"Although pain is commonly assumed to facilitate compliance, there is no available scientific or systematic research to suggest that coercion can, will or has provided accurate useful information from otherwise uncooperative sources," wrote one of the study's authors, Randy Borum, a University of South Florida professor who has served as a consultant to the Defense Department and U.S. intelligence agencies.

Moreover, Borum said, numerous studies have shown that pain and fear can mar not only the willingness to give accurate information but also the memory process that yields it up.

Experts' views on Field Manual

The CIA had been operating under special permission the Bush administration granted in 2002 to use "enhanced" interrogation techniques. The CIA reportedly has not used waterboarding since 2003. The procedure involves strapping down a prisoner, covering his mouth and pouring water



Douglas A. Johnson, executive director of the Center for Victims of Torture in Minneapolis.

over his face to cause the sensation of drowning.

Following scandals over prisoner abuse in Iraq, Congress limited the U.S. military to interrogation techniques outlined in the Army Field Manual, while allowing the CIA to continue using secret alternatives.

In the Senate, Bond has argued that the Field Manual was intended as a training document for rookie soldiers, not for sophisticated CIA operations. The manual was first developed during World War II to equip young enlisted men with a "rudimentary set of skills and techniques," according to the National Defense Intelligence College study.

But its sections on interrogations have been revised over the years, most recently in 2006. The 2006 version prohibits waterboarding and a long list of other specific tactics.

Experts in Minnesota differ over the value of the Field Manual as a model for U.S. interrogation policy.

Dr. Stephen Miles said he shares Bond's aversion to using the manual, but for different reasons. Miles is a University of Minnesota professor and author of the book "Oath Betrayed: Torture, Medical Complicity and the War on Terror."

The Geneva Conventions already prohibit coercive interrogations, Miles said. Attempts to authorize separate U.S. models effectively have made Bush the "non-appealable arbiter of the Geneva Conventions," he said.

But David Weissbrodt, a University of Minnesota Law School professor who specializes in international human rights law, said the Army manual comes as close to the spirit of the Geneva Conventions as any alternative the nation would accept politically.

"It's a lot easier to persuade people in the United States that the manual is what everyone should follow," Weissbrodt said.

Sharon Schmickle writes about foreign affairs and science. She can be reached at sschmickle@minnpost.com.

The case of Abu Zubaydah: How valuable was his information?

By Sharon Schmickle

In the debate over interrogation methods, the spotlight often has turned to Abu Zubaydah, a Saudi Arabian man who President Bush has described as a “senior terrorist leader and a trusted associate of Osama bin Laden.”

Lacking scientific support, many who advocate aggressive interrogation methods turn to anecdotal accounts to show that harsh interrogation yields names and information that are vital to the United States’ national security.

Zubaydah provides a leading, yet controversial, anecdote. There is little dispute over allegations that he has been active in al-Qaida since the early 1990s, playing a role in terrorist operations around the world.

He was captured in Pakistan in 2002 and taken to a CIA facility in Thailand, where he was subjected to waterboarding and other controversial interrogation methods.

Currently he is at the U.S. facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

His case resurfaced this month in the debate over an intelligence bill before Congress because the CIA destroyed videotapes of its interrogation of him and another alleged terrorist.

‘Vital piece of the puzzle’

The debate begins over the value of the information the CIA extracted from Zubaydah.

In a speech last year defending the CIA’s interrogation tactics, Bush said: “Zubaydah was questioned using these procedures, and soon he began to provide information on key al-Qaida operatives, including information that helped us find and capture more of those responsible for the attacks on September the 11th.”

For example, Bush said, Zubaydah disclosed that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was the mastermind behind the attacks on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, and he went by the nickname Mukhtar.

“This was a vital piece of the puzzle that helped our intelligence community pursue KSM,” Bush said.

But critics of the CIA’s tactics argue that Zubaydah was a marginal figure in al-Qaida’s operations and that most of the information he gave was useless or available elsewhere.

“He confessed to everything but knocking off the DQ on Franklin Avenue...and none of what he said was ticking time bomb material,” said Dr. Stephen Miles, a University of Minnesota professor and author of the book “Oath Betrayed: Torture, Medical Complicity and the War on Terror.”

Different tipster

The Washington Post reported last year that the CIA had Mohammed in its sights in August 2001 and had identified his nickname as Mukhtar.

Further, the Post reported, a different tipster had led the CIA

directly to Mohammed and collected a \$25 million reward. The Post cited Ron Suskind’s book “The One Percent Doctrine” as the source of that information but said unnamed intelligence sources confirmed it.

Zubaydah is “regarded as mentally ill by a number of people,” Miles said.

And the CIA’s harsh tactics with Zubaydah were unnecessary because the FBI extracted much of the same information from him with less controversial interrogation methods, said Douglas A. Johnson, executive director of the Center for Victims of Torture in Minneapolis.

“The torturers are desperate to show that what they did had some excuse to justify it,” Johnson said.

Sharon Schmickle writes about foreign affairs and science. She can be reached at sschmickle@minnpost.com.

Want to stop smoking? First, treat it as an addiction

DR. CRAIG BOWRON

We do smokers a tremendous disservice when we refer to smoking as a “bad habit.” Picking your nose is a bad habit. Talking with your mouth full is a bad habit. Turning left across traffic with a cell phone to the ear is a really bad habit.

Smoking is an addiction, as powerful as meth or cocaine. It just happens to be legal. It’s such an intense addiction that a Minnesota Department of Health survey found that 17 percent of Le Puffers du Nord light up within five minutes of awakening. Their brain is saying, “Gimme, gimme, gimme.”

So if you’re ready to help the smoker in your life kick the addiction in 2008, there’s a new drug available in the War on Cigarettes, and it’s called Chantix. OK, it’s not so new – the Food and Drug Administration approved it in May 2006 – but it’s gaining popularity. Doctors are growing more comfortable with it, and the U.S. Public Health Service’s “Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence Guidelines” for 2008 will now include Chantix as a first-line therapy option.

Before the arrival of Chantix, most smoking cessation aids were simply some form of nicotine: gum, nasal sprays, loz-

enges, inhalers, skin patches, hair tonic, dental adhesive, PEZ dispensers. The idea was to replace the nicotine the smoker was used to getting from cigarettes, and then to stave off nicotine withdrawal by gradually chewing less gum, or using a series of less potent patches.

What makes Chantix unique is that it works by both blocking and stimulating the nicotine receptors in the deep brain, areas that trigger reward and pleasure sensations. By blocking these nicotine receptors, a smoker on Chantix who decides to cheat gets nothing out of a toke except the usual carcinogens. In Pavlovian language, the bell goes off but no food arrives. The act of smoking is dissociated from the pharmacology of smoking.

And because Chantix also lightly stimulates the nicotine receptor, at about one-third to two-thirds the strength of the regular nicotine molecule, the smoker who takes Chantix also avoids going through sudden and severe nicotine withdrawal.

This nicotine receptor blocking/stimulating feature helps explain Chantix’s side effect profile. A third to half of patients will initially experience some degree of nausea, like they did when they puffed their way through their first experimental cigarettes

back in high school. Some side effects of Chantix – insomnia and headache for example – are identical to nicotine withdrawal and may be just that. These side effects can be lessened by starting Chantix at a lower dose one week before the “going smokeless” date, and by simple patience.

How good is Chantix compared to other cessation medications? As a base, kicking the addiction by going “cold turkey” has a 3 to 5 percent success rate over one year. Compared to placebo, nicotine replacement therapy increases the odds of quitting 1.5 to 2.0-fold; the antidepressant bupropion increases the odds 2-fold; and Chantix increases the odds 3-fold.

Those are the kind of numbers that get Jan Sieger, Tobacco Cessation Specialist with the Minnesota Department of Health, very excited. “It looks like Chantix is going to be a phenomenal tool for those smokers who are motivated to quit,” Sieger noted.

Need more information? Go to the Minnesota Department of Health’s tobacco website www.health.state.mn.us, or if you’re in no particular hurry, stop by my “Death-on-a-Stick” Minnesota State Fair booth and pick up your free cigarette glue-gunned to a bamboo skewer.

'All Is Calm' brings to stage the true story of a heavenly truce

For several precious hours on Christmas Eve in 1914, peace and joy broke out after German soldiers started singing "Stille Nacht" in the trenches. Within moments, they and their French and British enemies spilled onto the fields near Ypres, Belgium for some yuletide cheer. Theater Latte Da and Cantus stage the story with words and music in the premiere of "All Is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914."



DON LEE

It was humankind at its worst; it was humankind at its best.

Christmas Eve, 1914: In trenches carved out of the fields near Ypres, Belgium, British and French troops peered across No Man's Land at the Germans dug-in some 70 yards away. On the German side something remarkable was about to happen.

"All was quiet. No shooting. Little snow. We placed a tiny Christmas tree in our dugout. ... We placed a second lighted tree on the parapet."

— Hugo Klemm, 133rd Saxon infantry

"There was a lot of commotion in the German trenches and then there were those lights — I don't know what they were. And then they sang 'Stille Nacht.' I shall never forget it. It was one of the highlights of my life."

— Albert Moren, 2nd Queen's Regiment

"Then one German took a chance and jumped up on top of the trench and shouted out, 'Happy Christmas, Tommy!' So of course our boys said, 'If he can do it, we can do it,' and we all jumped up. A sergeant-major shouted 'Get down!' but we said, 'Shut up, Sergeant, it's Christmas time!'"

— Pvt. Frank Sumpter, London Rifle Brigade

Within moments, soldiers from both sides found themselves standing in the middle of No Man's Land, unarmed, shaking hands, laughing and doing their best to communicate in a foreign tongue. During the next several hours, they would exchange gifts, share a little rum, pause to bury fallen comrades, play a game of soccer and sing

Christmas carols.

Along with at least two recent books, this piece of history has inspired a new stage depiction: "All Is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914," by Twin Cities director Peter Rothstein. The premiere production, opening Friday, combines three actors from Rothstein's company, Theatre Latte Da, with eight singers from the men's vocal group Cantus. (Friday's 10:30 a.m. performance at Westminster Presbyterian Church will be broadcast live on Minnesota Public Radio.)

Mulling how to tell 'epic event' on stage

As the founder of a company that looks for new ways to integrate text and music, Rothstein knew when he first heard the story of the truce that he wanted to bring it to the stage. The question was, how? How to evoke the powerful contrast of this shimmering glimpse of hope on a bleak midwinter landscape?

"One of the challenges of thinking of it as traditional musical theater is to come up with an organic structure," says Rothstein. "This piece is about a lack of conflict. The soldiers emerge from a confined, claustrophobic world to the glory of being above ground. This was an epic event. How do you create it on stage?"

Rothstein came up with what he describes as a "docudrama" approach, although he adds that he does not want it to come off as "a slide show that feels like a history lesson."

To judge from Tuesday's rehearsal, "All Is Calm" follows a path that has led Ken Burns to glory. Narration is kept to a minimum. Actors recite poignant passages from soldiers' letters (including those above), then flatly intone the name of

the writer. Music of the era hovers in the background, swelling to sustain the mood as spoken words leave off.

'Radio musical drama' rang true

But "All Is Calm" is not a slide show. The form that ended up making sense to Rothstein was "radio musical drama." At the time of World War I, he says, "radio was becoming a primary communication tool for both the public and the army. It seemed like a logical fit."

"In live performance, the approach asks the audience to engage its imagination to complete the story," says Cantus Artistic Director Erick Lichte.

The story begins in summer 1914 as recruiters enlist young Britons to fight for King and country. The boys respond with bravado, confident the war will be over in a matter of months. By the time the Christmas truce has ended, they know the harsh truth first-hand.

Rothstein created the arc of his story this past summer from letters and official war documents that he found archived in London and Belgium. "The words [the soldiers] wrote have such power," he says. "What we end up with is a plethora of voices telling a single narrative."

Singing in the trenches with Cantus

Erick Lichte had a tough question of his own to face: how to make "All is Calm" a satisfying musical experience? "It's a Long Way to Tipperary" is no one's idea of a choral masterpiece.

"What's fun for me is that it felt like composing one big 52-minute piece," says Lichte, who arranged the music in collaboration with group member Timothy Takach. "The soldiers really did sing in the trenches. For songs like 'Long Way' I

For tickets to two remaining shows on Dec. 22 and Dec. 23, call Ticketworks at 651-209-6689. The 10:30 a.m. Friday (Dec. 21) show is sold out.

just told the guys to let their hair down and not worry too much about technique. Then we push to the other side — to what Cantus can do — negotiating our way to an eight-part arrangement of 'Silent Night.'"

Which brings up another issue. This is the annual Christmas show for the Cantus. "Is this going to be too depressing?" Lichte wondered. "Do we have enough Christmas in it for our audience to feel like it's their Christmas?"

Along with "Silent Night," the singing soldiers of Cantus perform about 10 other carols in "All Is Calm." That sounds like plenty, but Lichte is acutely aware of the expectations placed on a choral group at this time of year. There's nothing wrong with a traditional Christmas concert, he says, "but you can lose perspective on what it means. For me personally, when we get to these songs [in 'All Is Calm'], we get to a basic human need — what those songs are really about."

Hopes and fears meet when "Silent Night" is sung. "The soldiers all knew the song," Rothstein says. In the arrangement for this production, "They navigate their way to harmony, and it's glorious." But Rothstein did not want "All Is Calm" to be about "the glorification of war." As the truce ends, the arrangement becomes cacophonous.

"When that happens," he says, "you see the destruction of this harmony that's been created."

COMMUNITY VOICES

Note to Star Tribune's Katherine Kersten:

We're one nation, under gods

By DEBORAH MORSE-KAHN

"... The proscribing [of] any citizen as unworthy unless he profess or renounce [a] religious opinion is depriving him injuriously of those privileges and advantages to which in common with his fellow-citizens he has a natural right; it tends only to corrupt the principles of that religion it is meant to encourage...." – Thomas Jefferson, The Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, 1786

Katherine Kersten, your God is too small.

You write on any topic of your choice as long as your interpretation of Christianity is at the heart of your rant and you do grave injustice to all of those whose Christian beliefs vary from your own, and I want you to stop.

Despite your best hopes, this is not a Christian Nation. This is the United States of America, a pluralistic society, built on the concept of the commonwealth, root common wealth, common well-being. All of us in it together, each imbued with equal standing and value, with all the fantastic and marvelous messiness of our cultures, our ethnicities...and our faiths.

Your God isn't everyone's God

Your God is too small. If the lost child of Minnesota's famous Mayo family (Star Tribune, Dec. 9) had not been attending a church-tied private academy but, instead, was a student at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind just down the road, you would never have written that column. I find abhorrent your use of this child and this school to further your personal agenda. I cannot find any column in recent months – and you

are spinning them out at the rate of twice a week – that does not take the reader back to your one-note theme of better days in conservative Christianity.

Your God is too small. Your God is not in the great Rabbi of the turbulent days of Israel's Roman occupation. Your God is not in the gentle saints whose teachings reached Provence and then Saxon Britain and finally the shores of Ireland. Your God is not in the faith of the Early Celtic Church monastics. Your God is not in the mosaics of the Trinity at Eastern Orthodox Constantinople, the soaring Gothic arches of Chartres, the gentle and simple rule of Francis and Clare, the rebuilt Anglican Cathedral of Canterbury.

Your God is not in the Congregational fellowships of Massachusetts, the Methodist chapels of Georgia, or the silence of the Quaker meetings of Pennsylvania (would that you would consider adopting their example).

Your God is not in the four-square Baptist temples of Selma and Memphis. Your God is not in the Amish house churches (which would not even find you sufficiently Christian to be "saved"), the Mennonite double-door meetinghouses, the Greek Orthodox domes.

Your God is certainly not in the Buddha, who teaches us that no living being shall reach for Nirvana until every blade of grass is realized: we all go over the Wall together, or not at all.

Your God is certainly not in Allah, who is the All-Merciful and the transcendent Creator of the Universe.

Your God cannot be the Sophia of Gnostic Christianity and the Hellenic Church, who resides in us all as the Divine Spark and

Katherine, your God is too small. Where my God seeks to be everywhere, in all beings, in all ways, for all time, your God has rules and lines drawn in the sand, accusations and retributions and punishment for the unworthy.

whose heart is Wisdom.

Your God is not in Yahweh nor the lessons of the Talmud, where learned debate and discussion of the requirements of our lives as children of a just and loving God would be utterly foreign to you.

Your God is too small, and your ideas too narrow

Your God is too small, and your heart is hard. "Justice, justice shall ye pursue!" But you would reframe "my" justice. This scholar of the world's religions finds your ideas of our collective human value and many paths to be brutally narrow and built on your own self-importance. Archbishop Harry Flynn's marvelously direct statement in his letter to the Star Tribune amounted to a rephrasing of a classic Yiddish invocation, "May the Lord bless and keep you...far away from us!" I like to think he learned this wonderful exhortation from his colleague at the Jewish-Christian Learning Center on the University of St. Thomas campus: Rabbi Max Shapiro.

Katherine, your God is too small. Where my God seeks to be everywhere, in all beings, in all ways, for all time, your God has rules and lines drawn in the sand, accusations and retributions and punishment for the unworthy. The Rabbi Jesus who

received the devotion of the Magdalene, the Fallen Woman, and appeared to her first in the Garden of Gethsemane, first among all his disciples, would not approve of your chosen role. "You who are without blame, you cast the first stone."

Listen up.

And lest you presume that to be patriotic is to be Christian, and to be Christian is surely the essence of American patriotism, revisit Thomas Jefferson's words, written to stave off the very hope that you cherish, that your God truly does come with a sword.

"...Their ill tendency is a dangerous fallacy which at once destroys all religious liberty because he being of course judge of that tendency will make his opinions the rule of judgment and approve or condemn the sentiments of others only as they shall square with or differ from his own...."

Deborah Morse-Kahn, director of Regional Research Associates in Minneapolis, can be found at dmk@regionalresearch.net.