

# Opinion/Editorial

## Letters to the Editor

### Libya

#### A prudent response

During times of world crisis, there is a natural tendency for passions to hinder reasoning. The response displayed to the recent U.S. raid on Libyan terrorist camps is one such example.

While there has been much discussion of the immorality of the U.S. action, many have overlooked both the raid's instigating causes and the enormous prudence of the U.S. response. When discussing international politics, one must adopt a different language and reasoning than that which is used in domestic affairs. Precedent and context provide the basis for moral judgement in international affairs. The morality of any act in the international arena should be based upon a respect for world order and responsible conduct.

Libya's persistent sovereign support of terrorist aggression display a complete disregard for any conventions of international morality. The Libyan government continues to employ its diplomatic facilities as operating bases for terrorists.

In the fall of 1984 a British policewoman was gunned down by a sniper housed in Libya's embassy to Britain. U.S. intelligence sources and government officials (including prominent liberal spokesmen such as Senator Patrick Moynihan and Robert Byrd) have affirmed that the Libyan consulate in East Berlin was used as the base for last week's attack in Berlin. Among other suggested examples of Libyan support for terrorist atrocities are the coordinated holiday attacks on airports in Rome and Vienna.

Libya has housed training bases on its African soil as well. At these bases, terrorists develop the skills to practice their craft with Libya-supplied arms. They are trained to be elusive. The best efforts of Western intelligence cannot counter the enormous asset of consistent resources and a stable base of operation for terrorist activity. Terrorists can slip back to Libyan sanctuaries.

Libyan-sponsored terrorism has a different moral status than transnational terrorism. While transnational terrorist organizations such as The Red Brigade act outside of the international system, state sponsored terrorism clearly represents an act of sovereign aggression within the system. When a state apparatus publicly supports acts of aggression against other states and innocent civilians, that state is engaging in the moral equivalent of war.

Responses to state sponsored terrorism, then, should address the aggressor state. Victims of aggression possess a limited number of options in response: diplomatic solution, political/economic sanction, and military response. U.S. policy toward Libya has demonstrated remarkable restraint in choosing to exercise non-violent options.

Diplomatic attempts, however, have been ineffectual. The Libyan leadership has continually failed to respect promises or agreements. Economic/political sanctions, furthermore, did little to deter Libyan aggression.

In selecting the military option, the U.S. has followed respected norms of retaliation. The possibility of a U.S. response in the face of continued aggression was clearly displayed in the weeks before the attack. Unlike the terrorists, the U.S. raid demonstrated responsible planning and execution. All targets were closely related to terrorist support activities. The U.S. did not target civilian areas. Furthermore, the U.S. did not act until it possessed conclusive evidence of Libyan support for the West Berlin bombing.

Because Libya has sponsored terrorist activity against innocent civilians and property, it can be properly considered an ag-

gressor nation. The United States pursued a military course as a prudent and effective response to state-sponsored terrorism. The establishment of this precedent may deter more rational actors from testing the balance of power. — David Altman and Kevin O'Prey

#### The grand irony

To the Editor,

I am writing this on Tuesday, April 15th, 1986, an ironic day in which a set of connected events are occurring. The U.S. House of Representatives is scheduled to vote on Aid to the Contras at this very moment. The U.S. invaded/bombed military and civilian populations in Libya early this morning (6 p.m. Monday Iowa time). And lastly, today is the day all U.S. citizens' taxes are due.

One thing I think is ironic about the bombing of Libya is that we are crossing the border into another nation, murdering civilians and soldiers, blowing up military and non-military targets, and attacking the family of that nation's leader, all for the sake of stopping terrorism. This is not simply the kettle calling the teapot black, it is the Nazi calling the Jew a fascist, it is the bully calling the beaten one a punk and claiming self-defense.

As of the latest reports I have heard, our government's invasion caused the deaths of an unspecified amount of civilians and military people, the death of the 15 month old daughter of Khaddafi and serious injuries to two of his sons, and the partial destruction of the French Embassy and a non-military hospital in addition to destruction of military targets. This sort of destruction and murder is supposedly what our government stands against.

One thing that is even more "ironic" is that the air attack on Libya occurred on the eve of the Contra Aid vote. Even our Republican congressman, Cooper Evans, commented "My intuition tells me the precise timing was influenced by the contra vote." (Something that was equally "ironic" was the revelation from the White House on the eve of the previous Senate contra vote that Nicaragua had "invaded Honduras.")

The decision by the Reagan Administration was made with the approval of many in the House and Senate and of course the Pentagon people, who haven't had so much fun since Grenada. It is most likely a poor move as far as United States strategic global policy is concerned, mainly because we have unified the Arab (and "Third") World against us and proven ourselves to be "Yankee Imperialists" at a time when imperialist oppression is not being tolerated. The people of South Korea, South Africa, Chile, and El Salvador are realizing that their struggles are not being prolonged because of the popularity of their oppressive governments, but because of the military aid and support from the United States.

But "our" strategic interests don't interest me. Whose interests are they anyway? Not mine; I feel no real need to have my nation maintain its position as numero uno militarist-expansionist on this planet. This does not give me a warm cheery feeling in my heart. But I suppose that is my bias — I don't get off on the macho patriarchal world domination scene. It turns me off and turns my stomach. Yet I pay for it with my taxes.

So I think that all this intervention/invasion/bombing/covert war business (in order to make the world safe for tourism, er, um, capitalism, oh no, uh, I mean

democracy, yeah) will backfire internationally. Not only is it likely to make the world less amenable to the U.S. tourists and Grinnell alumni tours, it is likely to increase the popularity of militarists like Khaddafi (who oppose our own crazed militarists). The Arab people and the Libyans are supporting Khaddafi now more than ever!

On the other hand we have Reagan, who has dubbed himself "a Contra", and who thinks that the Contras are much like "our founding fathers." I don't know, maybe I'm wrong, but I don't remember reading in high school about "our founding fathers" invading a country with a popular government, relying on external funding, killing innocent civilians, burning fields, schools, and health care facilities, and raping, torturing, mutilating, and murdering hundreds of human beings. America's Watch, as well as Amnesty International and several recent books have documented a multitude of incredible human rights violations by the Contras. I guess President Reagan is in a sense the Supreme International Contra, for as leader of the misguided government of this nation, he has taken responsibility for the continuance of rape, murder, and torture throughout the world.

So I guess the grand irony of April 15, 1986, is that Reagan is aiding the Contras to promote democracy and bombing Libya to stop terrorism, and the joke's on us, 'cause we're paying' for it. — Owen Charles, '85

#### Damaging U.S. interest

After hearing about the U.S. bombing of Libya I am very unsatisfied with the reasons why bombing was the action taken and I am worried about where this action might lead to. These are the questions and concerns that I have:

1. Was bombing Libya the best action to take? I have serious doubts on this issue. If the United States wanted to take a stand against terrorism it should not have attacked Libya or have bombed Libya. When the United States takes military action to try to thwart Khaddafi it is only playing Khaddafi's game of guns instead of using diplomacy to properly and promptly rid him of power.

2. Is the use of military action accomplishing the U.S. goal of stopping terrorism? All military action so far has only put Khaddafi in the limelight and increased his power. U.S. military action has failed this objective.

3. How long can the U.S. use military power against Khaddafi before entering war? President Reagan warns that further military action will be taken if Khaddafi does not stop his terrorism. Each military action has gotten progressively more aggressive. In light of these facts I fear that a war would be started unless Khaddafi agrees to stop soon which I highly doubt since all U.S. military action has only increased his power.

4. How extensively can the U.S. use military actions without overstepping its rights. This is very nebulous but many countries believe the U.S. is being too pushy and if this is the case future U.S. influence could be severely damaged.

I don't believe we were justified in using military action against Libya and I certainly hope that we stop using military action against Libya. Continuing U.S. military action would only damage American interests. Julie Huddle

### Gay Resource Center

This is a copy of a letter that I sent to President George Drake and Jim Tederman concerning the proposed Gay Resource Center:

"I, like many people on campus, have been giving a considerable amount of attention to the proposal for a resource center for the gay community on campus. Along with this attention, much consideration has been given to the validity of beliefs not only for the proposal, but also beliefs against the proposal. The purpose of this letter is not to sway your view, but to present my view as a student of Grinnell.

After thinking out the various opinions I have been confronted with, I think it is best for the Grinnell College community to call this resource center the Gay Resource Center, and not one of the other names that have been suggested. The basis for this decision comes from an assortment of differing beliefs that I have.

The most important factor behind my decision in having the word "GAY" in the name of the resource center is recognition of the gay community as a valid minority on campus. To me, it seems odd that for a minority as large as the gay population is at Grinnell, that it is not highly recognized as a viable minority by the campus as a whole — both students and administrators. I realize there is G.C.G.C., but it is a support group that meets once a week in one room.

I find it disappointing that the gay community does not have a permanent place of their own to meet for support for more than just a couple of hours per week. I feel that there is a real need to allocate a permanent place, not just for gays, but for anyone on campus that might have questions concerning what "being gay" entails.

By creating the Gay Resource Center, the college is signifying that gay people on campus are a valid minority group with differing needs than those of other minority groups on campus.

Being a freshman, I do not know why the Black Cultural Center was created, but I would guess that it was created because the black community felt that their needs were not being met adequately, and to meet these needs the Black Cultural Center was established. Now such needs exist again, and I believe the Center is a viable way to meet these needs.

Another problem I considered was the inclusion of other groups in the center, and perhaps making it the Human Resource Center.

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