

# **HERMIT HERALD**

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## **QUOTE FOR THE DAY:**

**“If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.” Nelson Mandela**

## **MIDEAST - A TECTONIC SHIFT:**

**The recent establishment of full diplomatic relations between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel has been quickly followed by Bahrain. A small, but very wealthy country, Bahrain is home port for the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet and therefore, obviously, a trusted U.S. partner.**

**This move, which brings Bahrain into sync with Egypt, Jordan and the UAE regarding relations with Israel, is, on the one hand, not surprising, as Bahrain has long had dealings**

**with Israel. What is surprising is that this never could have happened without the approval of Saudi Arabia, which has been Bahrain's "big brother" protector for many years.**

**Young Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman has been taking steps in the direction of normalization with Israel for sometime, but has had to proceed slowly as Saudi's position has historically been focused on securing the Palestinians their own homeland, an objective the Israelis have thwarted.**

**While initially feeling betrayed by the UAE announcement and now, Bahrain, it may actually give the Palestinians new hope because the quid pro quo for the UAE agreement was that Israel had to put on hold plans to annex major portions of the West Bank.**

**Added to this mix is the wide spread distrust/fear of Iranian incursions in a number of Mideast countries; brings to mind, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." Israel fits the bill, being of like mind with Saudi Arabia,**

**UAE and Bahrain. The bottom line is that Saudi Arabia is making nice to Israel these days, most recently permitting El Al to fly in Saudi air space in conjunction with new service between Israel and UAE. Diplomatic recognition of Israel by Saudi Arabia may still be sometime off, but movement towards normalization is ongoing, with Sudan and Oman rumored to be the next to follow Bahrain.**

**This is a very big deal, but, predictably, in these politically charged times, on learning that two Scandinavians have nominated President Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize, Democratic pollster Jeremy Rosner, sniffed, "First of all, icicles in hell come to mind. Aint gonna happen." Adding, "National security policy is not playing a significant role in this election... this is stuff that isn't appearing on the screens of anybody except foreign policy experts."**

**Giving equal time; Ronna McDaniel, Chairwoman of the RNC stated, "Mr. Trump has accomplished more for peace in the past month than President Obama did in 8 years."**

**Regarding the Nobel Peace Prize, Michael Crowley, White House correspondent for the NY Times notes, “When a chagrined Mr. Obama was awarded one- during the first year of his presidency, no less – he proclaimed himself undeserving and his aides even explored the possibility of skipping the award ceremony in Oslo.**

### **MORE PEACE- MAYBE:**

**With the last prisoner exchange completed, Afghanistan and the Taliban are finally sitting down for peace talks in Doha, Qatar. Mujib Mashal reports, “Finding a compromise between the Taliban and the government on issues of power sharing and civil liberties, including the role of women and minorities, will be no easy task, and it will be made more difficult by decades of bloodshed and grievances.”**

**The U.S. is committed to reducing our Afghanistan presence down to 4,500 troops by this November and the Taliban are pressing for that number to be zero sooner rather than later. In return, the Taliban, as part of the**

**agreement, are committed to preventing any terrorist groups from using Afghanistan as a base of operations.**

**While the Taliban have ceased attacking U.S. forces, they continue to attack the Afghans, thinking that those actions keep the heat on the government to complete a peace deal. I've never quite understood the logic of that. How about just a full cease fire? In any event it is well recognized that any coalition government will need substantial foreign aid, primarily from the U.S. Knowing who controls those purse strings should be strong incentive for both the government and the Taliban to come to an agreement. As I've written in earlier issues, I have little long- term optimism. The Taliban are religious fanatics and ruthless against those who don't believe as they. Whether it be six months or six years, I see the Taliban eventually ruling the country.**

### **COVID- 19 (CV) CONTROVERSY:**

**Before getting to the main event – I'm amazed at the NY Times. I imagine each section of the paper is headed up by one editor/supervisor –**

**whatever. Anyway, it appears that no single Times employee reads the entire paper. In one part of the paper it is noted that 40% of the CV deaths in the U.S. have occurred in nursing homes. In another section, we are informed that 62,000 have died in nursing homes and that 191,500 have died in total- that's 32.6% - a huge discrepancy.**

**A recent WSJ article talks about “the Covid storm” focusing on the feud between Cuomo and DeBlasio. Memories are short, so the reader should be reminded that early on in the pandemic there was a big debate whether the U.S. or the states should have the top responsibility for handling the problem. It was decided that no one was better qualified than the governors of each and every state as they were the ones with feet on the ground and the ones best qualified to determine the approach for their own state.**

**Fast reverse to March 17<sup>th</sup> when Mayor DeBlasio told the city to prepare to “shelter in place”. Cuomo’s aides blitzed City Hall with calls. “The Mayor sounds crazy. He’s scaring people. You have to walk it back. It’s not up to**

**you. It's not your call." As the article continues: millions of people "continued to pack commuter trains and subways in the five day span between Mr. DeBlasio's order and Mr. Cuomo's eventual shut down order." Columbia University estimates that delay cost 17,500 lives in NY City. In addition, Cuomo was faulted for demanding that nursing homes had to admit patients who had already tested positive for CV – a recipe for nursing home "super-spreader events. Over the intervening months – up until June 19<sup>th</sup>, Cuomo gave 111 daily briefings which most of the media praised as the doings of someone really in control. Many others would say, "I don't think so." Many law suits are in progress over the results of Cuomo's actions and failures to act.**

### **DUMB LUCK:**

**So, this Virginia resident likes to play the "pick four" lottery. He's going to invest \$20 and buy 20 tickets. A winning ticket wins \$5,000. The logical thing is to put in your wife's birthday, your's, the kids, etc. – not this bozo- he picks the number 1929 for all 20 tickets and, damn,**

**He wins. He's now eating T bones from his \$100,000 pay out. Time to reevaluate gambling strategies.**

## **WORD WEALTH:**

**Important for our readers to continue to build their vocabularies: Our first word today is PROSOPAGNOSIA. The translation is "face blindness". Yes, we all forget names from time to time, but only about one in fifty people have true prosopagnosia – just can't identify people from their faces. However, in this mask wearing age, as many as 13% of people may have this problem- great conversation starter.**

**Our second word is, SWUGGLING. Gotta have this one at the ready. Swuggling is the act of swimming and juggling at the same time. An Oregon man just broke the Guinness world record with 101 consecutive catches. One question. Why?**

**Your faithful scribe,**

**PB**



