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**"Freedom of the Press belongs to those who own one."**

*A. J. Liebling of the New Yorker*

March 31, 2004



**Finally!**

**The national and international angst exhibited over the Israeli assassination of Yassin is still another demonstration that the world has lost the meaning of "war."**

**Almost everyone thinks that Yassin deserved to die for his crimes, but actually killing him seems to be something else. It is almost like the Clinton administration and Bin Laden, if the recent hearings are to be believed – President Clinton wanted Bin Laden dead but when the CIA had him in their sights, no one could be found to order the pulling of the trigger. While the Bush administration may well have been preparing a plan to step up action against Bin Laden, it was at best a three-part plan with increased diplomacy being the first part, covert overthrow of the Afghan government the second part, and serious action way, way down the line.**

**Sharon pulled the trigger. If ANY country SHOULD understand the meaning of war it is Israel, but even in Israel there is angst over the killing of Yassin if NOGA TARNOPOLSKY writing in the Jerusalem Post can be believed. Apparently, even many Israelis are asking if they may now reap a whirlwind.**

**Excuse me for being very 19<sup>th</sup> century, but when a nation has been bloodied for many years, there comes a time...**

**Of course it is theoretically more difficult to attack a group than it is to attack a government. History is written about nation-to-nation wars, and governments are accustomed to fighting other governments...but there are many instances of**

**Commentary**

destroying independent entities as well. I give you the Barbary Pirates.

Just 200 years ago, a bunch of independent thugs, stationed in and operating from Algeria, Morocco, Tunis and Tripoli were routinely seizing ships, plundering the cargo and sending sailors into slavery. Naturally, we tried diplomacy...it failed. (Surprised?) Then we tried to enlist the help of Europe. That failed. (I can't believe you are surprised.)

Our Ambassador to France was none other than Thomas Jefferson, but even he could not get the Europeans – whose ships were also being pirated – to act. Jefferson recommended that the United States “reduce the piratical states to peace.” Jefferson was elected President and did just that – you may recall the Marine Hymn's “...to the shores of Tripoli.”

(Historical note: The United States cleaned up and left within a year. The French then followed, and colonized North Africa for more than a century. As I recall, the French call us “Imperialists.”)

Fighting against non-states, or state-sponsored terrorism that has the sniff of “deniability,” is not easy – but failing to do so is just as dangerous as ignoring attacks from states.

To his credit, Sharon pulled the trigger, and has placed the rest of the Palestinian terrorists on notice that they are next. Terrorists everywhere have entirely too much time on their hands and they need to be more alert to “incoming.” It is difficult to plan when you are watching the skies day and night.

Neither Presidents Clinton or Bush had taken to heart the formal Declaration of War by Bin Laden – or the attacks on the World Trade Center, the Khobar Towers, the Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and the USS Cole. One would think that number of attacks by a known and declared enemy would warrant an extreme response, like “boots on the ground” – something neither President could quite muster.

It even took Sharon far too long, in my opinion, but still the UN and many wobbly Israelis and Americans fear the consequences.

How long should he have waited?

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## **Dolphin Realty**

**Allen P. Hemphill**

Real Estate Broker

15817 Bernardo Center Dr,  
# 111, San Diego, Ca 92127  
RB Office (858) 487-4750

27739 Mountain Meadow Road  
Suite #5

Hidden Meadows CA 92026  
Meadows Office (760)-749-5005

Home Office (760) 749-2654

[www.allenhemphill.com](http://www.allenhemphill.com)  
[allen@allenhemphill.com](mailto:allen@allenhemphill.com)