

COMMENTARY | K. CUNNINGHAM

‘Invisible women’

Women are becoming more lethal. In jihadist organizations – including even al-Qaida, which had long banned females from violent roles – women are increasingly taking part in terrorist actions. Since 1985, terrorism’s so-called invisible women have accounted for a quarter of fatal attacks in Iraq, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Chechnya, Sri Lanka, Morocco and Palestine. My research found that by mid-2008, women had acted as suicide bombers 21 times in Iraq’s markets and other civilian venues patronized by Shiites.

Other research has demonstrated that since 2002 women have carried out fully 50 percent of suicide attacks in Sri Lanka, Turkey and Chechnya.

So why do we think of violent jihadists as largely male? One reason is that terrorism observers, mostly men who have historically focused on men at war, tend to view women who participate in acts of terrorism as exceptions. Given women’s increasingly violent roles in jihadist organizations, however, researchers overlook females as effective killers at our peril.

Chechen women have been so successful as terrorists that Chechen leadership has now shifted to using them more than men. The Sri Lankan terrorist organization Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam managed to kill India’s prime minister in a one-on-one suicide attack because a female terrorist was able to get close to him where a male terrorist might have had more difficulty.

The increasing participation in violence by female jihadists represents, in part, a generational shift in their attitudes toward violence. In the past, these women seldom went beyond such activities as gun-running, harboring fugitives, fund-raising and intelligence – activities that oiled the terrorist machine and enabled it to operate smoothly but kept women at a remove from violence. Now many are no longer content to sit on the sidelines.

In 2008, Aymanawahiri, then second in command of al-Qaida and perhaps now its leader, allowed no female bombers in al-Qaida. He told female supporters their role was to stay home and raise children. But then the next year his wife, Oaima Hassan, defied him and went online to encourage women to become more active in jihad.

Part of the reason male jihadists have accepted more female participation is that terrorist organizations have lost many men through counterterrorism. As women have volunteered to become suicide bombers, they proved to be highly successful in hiding their bombs – and their intent to use them – under religious clothing. They raise fewer suspicions, and male jihadists appreciate that women can take advantage of the lack of female security personnel and gender-biased enforcement to get closer to their targets.

For their part, a younger generation of female jihadists has come to believe that acts of violence can be just as liberating politically and spiritually for women as for men. A religious woman can deflect her parents’ or husband’s objections by invoking the name of religion, which trumps all.

The new mantra is “even women must fight.” The U.S. has also produced its female terrorists. “Jihad Jane,” born Colleen R. LaRose, seemed to self-radicalize via the Internet. She recruited a female Muslim convert, Jamie Paulin-Ramirez, who moved with her 6-year-old son to Europe to take part in jihad. LaRose was arrested in 2009 and eventually charged with several terrorism-related crimes. She pleaded guilty to all counts.

Other indictments of U.S. women have linked them to supporting roles in terrorist organizations (including al-Qaida and Hezbollah) in Somalia, Afghanistan, Egypt and Britain.

The women-as-terrorist trend is highly likely to continue. Al-Qaida recently launched an Arabic-language magazine targeting women – much as its English-language magazine, Inspire, targets men – and urging them to take up the jihadist mantle. In their writings for the magazine, women also attempt to shame men for not being active enough.

As women step up their participation, terrorist-watchers need to keep pace. Terrorism’s “invisible women” need to be counted and countered not only by the U.S., but by all countries that harbor them.

■ Karla Cunningham is a political scientist at the Rand Corp.

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ARTIST’S VIEW



COMMENTARY | SEN. TOM O’MARA

Sometimes, the facts are the facts

It was last April, on the same day on the pages of the *New York Times* and the *New York Post*, when two stories first hinted that New York state was finally getting serious about that age-old government plague: waste and inefficiency.

“Albany wa\$teland” the *Post* proclaimed in a headline. In less sensational but no less straightforward fashion, the story in the *Times* carried this title, “Audits Find Widespread Waste in Spending by State Government.” Each story (which you can still find on my Senate website, [www.omara.nysenate.gov](http://www.omara.nysenate.gov)) sounded the same alarm. Reporters characterized it as “massive waste” throughout the state’s sprawling bureaucracy. Remember that when we talk about New York state government, we’re talking about more than 20 agencies and numerous other authorities, commissions and corporations. So there’s a lot going on in many different places.

What investigators began finding early last year was that there was no rhyme or reason to the state’s internal spending practices. An initial series of audits, dubbed “efficiency probes,” were shocking.

“There is no end to the horror stories,” a top Cuomo official leading the administration’s crackdown on waste and mismanagement was quoted by the *Post*. This

same official told the *Times*, “We’re a \$100 billion-plus corporation that has squandered its buying power, has no standardization across business units and does not reward efficiency.”

In short, we had a state government lacking in common (fiscal) sense.

It wasn’t exactly a surprise. Many had long suspected that out-of-control spending undermined the cost-effectiveness of the state bureaucracy and, therefore, diminished many programs and services. But here it was in black and white: state government operations “plagued by waste and often bewildering inefficiency.” Millions of dollars were being spent on toll-free telephone numbers that hadn’t been dialed in months. State agencies were paying outrageous costs for basic office supplies like ballpoint pens and paper clips.

The *Post* said the audits could produce \$50 million in immediate savings. The *Times* reported more than \$1 billion in savings could be found over the next several years.

Fast forward to the just-enacted state budget and here’s what we find now in black and white: Part L of one of the key budget bills, “Modify outdated Statewide procurement and printing practices.” The budget language begins in earnest the effort to modernize state government, right-size it,

improve performance, increase accountability and, ultimately, save taxpayers’ money.

It even includes an important but probably little-noticed provision expanding the ability of local governments and not-for-profit organizations to better utilize the state’s buying power to reduce local costs.

And, yes, it targets at least a billion dollars in savings over the next several years. Those savings, believe me, can be put to good use.

First and foremost, it reduces state spending.

This specific budget action raised concerns in a few corners about usurping more independent oversight of the state’s procurement practices.

But let’s face it, when it came right down to what should have been simple math over all these years, somehow the calculators weren’t working and the figures weren’t adding up.

The facts were the facts. And the facts of egregious inefficiency and waste can’t be overlooked.

So let’s keep it up. Keep turning the page on the state’s fiscal practices. The goal should be pretty easy to understand: get our own fiscal house in order so that we can afford more important priorities, in better ways, down the road.

■ Tom O’Mara is a Republican state senator from Big Flats.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Save Steuben health facility

**TO THE EDITOR** | There is not a need to outsource jobs at the Steuben County Health Care Facility at this time or any time in the future, as there already are qualified employees that are available to fill the positions necessary.

These employees already know the job and have been employed from one year to 30+ years.

Outsourcing jobs will require training, time and expense. Not only will there be this expense, you are looking at the quality of care that will diminish because the incoming people will not be making decent money, nor will they know the residents.

With outsourcing, you are looking at losing the compassion, empathy, quality and integrity, which includes but isn’t limited to assisting with daily task such as bathing, dressing, feeding, lifting, turning him or her in bed, cooking, paying bills, running errands, giving medicine, keeping him or her company, providing emotional support and so many other things that your current employees have because the contracting people will not have, as they will just be there for a pay check only.

There are not many people who are prepared for the responsibilities and tasks that entail caring for the residents because of the stress that is incorporated in it and this will be the case if you outsource.

Sometimes you have to take a step back and look at the whole picture, which includes your residents and their quality of care. The elderly need integrated and coordinated care, which the current employees provide on a daily basis to their residents.

Maybe the administration needs to be looked at? Look into the whole fiscal aspect of the business and come up with a more realistic plan.

Honestly, outsourcing isn’t the way to go, hmmm, when outsourcing, you are now going to lay off 200-300 people that are currently working for the SCHCF that will, without a doubt, have to collect unemployment to survive at the county’s expense, plus you will be paying the contractors and possibly some college tuitions.

Doesn’t make any sense because in the end you are only creating more expense for yourselves. There are other avenues that can be pursued to cut cost while keeping your current quality employees.

Quality is much better for the residents than quantity!

Commit to care. No outsourcing. Save the Steuben County Health Care Facility not only for the residents, but the employees!

Sandy Minck  
Bath

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