



Georgia editorial roundup

The Associated Press
October 8, 2014

Recent editorials from Georgia newspapers:

Oct. 6

Morning News, Savannah, Georgia, on Joe Biden:

Every time Joe Biden opens his mouth, people hold their breaths.

That includes members of the Obama administration.

Normally, the vice president's chronic foot-in-mouth disease doesn't cause real harm. Instead, his embarrassing and awkward stumbles have provided free fodder for late-night comedians.

But his latest cringe-inducing comments about ISIS and America's allies in the Middle East deserve scolding by President Obama.

Biden was forced to apologize over the weekend to leaders of Turkey and the United Arab Emirates after suggesting in a speech at Harvard University that these two countries and another ally — Saudi Arabia — were the United States' "biggest problem" in responding to the Syrian civil war.

"The Turks, who are great friends — I have a great relationship with (Turkish President Recep Tayyip) Erdogan, whom I spend a lot of time with — the Saudis, the Emiratis, etc. What were they doing? They were so determined to take down (Syrian President Bashar) Assad and essentially have a proxy Sunni-Shia war," Biden said, according to Associated Press.

Biden also said Erdogan admitted to him that Turkey "let too many (foreign fighters) through" into neighboring Syria.

Forget for a moment that there is some truth to what Biden said. Plenty of mistakes have been made in regard to the Syrian civil war and the rising threat of the Islamic State. Obama made his share of them, too, ignoring the advice of Leon Panetta, his one-time Defense Secretary, and Hillary Clinton, who was his Secretary of State.

What matters is the present and the future.

Secretary of State John Kerry has been burning through his frequent flyer miles between Washington and Middle East, cobbling together a coalition to stand up to ISIS. Obama is making the case back home why ISIS must be destroyed.

And what is No. 2 person in the Obama administration doing? Popping off with his mouth and shooting everyone in the foot.

Biden's follies are getting old. It's shocking to consider he's a heartbeat away from the Oval Office. Obama would be wise to assign the vice president some lighter duties that keep him away from cameras and microphones during the remainder of his second term.

Meanwhile, serious-minded Democrats should ask why Biden is considered a possible contender for president in 2016. He's not a credible nominee.

Online:

<http://savannahnow.com>

Oct. 7

The Augusta (Georgia) Chronicle on no-knock police raids:

Nobody was hurt or killed late last week when heavily armed police showed up to raid the home of a Cartersville man whose okra plants were mistaken for marijuana.

But there easily could have been.

Just a few months ago, a SWAT team lobbed a "flash-bang" grenade into the playpen of a 19-month-old boy during a raid at a home in rural Habersham County.

Police in that case made a mistake, too. The suspected drug dealer they were searching for wasn't there - he was apprehended at a different home. The toddler's injuries were so severe he had to be put into a medically induced coma to undergo numerous reconstructive surgeries to his face.

Sadly, dozens of people and their pets have been killed or injured in recent years because of questionable military-style law enforcement raids, the type of aggressive response once reserved for volatile hostage situations or active confrontations with armed individuals.

But, as in the cases of the Cartersville okra farmer and Habersham County toddler, police burst onto the scene in full force without warning. The tactic even has its own name - the "no-knock" raid.

There's no doubt the nation's criminal element is more sophisticated than in the past, but it's increasingly obvious from national reports that police are overusing advanced weaponry and commando tactics to deal with what are essentially routine law enforcement matters.

An interactive database on botched para-military style raids can be found at Cato Institute, a conservative Washington think tank, at cato.org/raidmap.

A case can be made that many of the aggressive, no-knock raids increase the chance violence will occur. Imagine being a homeowner waking up in the dead of night to the sound of the family dog being shot and multiple men kicking in the front door.

How could anyone expect a dazed homeowner - particularly a law-abiding one with the misfortune of being mistakenly targeted by police - to react to such an assault with anything other than violence?

Police are not perfect - they commit errors. And society generally is forgiving of law enforcement officers who make honest mistakes. But our homes are our castles, and forgiveness is withheld, rightfully, when the gaffe results in teams of black-masked police showing up with machine guns, grenade launchers, attack dogs and armored vehicles.