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From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, July 8, 2011 3:29 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: Leslie Gelb Daily Beast Blog 7/8/11

Worth reading.

-----Original Message-----

From: Leslie H. Gelb [mailto:
Sent: Friday, July 08, 2011 12:44 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: Leslie Gelb Daily Beast Blog 7/8/11

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Dear Mr. Sullivan:

Leslie H. Gelb on some recent absurdities in U.S. politics and foreign policy and whether to laugh or scream or more:

The full text of the piece is included below.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/07/07/the-latest-u-s-foreign-and-domestic-policy-outrages.html>

Sincerely,

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"The Latest American Outrages"

By Leslie H. Gelb
July 8, 2011

The gun cops sell guns to gangsters. The U.S. lets Iraq sell oil rights to China. And don't even talk about the debt debate. Leslie H. Gelb on nine things that just make you want to scream.

**Will Rogers liked to say, "It's easy to be a humorist, you have the whole government working for you." Government officials still do, joined by politicians, business leaders, cable news anchors, and foreign officials who take Americans for saps. I wish I could still laugh at their antics. But with upwards of 14 million jobless Americans, I just want to scream. Your call-laugh or scream at these:

1) The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives sold guns with tracers to low-level Mexican gangsters in order to catch gangster bigwigs, then lost track of the guns, and found only one or two that were used to kill a Border Patrol agent.

Needless to say the acting head of the ATF is in trouble over this. Even if they fire him, he's shown he's qualified for higher office.

The best moment in this fiasco was captured on The Daily Show when Jon Stewart played back an ATF official's answer to the question, "Did the Mexican government cooperate in this sting operation?" The ATF agent responded: "They were cooperating partly because they didn't know about it." This man has the potential to be a famous diplomat.

2) After the U.S. paid dearly in lives and treasure for Iraqi freedom and even as Washington continues to spend billions for Iraq's future security, the Baghdad government awarded contracts worth billions ... to China.

You say this couldn't have happened? Well, on June 21 the Chinese opened the first major new oil field in Iraq in 20 years. One might have hoped that some high U.S. government official would have told the Iraqi prime minister that if he awarded that contract to anyone but a U.S. oil company, he could forget about future American aid. Mind you, this is just the latest of several oil deals made between Iraq and China.

3) President Obama says the U.S. and NATO aim to prevent Gaddafi from killing vast numbers of innocent Libyan civilians-though he and the George W. Bush clan have praised and honored the colonel.

You say I'm kidding? But here's the record. In May 2010, the White House stood by while Libya was named to a seat on the U.N. Human Rights Council.

Yes, I said Human Rights Council.

But Obama was just following well-established U.S. policy formulated by the human-rights hero of the neoconservatives- none other than George W.

Bush. Under Bush, Gaddafi was allowed to take a seat on the U.N.

Security Council, the U.N. biggie. His secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, called Libya a "model" for others. She later praised Libya for "excellent cooperation in response to common global threats faced by the civilized world since September 11, 2001." Isn't this the same Gaddafi we're now helping our NATO allies (who also praised Gaddafi to the high heavens) bomb to holy hell?

4) Pakistan, for whose future stability we are fighting and dying in Afghanistan, is providing arms, money, intelligence, and safe haven to the very Taliban who are killing our troops in the battle zone.

This is a familiar story by now-one we're supposed to pretend is too complicated for us mere mortal Americans to understand. Supposedly, the situation in Pakistan would be far worse if the United States weren't being a total sucker and fighting for Pakistani interests in Afghanistan while providing Islamabad with billions in yearly aid. And don't forget the latest touch-Thursdays revelation in The Washington Post that Pakistan was selling nuclear secrets to one of our other best friends, North Korea.

5) The esteemed Business Forum, long known for its integrity and common sense, finally enters the current debt debate-not to provide desperately needed business sense, but to call for more tax loopholes for corporations even as it demands the deficit be chopped.

So you would think that our top business leaders would know best how to be practical in reducing America's \$14 trillion debt. And so you'd think that the esteemed business forum would introduce practicality. Yet its report issued in recent days insists on the absolute need to reduce the federal deficit, and then goes on, inexplicably, to say they need more corporate tax breaks and a continuation of tax loopholes on the money they use to make money. Maybe they're so flush with the trillions they've earned over the last decade, and so greedy to earn more, that they secretly don't give a damn about the debt or our country.

6) Even as our troops are fighting to build a new Afghanistan, they also happen to be guarding a very productive and extremely profitable copper mine owned by none other than, you guessed it, China.

You say that our government couldn't possibly be so dumb? Well, one army brigade of about 2,000 troops is deployed in the immediate vicinity of that vast copper mine and, as luck would have it, for Beijing. Maybe somebody in the Obama administration should suggest to Beijing that it deploy its own security force there.

7) Democrats are so totally out of it that they still don't know how to bargain with Republicans.

You'll remember that most Republicans took the pledge never to raise taxes in any way, shape, or form or they'd have to kill their mothers.

And there they have stood for almost a year on rock-solid bargaining ground. Why didn't the Democrats take their own pledge not to slash the federal debt on the backs of the middle class and the poor? That would have evened up the bargaining ground.

8) Despite their reputation for practicality, the ongoing debt crisis proves that Republicans still can't add and subtract.

Put it this way, the U.S. has a \$14 trillion overall debt and an annual deficit of more than \$1.5 trillion. Even if spending were slashed by \$700 billion or \$800 billion this year alone (far more than the Republicans are demanding), that would still leave us hundreds of billions short of cutting this year's deficit alone-and wouldn't dent the \$14 trillion debt by one penny. Indeed, it would add to that overall debt by this year's unpaid billions. Moral: you can't really reduce the deficit without tax increases, and without cutbacks in defense spending and entitlements. All of which suggests that the Republicans failed arithmetic and passed ideology.

9) Democrats are at a structural disadvantage in public debate: they have no idea how to talk to the people, but the Republicans sure do.

Any Democrat's explanation of a public issue-be it Nancy Pelosi or Harry Reid or President Obama-sounds to my ear as follows: "Four score and 17 points ago, we tried to deliver the nation from want, only to face a long road paved by Herbert Hoover and George W. Bush. It could take 12 or 16 years to solve the problem, to be honest." On the other hand, Republicans conjure up real passion with originals like "Live free or die," "I have only one life to sell for my country," and, "So's your old man." Republicans don't make 17 points; they always keep it to an intelligible half a point plus an insinuation.

Our governmental and political shepherds, cable anchors, foreign and business leaders couldn't possibly believe that we, the American people, will simply continue laughing or screaming at their follies, and that we are so dumb we're just going to sit back and take this. Could they?

Leslie H. Gelb, a former New York Times columnist and senior government official, is author of *Power Rules: How Common Sense Can Rescue American Foreign Policy* (HarperCollins 2009), a book that shows how to think about and use power in the 21st century. He is president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations.