

Get ready for Houston's image to take a beating



BILL KING says the high-quality video of local police officers beating a suspect is likely to be released to the public and widely viewed across the country.

IF a picture is worth a thousand words, these pictures will be worth millions of words, and none of them will be good.

In March, a number of Houston Police Department officers chased 15-year-old Chad Holley through a westside neighborhood, suspecting that he had been involved in a nearby burglary. The chase ended in a storage lot which, unbeknown to the officers, was being monitored by a video recorder. The young man alleged that he had attempted to surrender but was nonetheless severely beaten by police. Shortly after the video came to light, eight police officers were relieved of duty. Ultimately, four officers were indicted, three were fired and five others were disciplined.

So far, the public has not seen the video. However, that could change soon.

In one of the civil cases pending in connection with the incident, some of the officers and the district attorney have requested that the court issue a gag order that would keep the video secret until the trial. The judge hearing the case has recently returned from summer vacation, and a ruling may be forthcoming shortly.

In such cases, the court weighs the impact of releasing the evidence in question on the defendants' right to a fair trial against the public's right to be informed. Since the tape will almost unquestionably be evidence at the trial anyway, it would seem that the scale will likely tip in favor of releasing the video to the public. So it is possible that the beating of Holley will be coming to your TV screen soon.

I have not seen the video, but I have talked to several people who have. While normally such surveillance tapes are made up of grainy, black-and-white images, this incident, which occurred in the daylight, was captured on high-quality digital video. The common term used to describe the scene by those who have seen the video is "nauseating."

Apparently when the young man was finally cornered, he fell on the ground with his hands behind his head. Notwithstanding his attempt to surrender, the officers proceeded to hold Holley down and take turns severely

beating him. One of people who had viewed the video told me that the violence is so brutal and graphic that it is comparable to the 1991 Rodney King-Los Angeles Police Department video.

If the beating is as bad as it has been described to me, it will instantly become a national news story. The video will be plastered across the 24-hour cable news channels non-stop. It will go viral on the Internet, be posted to YouTube and a dozen other sites, and be seen there by millions.

The Rodney King tape, ancient by Internet standards, has been viewed more than 1.5 million times. The Holley video will be a blemish on Houston's reputation that will be permanently preserved in cyberspace and engraved in the national consciousness.

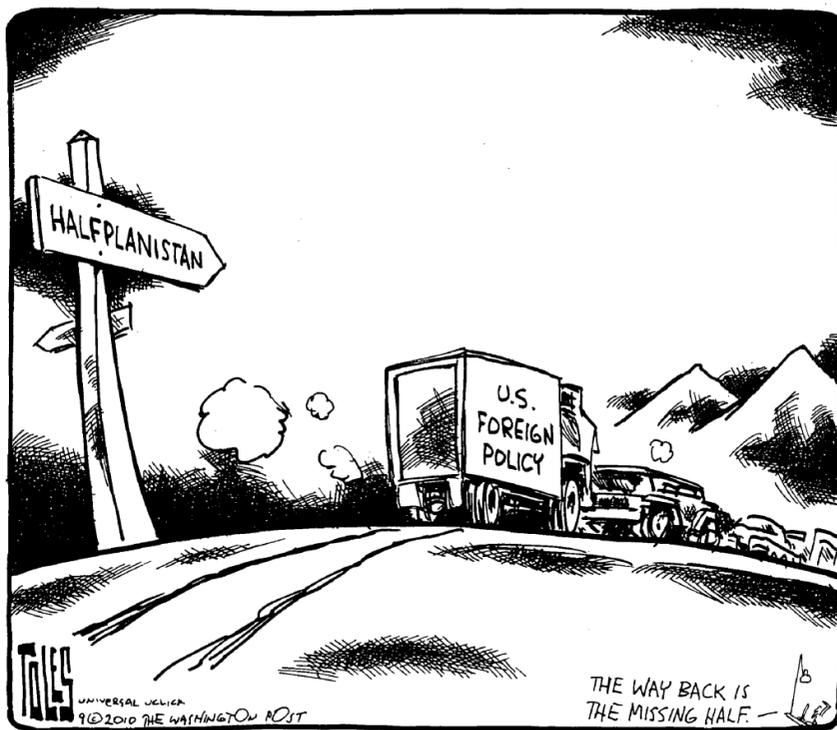
While the city is in the garish light of this national publicity, we, as a community, are going to have to come to grips with what this incident means about our police department. Those of us who have lived in Houston long enough remember a time when such incidents were far more common, such as the Joe Campos Torres case. We believed that we had turned that dark page on our city's history. The video will confront us with the disturbing prospect that perhaps not as much has changed as much as we thought, or at least, hoped.

There will be, of course, the inevitable racial overtones to the discussions since Holley is African-American. However, apparently one of the officers who actively participated in the beating is also African-American, so the racial motivation, so painfully apparent in the King and Torres incidents, may be less clear in this case.

I may be wrong, and the video may not come to light for some time. But regardless of when it happens, it is going to be an unparalleled public relations disaster for Houston. The damage done to Houston's image will take years, if not decades, to undo.

Brace yourself, Houston. This is going to be bad.

King's e-mail address is BKing@weking.net.



Mexico violence moving close to the tipping point

Colombia comparison is not that far off the mark

By **JOAN NEUHAUS SCHAAN**

RECENTLY, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton compared the escalating violence involving Mexican drug cartels to the war of terror waged against the Colombian government two decades ago.

"It's looking more and more like Colombia looked 20 years ago, where the narco-traffickers controlled certain parts of the country," Clinton told the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, D.C. In some cases, the trafficking "is morphing into, making common cause, with what we would consider an insurgency," she said.

Mexican officials took offense to the comparisons with Colombia and the use of the word insurgency. But while the situations may be different, the violence is no less well organized.

Some may argue with the use of the term insurgency, but visualize a similar situation in Southeast Texas. What if two television stations in Galveston had been attacked and a local journalist killed? What if 100 people were found massacred in Pearland, and the police chief and a detective were murdered shortly thereafter? What if all the cartel members held in facilities at the Texas Department of Criminal Justice unit in Huntsville escaped? What if the mayor of San Antonio were kidnapped and then found dead? What if two car bombs had gone off in Houston and San Antonio? What if the mayor of Wharton were assassinated? What if an investigation determined that the cartels were operating in Texas state trooper-cloned vehicles and wearing Texas state trooper uniforms? What if raids turned up arsenals of weapons, including military-grade weaponry? What if a major gun battle broke out in front of an elite private school, as security attempted to prevent an attack on or kidnapping of the children? What if 12 simultaneous cartel roadblocks appeared in Houston, while firefights broke out among cartels across the city? What if Southeast Texas experienced 20 grenade attacks? And what if all this occurred since the beginning of August? This is what the Mexican states of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon have experienced. The scenario does not include the horrors experienced in Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua.

Mexico is moving to the tipping point, if it has not already passed it. Earlier this year, the mayor, city secretary, city council, two

department heads, chief of police and 60-man police force resigned in the town of Tancitaro, Michoacan, after months of threats from the drug cartels culminated with the kidnapping of the elderly parents of city leaders. In just the last few days, the president of Mexico's National Action Party, Cesar Nava, has advocated government pacts with the criminal organizations (although the party later denied the statement), and the press has been pushed to the point of surrender. The recent Houston Chronicle editorial "Cry from Juarez" (Page B8, Sept. 22) accurately described the horror Ciudad Juarez is experiencing. As mentioned in the editorial, a photojournalist for El Diario, a newspaper in Ciudad Juarez, was killed, and the paper was compelled to publish an editorial to the criminal organizations stating:

"You are, at present, the de facto authorities in this city, because the legal institutions have not been able to keep our colleagues from dying. We do not want more injuries or even more intimidation. It is impossible to exercise our role in these conditions. Tell us, then, what do you expect of us as a medium?"

Yes, there are fundamental differences between Colombia and Mexico in the origins of the criminal organizations and their roles in the drug trade. For example, in Mexico, the cartels can be found everywhere, and the corrupting influences reach into all parts of Mexican life and many of its institutions. In Colombia, there has been some modicum of geographic separation between the adversaries. Whereas the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) may be dressed in fatigues in jungle camps, the Mexican cartels, like terrorists, have blended into the population.

If "insurgency" does not seem the appropriate word, each person can apply his or her own term to describe the rampant atrocities. The important point is not to let a battle over semantics cloud the issues that demand our attention.

What if Mexico is compelled to accommodate organized crime and acquiesce to its demands? How do we protect our own nation? Our state? Our city? Our families?

Schaan is the fellow in homeland security and terrorism at Rice University's James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, coordinator of the Texas Security Forum and member of the advisory board of the Transborder International Police Association. She has served as the executive director of the Houston-Harris County Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council and on the board of Crime Stoppers of Houston Inc.



Democrats trying to demonize tea party candidates



GEORGE F. WILL says the media has a history of serving as a megaphone for manufactured hysteria about the dangers posed by conservative candidates.

IT is a lawyers' adage: If you have the law on your side, argue the law; if you have the facts, argue the facts; if you have neither, pound the table. Forgive the Democrats for their current table-pounding.

They cannot run on their record, which has two pillars. One is the stimulus that did not stimulate as they said it would (or else unemployment would not be above 8 percent). The report that the recession ended in June 2009 means the feeble recovery began before stimulus spending really started.

The second pillar is the health care legislation. This may not be (as suggested by Michael Barone, author of the Almanac of American Politics) the most unpopular major legislation since the Kansas-Nebraska act of 1854. But it remains as unpopular as it was when the administration told Americans to pipe down and eat their broccoli.

Unable to campaign retrospectively, Democrats also cannot campaign prospectively — "Elect us and get more broccoli!" Hence the table-pounding: The tea party is a death panel

for America's happiness.

As the year began, we were warned that tea partiers would not play nicely with others — would not abide by the mores and outcomes of the two-party competition. It is, however, some anti-tea party "moderates" who exemplify repulsive politics this year.

Florida's Gov. Charlie Crist wanted the Republican Senate nomination. So did Marco Rubio, a tea party favorite. When Rubio went from 30 points behind Crist to 30 points ahead, Crist discovered that he is not a Republican. Promptly reversing his beliefs on various policy questions, he embarked on a run as an independent.

It is unfairly said that Crist's versatility of conviction proves that he has no convictions. He has one. It is that he should be a senator. Alaska's Sen. Lisa Murkowski is similarly a conviction politician.

She became a senator by nepotism (her father appointed her to his Senate seat when he resigned to become Alaska's governor). Since losing her renomination bid — defeated by tea

party-backed Joe Miller — she has behaved as though voters have violated her property right to her seat. She is running a write-in campaign.

When Mike Lee, supported by tea party types, defeated Utah Republican Sen. Bob Bennett's bid to be renominated for a fourth term, Bennett contemplated a write-in campaign. In Delaware, where Christine O'Donnell defeated Rep. Mike Castle for the Republican senate nomination, Castle has not, as of Wednesday, ruled out a write-in candidacy.

Democrats, unable to run on their policies, will try to demonize the opponents with tea party support as unstable extremists with personality disorders. They have ridden this hobby horse before.

In 1964, the slogan of the Republican presidential nominee, Barry Goldwater, was "A choice, not an echo." Forty-six years on, the tea party is a loud echo of his attempt to reconnect American politics with the tradition of limited government.

In response to a questionnaire from a magazine, 1,189 psychiatrists, none of whom had ever met Goldwater, declared him unfit for office — "emotionally unstable," "immature," "cowardly," "grossly psychotic," "paranoid," "chronic schizophrenic" and "dangerous lunatic" were some judgments from the psychiatrists who believed that extremism in pursuit of Goldwater was no vice. Shortly before the election, Columbia University historian Richard Hofstadter published in Harper's an essay

(later expanded into a book with the same title), *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, that encouraged the idea that Goldwater's kind of conservatism was a mental disorder.

On the eve of the convention that nominated Goldwater, Daniel Schorr of CBS, "reporting" from Germany, said: "It looks as though Sen. Goldwater, if nominated, will be starting his campaign here in Bavaria, center of Germany's right wing" and "Hitler's one-time stomping ground." Goldwater, said Schorr, would be vacationing near Hitler's villa at Berchtesgaden. Schorr further noted that Goldwater had given an interview to Der Spiegel "appealing to right-wing elements in Germany" and had agreed to speak to a gathering of "right-wing Germans." So, "there are signs that the American and German right wings are joining up."

But as Andrew Ferguson of The Weekly Standard has reported, although Goldwater had spoken vaguely about a European vacation (he did not take one), he had not mentioned Germany, and there were no plans to address any German group. Der Spiegel had reprinted an interview that had appeared elsewhere.

The relevance of this for 2010? There is precedent for the mainstream media being megaphones for Democratic-manufactured hysteria.

Will's e-mail address is georgewill@washpost.com.