

Association For Intelligence Officers

The Tom Smith New Mexico Chapter

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OCTOBER MEETING

Wednesday, 14 December 2011

Marcello's Chophouse, Albuquerque Uptown

11:15 AM: Arrive, Sign in, Order Lunch **11:45 AM:** Call To Order

PRESIDENT'S CORNER – WHAT A YEAR!

It's hard even to know where to begin...2011 has brought us more global, political, social and economic upheaval than most people have ever experienced. Even with 20+ years of all-source analysis under my belt, I find the current information flood pretty daunting to manage on my own. It's a great challenge for our current analytical and operational folks, and I truly appreciate their management of the myriad and interconnected security challenges the Intelligence Community faces these days. "Connecting the dots" has never been more difficult; yet, given the range of threats to this country, we in the U.S. are remarkably secure.

In addition to the threats, there are worldwide economic, political, social and environmental upheavals that concern us whether we like it or not. Sectarian and social/tribal rivalries are as violent and intractable as ever, no matter what spin you see in the news. Iraq, Iran, Syria, Egypt, Kosovo, Serbia, Sudan, Yemen, Congo, etc. Take your pick. Let me just skim over a selection.

The IRAQIS are nowhere close to a power-sharing arrangement for their government. The EGYPTIAN military is loath to yield power, let alone share it. And, keep an eye on the Muslim Brotherhood—a large, sophisticated, well organized movement with a radical core that does not like our way of life very much. SYRIA'S Assad, clinging tightly to his lucrative dictatorship, is clearly willing to exterminate anyone opposing him (where have we seen that behavior, before?). IRAN is a dangerous wild card. Irrational civilian leadership and hard core religious leaders, combined with national nuclear ambitions pose destabilizing scenarios for the region and for the international community. ISRAEL now faces both new and more virulent challenges on several fronts, making that part of the world more dangerous than it has been for a generation. In EUROPE, we may actually be witnessing the collapse of an entire monetary system, an eventuality with dire consequences for the affected national economies, international trade arrangements, banks and global markets. If the Euro collapses, the impact on the U.S. will surely amplify our own economic meltdown. Things don't look much brighter in ASIA. In South Asia, the INDIAN economy—thought to be bright spot--still sputters. PAKISTAN, which we, arguably, haven't handled very well, is now seriously estranged from us, though they need us, and we them. Our relations with them, thanks to a combination of their ineffective national leadership and the opaque operations of the ISI, are at their lowest level since Musharraf stepped up to the plate to aid us after 9/11. AFGHANISTAN'S future is a great unknown. The progress we have made there, at great cost, could be rapidly undone after our departure. Attempts to fashion something resembling a "central" government have

been undermined for longer than any of us have been alive, by the fierce independence of the many tribes, a complete distrust of outsiders, and an understandable mistrust of would-be “national” leaders. In other parts of ASIA, JAPAN faces a long, uphill battle in rebuilding infrastructure wiped out by the tsunami and the nuclear plant meltdown, and its economy, which has suffered from international market slowdowns. THAILAND, learning to cope with a new and somewhat unpredictable (for the previous ruling elites) government, has just suffered the most devastating floods in decades. In addition to the thousands of people displaced from their homes, the threat of disease is severe, and a number of industrial enterprises (e.g., Toyota and computer parts suppliers) have been damaged, with an immediate, negative impact on the Thai economy. BURMA, long one of the most repressive regimes on the planet, has embarked on a possible turnaround, pushing most of the offensive military leaders into the background and showing a more open face to the world. Freeing Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel prizewinning democracy advocate, to move about freely and engage in public activities has been a startling step toward openness. Since the steps taken, so far, are likely to develop a momentum of their own—thus being hard to undo—I am cautiously optimistic that this backward nation, with its plethora of agricultural and other natural resources, may eventually flourish once again. As a side note, this recent opening to the outside world appears to offer the Burmese an opportunity to rebuff Chinese attempts to increase Beijing’s presence and activities inside Burma.

Well, colleagues, enough of this rambling, even though we have only scratched the surface. Our only tasks for the rest of the year are to wish each other well over the holidays, send out special prayers to our servicemen and women wherever they are overseas, and to their families who await their return, at home. Additionally, I believe we owe particular thanks, and support, to those who have returned from war with wounds—physical and mental—who require intensive, long term support. Other veterans, especially, will appreciate their need for community support in addition to medical treatment.

As I have been away for much of the last couple of months, I am not up to date on how our members who are on “sick call” are doing, and would appreciate input any of you may have, at the meeting.

For now, and for those who will be unable to attend the meeting, the Chapter and I wish you all the best for the holidays and the New Year. Please stay in touch, and keep us apprised of events in your life and your thoughts about international affairs.

I will be adding articles I believe to be of interest to the members’ area of our web site, following the meeting. I look forward to seeing many of you at the meeting next week.

Respectfully yours,

Pete Bostwick

MERRY CHRISTMAS,
HAPPY HANUKKAH
and
HAPPY HOLIDAYS !!!