

26 February 2010

Today's Tabbloid

PERSONAL NEWS FOR Ign@limitedgovernmentnetwork.com

FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE BLOG FEEDS

Pwned! Paul Ryan on Healthcare and Deficits [Americans for Tax Reform]

FEB 25, 2010 04:24P.M.

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FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE BLOG FEEDS

Quote of the Day [The Club for Growth]

FEB 25, 2010 03:53P.M.

Just keep on talking, Mr. Vice President. 

FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE BLOG FEEDS

Are We Really Going to Leave Iraq? (cont'd) [Cato at Liberty]

FEB 25, 2010 01:48P.M.

By Justin Logan

A follow up on yesterday's post about my skepticism that we would be able to get out of Iraq by 2011 (and get all "combat" troops out by September 1 of this year):


- Tom Ricks reports that Gen. Odierno has formally requested keeping a combat brigade in Kirkuk beyond the September 1 deadline; but
- Laura Rozen says we should keep our eyes peeled for a Senate resolution whose "group of cosponsors will confirm that, at long last, the war over the war is over."

One way to square these two seemingly contradictory statements is if the bipartisan consensus Rozen implies exists reflects an agreement between Democrats and Republicans that the United States should use Iraq as a

new military base in the Middle East like we used to use Saudi Arabia. Ricks's report strongly implies that the military is trying to force Obama to stay, although it's not clear whether Obama has any desire to take up a fight with them over leaving. And that's assuming he actually wants to leave.

Ricks writes cryptically that "this debate is just beginning. I expect that Obama actually is going to have to break his promises on Iraq and keep a fairly large force in Iraq, but of course that won't be the first time he's had to depart from his campaign rhetoric on this war." Finally, Ricks suggests


Let's open the betting: How many U.S. military personnel will be in Iraq four years from today—that is, Feb. 25, 2014? The person who guesses closest gets a signed copy of any of my books. My guess: 28,895. Not "combat" troops, of course! Goodness no. Just "advisory" troops who carry M-16s and call in airstrikes and such.

I have enough humility to duck a precise guess, but I would be very, very surprised if the number is zero. Americans don't give up military footholds unless we're chased out, a la Vietnam, Lebanon, or Saudi Arabia. We're still in Europe, for goodness' sake. 

FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE BLOG FEEDS

The 200 NTU Scorecard [The Club for Growth]

FEB 25, 2010 01:17P.M.

National Taxpayers Union has released their 2009 scorecard. s his seventh straight year in the top position...a record. 


FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE BLOG FEEDS

Patriot Act Update [Cato at Liberty]

FEB 25, 2010 12:25P.M.

By Julian Sanchez

It looks as though we'll be getting a straight one-year reauthorization of the expiring provisions of the Patriot Act, without even the minimal added safeguards for privacy and civil liberties that had been proposed in the Senate's watered down bill. This is disappointing, but was also eminently predictable: Between health care and the economy, it was clear Congress wasn't going to make time for any real debate on substantive reform of surveillance law. Still, the fact that the reauthorization is only for one year suggests that the reformers plan to give it another go—though, in all probability, we won't see any action on this until after the midterm elections.

The silver lining here is that this creates a bit of breathing room, and means legislators may now have a chance to take account of the absolutely damning Inspector General's report that found that the FBI repeatedly and systematically broke the law by exceeding its authorization to gather information about people's telecommunications activities. It also means the debate need not be contaminated by the panic over the Fort Hood shootings or the failed Christmas bombing—neither of which have anything whatever to do with the specific provisions at issue here, but both of which would have doubtless been invoked *ad nauseam* anyway. 

FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE BLOG FEEDS

India Explicitly Rejects Bringing Environmental Issues Into WTO [Cato at Liberty]

FEB 25, 2010 12:21P.M.

By Sallie James

An article today in BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest (*What? You don't subscribe??*) contains an explicit rejection by India's trade minister of the idea that carbon border tax adjustments belong in the WTO's agenda. Border tax adjustments in this context refers to *de facto* tariffs that would "level the playing field" for domestic producers competing with foreign producers not subject to climate change policies of an equivalent rigour, also called "border carbon adjustments" or variations on that theme.

While Minister Khullar predicts that these sorts of measures will be in place in 2-3 years time, he rejects that the WTO is the forum to deal with


environmental issues.

Furthermore, countries introducing such measures can expect litigation:

India and other developing countries will undoubtedly challenge the true impetus behind the [border carbon adjustment] measures.

"Such measures imposing restrictions on imports on the grounds of providing a 'level playing field', or maintaining the 'competitiveness' of the domestic industry, etc are likely to be viewed as mere protectionist measures by the developed world to block the exports of the poorer nations," [a recent report from an Indian think-tank closely connected with the Indian government] reads. "This is because there is little empirical evidence that companies relocate to take advantage of lax pollution controls."


The [report] argues that such unilateral trade measures will inevitably lead to tit-for-tat trade retaliation that could spiral into an all-out trade war. Such warnings have also been raised by China and several think tanks following the issue.

I've written before on the dangers of introducing climate change issues into the WTO (and Dan Griswold has written more broadly on why labor and environmental standards don't mix well with the aim of freeing trade) but this is yet another firm, unequivocal warning to developed countries that their proposals (and they are still just proposals at this stage) will have consequences. Developed country politicians who insist on forcing rich-world standards on the poor world should listen carefully. 

FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE BLOG FEEDS

Thursday's Daily News [The Club for Growth]

FEB 25, 2010 11:47A.M.

Economist Don Boudreaux: The raw hypocrisy of reconciliation. iTunes has sold its 10,000,000,000th song. 

FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE BLOG FEEDS

Clinton on Possible Free Trade Agreement with Pakistan [The Club for Growth]

FEB 25, 2010 10:34A.M.

This made me gasp and sigh at the same time. she said. 

FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE BLOG FEEDS

On Fourth Amendment Privacy: Everybody's Wrong [Cato at Liberty]


FEB 25, 2010 08:42A.M.

By Jim Harper

Everybody's wrong. That's sort of the message I was putting out when I wrote my 2008 *American University Law Review* law review article entitled "Reforming Fourth Amendment Privacy Doctrine."

A lot of people have poured a lot of effort into the "reasonable expectation of privacy" formulation Justice Harlan wrote about in his concurrence to the 1967 decision in *U.S. v. Katz*. But the Fourth Amendment isn't about people's expectations or the reasonableness of their expectations. It's about whether, as a factual matter, they have concealed information from others—and whether *the government* is being reasonable in trying to discover that information.

The upshot of the "reasonable expectation of privacy" formulation is that the government can argue—straight-faced—that Americans don't have a Fourth Amendment interest in their locations throughout the day and night because data revealing it is produced by their mobile phones' interactions with telecommunications providers, and the telecom companies have that data.

I sat down with podcaster *extraordinaire* Caleb Brown the other day to talk about all this. He titled our conversation provocatively: "Should the Government Own Your GPS Location?" 

FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE BLOG FEEDS

Put Housing GSEs in the Budget and then Privatize [Cato at Liberty]

FEB 25, 2010 08:39A.M.

By Tad DeHaven

The two large housing government-sponsored enterprises, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, have been in government receivership since September 2008. The U.S. Treasury has given the housing GSEs \$112 billion in cash infusions, and this past Christmas Eve it quietly announced it would cover *all* of Fannie and Freddie's losses beyond the original \$400 billion limit through 2012.

The president's latest budget proposal continues to only count the cash infusions, which it projects to be \$188 billion through 2020. On the other hand, the Congressional Budget Office also includes in its budget projections the subsidy cost of new loans or loan guarantees made by Fannie and Freddie, which results in a total projected hit of \$370 billion through 2020.

The CBO's rationale for including the subsidy cost is obvious:

[T]he Congressional Budget Office (CBO) concluded that the institutions had effectively become government entities whose operations should be included in the federal budget.

Is it not obvious to the administration? Of course it is, but the administration doesn't want the GSEs "on budget" because it will only make already dismal deficits look worse. It also hinders any effort to count the GSE's combined \$1.5 trillion in outstanding debt against the ever-increasing federal debt limit. Yesterday, Treasury Secretary Geithner waived the idea away when he told the Senate Budget Committee that "we do not believe it's necessary to consolidate the full obligations of those entities onto the balance sheet of the federal government at this stage."

Geithner also told Congress the administration will now wait till 2011 to propose an overhaul of Fannie and Freddie. The Associated Press noted the hypocrisy in the administration's punt:

'We want to make sure that we are proposing these changes at a time when we have a little bit more distance from the worst housing crisis in generations,' Geithner said. That argument is exactly the opposite of the case Geithner is making for new financial regulations. Geithner is pressing Congress to move swiftly on new Wall Street rules, saying action must occur before memories of the financial crisis recede.

Geithner said he wanted measures that would ensure "the government is

playing a less risky, but more constructive, role in supporting housing markets in the future.” But government “support” of the housing market is what fueled the housing bubble and subsequent damage to the economy. Why should the arsonist be trusted to put out the fire?

Unfortunately, policymakers get a lot of self-serving prompting from the housing industry, as I discuss in this Cato Policy Analysis. For example, the National Association of Realtors is currently shopping a plan on Capitol Hill that would turn Fannie and Freddie into government-chartered non-profits *explicitly* backed by the government. Instead, policymakers should begin the process of separating housing finance and state by developing a plan to privatize Fannie and Freddie. 