

Governance, the Achilles' heel

Development partners say it again

THE donor representatives in a characteristic mixed-bag appreciation of the economy at the inaugural of the two-day meet of the Bangladesh Development Forum ending yesterday, advised the government to handle certain core issues more efficiently to accelerate the pace of development.

The World Bank Vice President for South Asia, Meiko Nishimizu, pinpointed the progress made by the country in some key areas but was quick to point out that people have not been benefited by the achievements because of poor governance, slide in law and order and corruption, which also have had a negative impact on the investment climate. Nishimizu has been particularly focused on the bane of corruption, saying that its elimination will instantly push up the GDP by at least three per cent.

IMF Assistant Director Champen Puckahtikom laid emphasis on formulation of clear strategies for improving the poor law and order situation, which has had a crippling effect on society as a whole.

The donors have basically echoed what the media and the members of the civil society have been saying for a pretty long time now. They have been advocating creation of a fully independent anti-corruption commission, an ombudsman's office and separation of the judiciary from the executive in order to improve the quality of governance in general and addressing some specific issues in particular. The advance made in setting up an independent anti-corruption commission is a step in the right direction, although belated. The still unfinished institutional agenda need to be addressed.

This is not the first time that they have stressed the need for creation of conditions conducive to investment, both foreign and domestic. However, the observations made by them in a changed world aid climate acquires a bit of an extra significance that may not be lost on us.

A degree of skepticism has been expressed about the way the government has been dealing with some NGOs. Though the government representatives have tried to dispel any doubts that might have crept in about the relations between the government and those NGOs, people would surely like to know the 'specific allegations' purportedly brought against them by the NGO Bureau.

We have perhaps the best package of incentives for investment in the world. But that alone may not do the trick. Unless the country offers political, social and economic stability that the prospective investors look for before taking a plunge no significant headway can be made in the area.

CHT peace accord

Tribal infighting taking a toll

WELL over five years ago, the CHT peace agreement was signed between the former AL government and the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) marking an end to two-decade-old insurgency in the region. While the confrontation between government forces and the since defunct Shantibahini, the military wing of the PCJSS, was put behind as a result of the accord, subsequent internecine conflicts within the tribal community bred a violence leading to bloodshed in same-side slanging matches. The detractors of the peace accord regrouping under the banner of Pahari Chhatra Parishad have had a front organisation called the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF). In fact, the Pahari Chhatra Parishad had voiced their opposition to the peace deal right at the time of its consummation back in December, 1997. The PCJSS-UPDF clashes have taken a toll of a hundred lives already, not to mention the incidence of abduction of rival activists in the torrid atmosphere of mutual political hostilities.

The UPDF has put forward a five-point demand which, inter alia, included full autonomy for the CHT, pullback of the armed forces and withdrawal of Bangalee settlers from the hill districts. This amounts to reopening of issues settled in the peace accord signed by the AL government and the PCJSS led by Santu Larma. Many observers believe that the procrastination over implementation of the peace accord has exacerbated the differences between PCJSS and UPDF elements. The pivotal feature of the peace deal was election to the regional and local bodies. If the polls were held, different groups would have participated in the fray resulting in the throwing up of a leadership largely shorn of the baggage of history. Unfortunately, barring the national election, the hilly region has had none of the other elections. As a result, the dominance of the tribal weightage in district and regional councils which the peace accord has provided for remains largely unrealised. So, we think, the elective processes should be completed sooner than later in order to give the CHT people a true feel of autonomy.

Basically, the mainstream political parties which alternatively held power and lost it have had their contributions in advancing the cause of peace in the troubled hilly region. They must now forge a consensus to take the process of implementing the accord forward. It should be possible through negotiations with the tribal leadership across the board to persuade them to bury their differences in the greater interest of development in the region which the donors are all too eager to fund.

The political economy of Iraq war



M ABDUL HAFIZ

THE Bush Administration had promised 'new Afghanistan' after the ouster of Taliban from Kabul and other major cities of the country. In recent weeks as the Taliban and their allies are getting more audacious in their hit-and-run attacks against the US military targets and it becomes evident that the writ of the US-backed government in Afghanistan hardly runs beyond Kabul the more and more Afghans now see President Karzai as nothing more than a puppet of the United States. So much so that he was among a few leaders internationally who backed the US' aggression against Iraq. The financial bonanza promised to the Afghans by Bush administration has proved to be a hoax. Even now when President Bush sent his budget proposal for the fiscal year 2004 (beginning Oct 1, 2003) to Congress for preliminary scrutiny it revealed that no fund had been allocated as reconstruction aid for Afghanistan. The neglect was so stark and the US' official response was so embarrassing, it is told, a congressional staff managed to scribble in a figure of \$300m before the budget was sent onward for scrutiny by the House.

Already after more than a year and half after the fall of Taliban the long-suffering people of Afghanistan are still awaiting a 'new Afghanistan' promised by President Bush who is quoted in Bob Woodward's book 'Bush at War' as having said that the US strategy in Afghanistan is to create 'chaos and vacuum' in the pious hope that something good would

emerge out of them. The result of Bush policy in Afghanistan is there for all to see: anarchy and return of warlordism.

A similar fate may be awaiting Iraq. Once the scourge of war passed, promised George Bush, Iraq would enjoy the 'sustained commitment' of the United States in any effort to build, it as a 'united stable and free country'. The global audience recalled from not far back that much the same had been promised the people of Afghanistan when the final war for destruc-

different circumstance. The first major contract from the US government under Iraq reconstruction programme had gone to a firm with a distinguished lineage of Republican Party political operative. Without so much as a pretense for competitive bidding the task of evaluating and restoring devastated power, water and sewerage system in Iraq had been awarded to California-based Bechtel Corporation. The contract which is subject to ratification by US Congress is estimated at an enviable \$680m.

arm of Halliburton won the contract to set up the US' detention centre for 'illegal combatants' at Guantanamo Bay. With its expertise in oil field repairs and civil construction, Halliburton could be the big gainer from Iraqi reconstruction contracts.

It's indeed a big enterprise, not withstanding its snags -- the snags of not being able to come up to the desired level of reconstruction. It's not much the problem either of management or perception. The problem rather is of an US admin-

istration that is enslaved by an ideological agenda having non-negotiable policy choices. Integral to this agenda are unending war overseas and huge tax breaks for the rich at home -- a hallmark of emerging new empire. The money will never be enough to meet the conflicting requirements of reconstruction and corporate bonanza.

To top it all there is another basic problem that is worrying the administration and its corporate cronies: Where, after all, the money either for reconstruction contracts or tax cuts is going to come from? Of the special appropriation of \$10 bn that President Bush requested from congress just days after the invasion of Iraq, no less than \$62bn is for the military component. Of the rest, Iraqi reconstruction accounts for only a small part, as yet unspecified. There are indications the congress would like

nation threat in the belief that she could contribute to Iraq's reconstruction. She soon ran into the US' government's theological conviction that Iraq's health care infrastructure should be entrusted to US corporations, and none other. The mood at the summit within the inner circle of the council of Europe at Brussels within a day of the outbreak of hostility in Iraq was not congenial either. France was believed to have told Britain that its advocacy of the cause of Iraqi reconstruction was 'presumptuous and insolent'. As a country that was partly responsible for the problem, it was upto Britain to first publicly atone for defying the will of the international community and then put up the funds for the reconstruction effort. If not anything, the US' trans-Atlantic allies darken the prospect for getting reconstruction fund from the world's capital-surplus regions as well.

Those who see a flicker of hope for reconstruction fund in the revival of oil-for-food programme are indeed oblivious of its real potential. Whatever potential the oil-for-food had to mitigate human suffering in Iraq was effectively sabotaged by the US and Britain who worked jointly to hem it in with a host of arbitrary conditions. Despite seven years of the programme, Iraq's infrastructure remains static. At current level of oil prices Iraq barely manages to earn \$6 bn annually of which only a fraction is made available for essential purchases. That means the restoration of power grid, the water supply system and the oil industry to a viable level would require enormous investments far beyond Iraq's oil revenues.

While it remains an open question whether under the present predicaments Iraq reconstruction would be dumped like Afghanistan earlier, a grim waning in sounded by economist William Nordhaus who points to the inescapability of sharing burden by the US tax payers unless they want to see 'the cost of a botched peace' which, he argues, is higher than 'the price of a bloody war'.

Brig (ret'd) Hafiz is former DG of BIIS.

PERSPECTIVES

While it remains an open question whether under the present predicaments Iraq reconstruction would be dumped like Afghanistan earlier, a grim waning in sounded by economist William Nordhaus who points to the inescapability of sharing burden by the US tax payers unless they want to see "the cost of a botched peace" which, he argues, is higher than "the price of a bloody war".

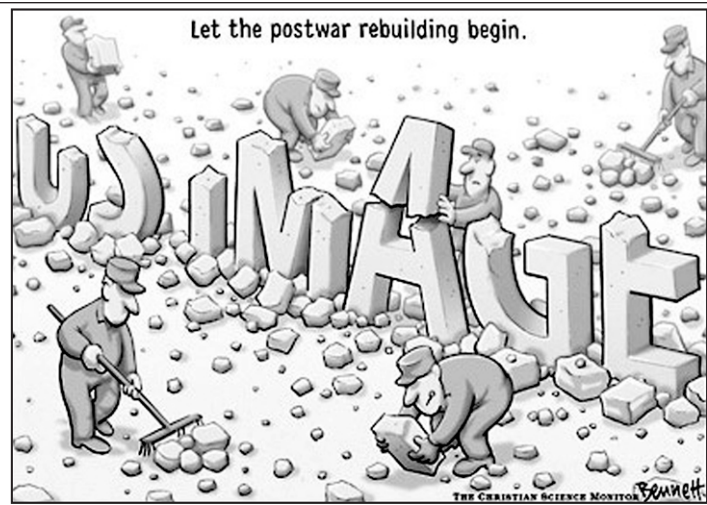
tion was launched in that country in October 2001. Contrasting that experience of the Afghan people, the things are moving fast with regard to reconstruction in Iraq thanks to a different set of dynamics already set in motion. The events unfolding in the wake of a coalition victory in the operation -- Iraqi freedom had been for Donald Rumsfeld, the US secretary of defence, a personal triumph, a vindication -- although not so much for his conduct of war itself.

After war -- has come the period of reconstruction marking a prime time for corporate profit. Back in December, 1983 -- Rumsfeld, as a special envoy of president Reagan met President Saddam in what was termed as a meeting of concord according to the records recently declassified under the Freedom of Information Act. Rumsfeld raised, by departing from an agreed agenda, the subject of a new pipeline to Iraqi oil through Jordan to the sea port of Aqaba only to be perfunctorily responded by the Iraqi President. But that was the beginning of a political patronisation of a corporate interest seeing its fruition now under a

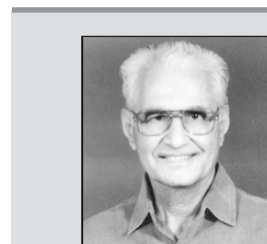
Another company which is advantageously placed to day for the corporate colonisation of Iraq is Halliburton. Dick Cheney headed it till he was given the Vice-presidential nomination in 2000 and earns an annual \$1 million from the company as part of his severance package negotiated in the same year. The construction

to hold down the committed reconstruction fund to only \$2 bn, in an effort to coax other prospective donors to step up their contribution. In the meantime, deep divisions persist over the size of the tax cuts the Bush cabal wants. The administration's proposals conceive of tax cuts of \$726 bn over a ten-year period while the House of Representative approved of relatively more modest cuts of \$550 bn. In the crunch there is also the remotest prospect that the US tax payers are going to support any part of Iraqi reconstruction. It can happen only at the weakening prospect for Bush's re-election for the second term yet the swaggering, contemptuous top officials of the Bush Administration dimmed the prospect of fund coming from other sources by arrogating to the US the sole right to determine who the agencies of reconstruction should be. The US Agency for International Development has already been floating tenders.

For example, Clare Short, British secretary of state for International Development had swallowed her reservations about Blair's reckless rush to war and withdrawn a resig-



Let the Army choose



M B NAQVI

writes from Karachi

TABOOS are breaking down, people have begun to express themselves in print what they had earlier talked in drawing rooms or tea-shops. It should be welcomed. The context includes ongoing excitement over making it up with India as also the debate over LFO. The question is: would Pakistan army and its propagandists permit normalisation and free trade with India while Kashmir issue is put in cold storage through a suitable political formula? Resolution of Kashmir issue is anyhow a long haul affair. Would they?

The background and assumptions underlying this question are known. It is now recognised that Pakistan Army has manipulated and frequently directly ran the government. It has had a veto over important decisions even during nominally democratic governments, especially over national security matters. The definition of security matters included all foreign policy decisions regarding India, US, China, Afghanistan, etc.

This definition included something more basic: the so-called democratic governments lived or died at the Army's pleasure. It would be tiresome to recount all the instances of Army's manipulation of nominal governments from its first indirect intervention in April 1953. The brutal fact is that locus of true power in Pakistan shifted to the Army as an institution well before 1960s through successful coups, including dismissals of all Prime Ministers. It is

Pakistan's distinction that no Prime Minister ever completed his normal term, except Z.A. Bhutto who completed his first term but not the second one. But then he was hanged. Not even a General went out of office by his own volition -- not one of them; each was pushed out by the Army itself.

Today three issues are fuelling the debate over Army's role: the first is the India policy to be. The second is the explosive domestic struggle over LFO. Gen. Pervez Musharraf, the concurrent Army

category of Bhutan and the like.

Can this economy sustain such a big military establishment? Pakistan could manage so far because the US armed forces now require foreign mercenaries to do secondary jobs, the so-called 'bag carrying' operations. The US pays cash on the barrel. But in the 'bag carrying' department there is stiff competition and the wages are declining. Can Pakistan sustain its military on merely expected receipts of international bag carrying? Apart from the question of honour, can it be

To maintain present establishment, they require a lot of money -- they tend to take over governments to make sure of that -- and an emotive justification for maintaining their positions and perks. Pakistan Ideology -- mostly denunciation and hatred of Hindus -- and Kashmir Jihad serve that purpose.

Which is why generals cultivate and pay or promise propagandists and many politicians. In order to sustain an unending confrontation with India -- the only justification of keeping such a large establishment -- support from the press and

that these agencies are under no one's control, not even of the generals, having become rogue states. Foreign governments directly deal with them.

The three issues discussed here are not separate; they are causally linked. Due to the military's size, its requirements are big. Pakistan economy, unaided, cannot sustain it, especially its foreign exchange component. No prudent country can accept an obligation for which there is no money. If foreign power foots such a bill, as the US does, it is

ments of the people -- their education and skills and healthcare, not to mention the eradication of hunger -- are met. These will need a lot of new resources that need to be generated from the kind of development that is oriented to meeting human needs of a growing population.

External threats, including from India, are largely fanciful. If Pakistan had not adopted the militaristic approach of wresting Kashmir by force --- by 1965-like war or the current Jihad --- the present impasse would not have arisen. Jihad today is only killing Kashmiris and India is able to absorb the negligible losses to its Army. Given India's Hindutva orientation -- insofar as it is stable -- it will need to invent a Pakistan, if the present one were not there. Mad would be the Indian 'Hindu' to want another 150 million Muslims in India.

A new Kashmir policy is needed that does not require guns going off daily. It will enable this country to reduce the defence establishment -- down to whatever may be needed to back up the police and paramilitary forces for keeping law and order and preventing smuggling and narcotics trade. That can release resources to be divided between investments in infrastructure and for starting an affordable social security for all.

But that domestically requires total rejection of the LFO by the Parliament which should demonstratively assert its supremacy by rejecting Army's dictation over policy-making on national security issues themselves, let alone foreign, domestic and economic policies. But, and this is a bigger but, who will bell the cat? Well, these very politicians in this very doubt-raising Parliament. If they cannot, well, let them reject the LFO without any agreement or compromise and let the Army take over again and run the country directly. What happens later will be its responsibility.

MB Naqvi is a leading columnist in Pakistan.

PLAIN WORDS

A new Kashmir policy is needed that does not require guns going off daily. It will enable this country to reduce the defence establishment -- down to whatever may be needed to back up the police and paramilitary forces for keeping law and order and preventing smuggling and narcotics trade. That can release resources to be divided between investments in infrastructure and for starting an affordable social security for all.

Chief and the President of the Islamic Republic plan to retain total control over what is done in Pakistan through LFO provisions. This preempts democracy; it is a formula for an absolutist dictatorship. A divided opposition began rejecting the LFO. The COAS said nonsense; I am here to remain; lump it. The outcome is still uncertain.

The third is the facts of the economy. Except for what foreigners give Islamabad for services rendered in Afghanistan and for capturing al-Qaeda fugitives, the country has been living on cash injections and debt reschedulings, having given its economic policy-making in hoc to IFIs. Pakistan economy incurs three deficits: national budgeting, trade and balance of payments. New investments are few and far between. Authority is waiting for Godot -- the elusive foreign investments' flood. While hopes are high of 5 percent GDP growth, unemployment and poverty are growing alarmingly. In terms of the availability of social services, Pakistan belongs to the

relied upon, given the Army's liabilities: Kashmir Jihad, armies of unemployed Islamic fanatics and the growing domestic confrontation with opposition and as also with India.

Time has come to face facts. Army's domestic supremacy and its Army Chief being a sort of Regent in waiting has gone on far too long. Its price is the loss of national unity and integrity. Pakistanis were never so divided. Even the bureaucracies at the Centre and in the provinces are perpetually quarrelling. Provincialism has grown dangerously. The glue that holds a nation together is the feeling of being partners in decision-making. In short, without democracy -- with no adjectives -- Pakistan's future is at risk. Actual subordination of the military to whatever government there may be is the primary need. But how does one make the Army's leaders, with their self-importance and arrogance, see this fact. Understandably they are more concerned with the institutional or corporate interests of the Army.

politicians is vital. That opens the door to political takeovers and underhand manoeuvres.

Anyway, the Army now acts as a vested interest. It is the most integrated group in society. Acting like a political party, it has acquired a lot of power. Its major takeovers were preceded by a concerted press campaign about how corruption and malpractices have become intolerable and that the government of the day is unable to curb it. Military's intelligence agencies being its political arm, they keep a number of newsmen and columnists on their payroll, especially in the Urdu press. That enables it to influence, indeed it can create or exaggerate, a crisis. Exposing and, if possible, neutralising this nefarious group is important.

What can be done? The usual political parties, having been infiltrated and often bribed by agencies, may have lost the ability, power and may be the will to control the generals and discipline their agencies. At times it seems

entitled to call the shots and indeed does so. Pakistan's sovereignty has been seriously compromised.

The logical thing to do is to persuade or force the Army out of politics. That is the only way democracy can be established. And insofar as democracy remains partial or defective, the state of Pakistan can scarcely remain united. The contrary is also true: if the Army goes on calling all the shots, the future of national unity and state's integrity will be dark. A large sized Army cannot safeguard what Pakistanis may become reluctant to save because their needs and wishes count for nothing.

A democratic government free of Generals' stranglehold can change national priorities. The need is to revamp the economy's Development Model not with a view to paying the unaffordable defence bill but to accelerate both the growth of employment and primary consumption of the poorest sections of society. Defence comes after the primary require-

War souvenir leads journalist into prison

MONZURUL HUQ writes from Tokyo

THE fall of Baghdad had the twist of irony to let loose the thieves of Alibaba's old historic city who didn't hesitate at all to pick up even hospital equipment and medicines. While the well-trained and well-armed victors were too busy in their failed attempt to dig up the much sought after prize of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction (WMD), Baghdad's goons and thugs had their free reign to run after everything possible to grab. Amid that chaos and confusion not only valuable artefacts from museums and other places of their preservation went missing, the coveted word WMD itself also went into oblivion, for much the pleasure of the victors and their lackeys. It was in the name of finding Saddam's arsenals of WMD that the United States and its unofficial subaltern Britain started a joint assault against the 'deadly enemy standing as a threat to the survival of human race'. To our utter surprise, with the passing of each day less and less is being heard from the victors of the word

that only a few weeks ago seemed to have inspired them to risk lives of their own citizens for the noble purpose of saving the world from its imminent destruction.

It should be mentioned in this context that any mention of the word WMD was conspicuously absent from the recent long accusing letter of the British High Commissioner in Bangladesh, where he blamed the newspaper for not reporting the war objectively and tried to give candid advice on what objectivity is. The issue of Saddam's obligation to disarm concerned precisely those of his WMD. As a result, an intentional act of avoiding the mentioning of the main reason that was repeatedly sighted earlier as the logical ground for invading Iraq has no doubt turned the whole context of the letter into a mere unsophisticated attempt of practicing raw propaganda initiative. May be Iraq's WMD by now has turned into a new collectible souvenir item that some people are desperately trying to get hold of just to put them on display in their well-decorated living rooms. A recent incident at Amman international airport

involving a Japanese journalist most likely comes as an indication that it is not possible to rule out such assumption simply as a fantasy.

The journalist in question is not a free-lancer or someone working

Queen Alia International Airport in Amman, killing a security guard and injuring three others. The thirty-six years old photographer Hiroki Gomi was returning to Japan after covering the war in Iraq.

injured others. Gomi was arrested on the spot by the Jordanian police and has been detained for interrogation over the incident.

According to reports published in Japanese media, Gomi told Jordanian authorities that he

found a similar cone-shaped metal object with a ring attached on the top. It was similar to the object in Gomi's suitcase, but did not contain any explosive. Hilwa told police Gomi had given him the object, which he collected in Iraq.

The Mainichi photographer was arrested by Jordanian authorities on May 1 after a metal device in his carry-on baggage exploded at the Queen Alia International Airport in Amman, killing a security guard and injuring three others. The thirty-six years old photographer Hiroki Gomi was returning to Japan after covering the war in Iraq.

for an insignificant publication. The world of Japanese journalism is dominated by five super-powers who virtually have monopoly control over newspaper and television industry. *Mainichi Shimbun*, being one of the big five, is a newspaper that enjoys great prestige and privilege, and the journalist was a photographer of the daily who was sent to Iraq with the special assignment of visualising the situation of post-war Iraq. The Mainichi photographer was arrested by Jordanian authorities on May 1 after a metal device in his carry-on baggage exploded at the

explosion occurred at a baggage screening section at the entrance of an embarkation counter. The passengers were boarding the plane for their onward journey to Cairo where from Gomi was to take a flight back home, and the baggage check was a procedural matter before embarkation. When a security guard put Gomi's suitcase through an X-ray machine, a metal object was detected inside. The security guard at that point opened the suitcase and picked up the object to examine it and it exploded killing the guard and

found the metal object beside a road in Iraq on April 11, and had carried it with him ever since. The Jordanian police had described the object as cone-shaped with a ring attached and according to them the device looked new and an explosion was predictable. Meanwhile, a Jordanian assistant to Gomi was also arrested on suspicion of possessing an explosive device. Abed Al-Salam Hilwa worked as an assistant to Gomi in Iraq. He was at the airport to bid farewell to Gomi when the object exploded. Jordanian police later searched his home in Amman and

The whole episode has created an embarrassing situation for Japan in general and for the Japanese media in particular. Mainstream Japanese media was reluctant to send their staff inside Iraq during the war period and reporters, camera crews and photographers from their bases in Amman, Damascus and Qatar mostly covered the war. The reason was to avoid forcing the staff to risk their lives by asking them to take assignment in a danger zone. The logical assumption behind such decision was that, it might have given a wrong understanding that the

media companies were more interested in chasing after the news than the important obligation of protecting their own people from danger. As a result, national dailies and broadcasting stations conducted in-house survey with the intention to know if any of their staff members was willing to go to the war voluntarily. Unfortunately for the Japanese media world, only a few opted for such a risky assignment and most media organisations had to depend on free-lancers who were already inside Iraq much before the start of the direct military confrontation.

The unexpected Gomi incident now has turned the table against media despite their earlier cautious standing, and *Mainichi Shimbun* is now seen busy trying to overcome the impact of the incident that has the potentiality of creating a bad image for the newspaper. Immediately after the incident, Mainichi published a front-page statement issued by the editorial board taking responsibility for what happened at Amman international airport and promising a full investigation of the incident. It has also dispatched senior

officials to Jordan to apologise to the Jordanian people, and the government of Japan and country's media are now anxiously waiting to see what action the judicial system of Jordan recommends against the Japanese journalist who has been blamed for killing a Jordanian and injuring others.

The incident in Jordan also raises the issue of ethics of journalism in covering events in troubled regions. Some in Japan are suggesting that Gomi might have been lucky that the explosion at the airport killed only one. Had it happened while the plane was on air, the outcome would definitely have been much more catastrophic. This takes us back to the question of importance of having high moral judgment for journalists. Gomi, no doubt, lacked thoroughly any such quality, as it was rightfully sighted by a fellow Japanese freelancer, "even if he did not think the object might explode, taking something that originally was a weapon into a plane casts doubt on not only his ethics as a journalist, but also his sense of crisis."