

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## JOIN THE DEBATE

"The high prices [of crude oil] are being sustained more by anticipation of potential world problems than by the law of supply and demand. At some point, prices must come down."

— Reader Paulo Nery on the price of crude oil.

Go to [WSJ.com/Question](http://WSJ.com/Question) to share your opinion.

**Q: Are the winners of the Iowa caucus likely to become their parties' nominees?**

Cast your vote at [WSJ.com/Question](http://WSJ.com/Question)

**Murder of Benazir Bhutto Is Huge Loss for Progress**

My husband and I applaud Bernard-Henri Levy for his very poignant opinion regarding Benazir Bhutto's death ("Grieving for Benazir," op-ed Dec. 29). My eyes filled with tears when I heard about her assassination and again when I read Mr. Levy's statement. He wrote about the very issue so many people are hesitant to voice. Ms. Bhutto was a brilliant, courageous woman and her unveiled head symbolized the fight for freedom and resistance to the tyranny of misogynist terrorists. These hardliners will never tolerate a woman as a leader for the mere fact that she is a woman.

Ironically, I notice the advertisement by Saudi Arabia in that very same issue. Perhaps I missed something. I did not see one picture of a woman in this advertisement nor did I see anything mentioned about progressing women's rights to compete in the world market. I wonder how they will be able to do this as they continue to oppress half of their population.

DARLENE CORBETT-HYJEK  
Needham, Mass.

Benazir Bhutto was the target because she was a Muslim woman and liberal. Unfortunately, the Bush administration did not listen to her when she was begging the administration to allow her to fight the Taliban and al Qaeda in Pakistan—these two groups have found Pakistan a safe haven during President Musharraf's tenure. Contrary to President Musharraf's rejection of the U.S. requests, Ms. Bhutto had been saying openly that she would allow the U.S. to hunt for Osama bin Laden in Pakistani territory and would let the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna interrogate A.Q. Khan, the Pakistani nuclear scientist. Terrorists took her life because she was a threat and challenge to them.

With her death, America has lost a true friend.

NIRODE MOHANTY  
Huntington Beach, Calif.

**Give the Air Force What It Needs for the Job**

Your editorial on the F-15 ("On the Wings of Eagles, Or Not," Dec. 27) made some excellent points. The one error was urging that we build more F-22s. It is time to look at how we used to do things and how the Russians continue to do them. They build purpose designed aircraft that have only what is needed for their primary mission. As a result they can build a lot of them. We have only done this once in recent history. The A-10 was the most effective ground attack aircraft (fixed or rotary wing) in both Gulf Wars, yet the USAF has been trying to kill it since it came into the inventory.

During World War II when it took three Sherman tanks to take out a Panther tank, we built many times as many as the Germans did. We were able to do this in part because we built our systems simple—the breach on an American howitzer had less than 10 parts, the German equivalent several times that many. Complexity limits production and lowers reliability.

When new, our weapon systems may be technologically superior to those of our potential enemies' but we make them so complicated that we cannot build them in the quantities needed, replace them as frequently as

necessary and maintain them in the field. This is true from the complex, such as aircraft, to the simple, such as the infantryman's rifle. The M-16 is a much better rifle than the AK-47, but the Russian design is all but foolproof, whereas ours requires a lot of care. Also, most combat does not require accuracy to 1,000 yards—300 feet is a long shot in most situations and the AK-47 is accurate at that range.

We need to relearn the lessons that allowed us to win World War II. Maybe we should buy a few MiGs, Yaks and Sukhois and see what a purpose-built aircraft can do compared with one that is supposed to be everything for everybody.

CHRIS DALY  
Yucaipa, Calif.

New afflatus is given to your editorial calling for replacement of the Air Force's venerable F-15 fighter by the newswire's announcement that Russia is shipping advanced anti-aircraft missile systems to Iran. The F-22 Raptor's stealth capabilities have never been more critical to our national security. Its production numbers should be ramped up, not cut back.

CHARLES SYKES  
San Jose, Calif.

**Medical Consequences Of Recreational Drug Use**

Stanton Peele ("Drug Use and the Candidates," Dec. 31) writes that "subtracting the approximately 20 million current drug users from the 110 million plus people who once used, almost 100 million Americans have left drugs behind."

Mr. Peele's math is as poor as his approach to preventing adolescent substance abuse. Dismissing educational programs that present individuals ruined by drugs, he would let our naturally risk-taking teens be risk-taking teens, just so long as they feel good about themselves and "develop skills," whatever that means.

What Mr. Peele overlooks is that even a single episode of drug use can have serious adverse health consequences, not to mention legal ones. The risk increases with each episode. Claiming that the vast majority of drug users "have left drugs behind" ignores the physical, emotional and financial toll drugs may have taken on them and their families at one time or another.

I wonder if Mr. Peele would back off urging adolescents not to take up cigarettes, since most smokers eventually quit, one way or the other.

ALAN BLUM, M.D.  
Director

The University of Alabama Center  
for the Study of Tobacco and Society  
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

**Face It, Snowboarding Is Democratic and Fun**

It may be true that the majority of skiers are older than 25 and the majority of snowboarders are "not old enough to rent a car" ("Snowboards Invade Another Ski Shrine," Weekend Journal, Dec. 22). It is also a quite common trend that the children and grandchildren of skiers demand to open the "skiers only" resorts to boarders, or else. There is, however, another significant trend developing based on my observations and experiences: boomer skier turned boomer snowboarder.

I've just become eligible for Social Security benefits, but about 10 years ago my daughter started snowboarding and was too young to do it by herself. I strapped on a board and took lessons with her. Admittedly, it was humiliating and frustrating for a few days, until I got the hang of it.

To my surprise snowboarding has rejuvenated my excitement on the slopes. I can do more with the board than I was ever able to do with skis and with less probability of leg injuries. Besides, it's pretty "cool" when my boomer buddy and I say to the teens sitting next to us on the lift that our combined age exceeds 120 years, and then we beat them on the way down, getting (not giving) air for show.

TAI SUGIMOTO  
Wadmalaw Island, S.C.