



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #90 — MAR. 8, 2012

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Closing In on the 'God Particle'

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Mar. 8, 2012)

European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN)'s Large Hadron Collider (LHC)



Finally! Some good news!

"US Physicists Confirm Higgs Finding Is Near" AFP

Mar. 7, 2012 (<http://news.yahoo.com/us-physicists-confirm-higgs-finding-near-095411592.html>)

US-based physicists said Wednesday that their experiments confirm those from a major European atom-smasher's that have narrowed the range where the elusive Higgs boson particle could be hiding.

The results come from the now-defunct Tevatron collider, which closed down in September after nearly a quarter century, though physicists continue to analyze its data in the hunt for the so-called "God particle."

The Higgs boson is the missing link in the standard model of physics and is believed to be what gives objects mass, though scientists have never been able to pin it down and it exists only in theory.

"The end game is approaching in the hunt for the Higgs boson," said Jim Siegrist, Department of Energy associate director of science for high energy physics.

"This is an important milestone for the Tevatron experiments, and demonstrates the continuing importance of independent measurements in the quest to understand the building blocks of nature."

Physicists from the CDF and DZero collaborations at Fermi National Acceleratory Laboratory in Illinois said in a statement that their data "might be interpreted as coming from a Higgs boson with a mass in the region of 115 to 135 GeV (gigaelectronvolts)."

That result includes the slightly more narrow constraints announced in Dec., 2011 by scientists at CERN's Large Hadron Collider -- the world's largest atom-smasher, located along the French-Swiss border.

The CERN (European Center for Nuclear Research) experiments, carried out by a consortium of 20 member nations, have shown a likely range for the Higgs boson between 115 to 127 GeV.

GeV is the standard measure for the mass of sub-atomic particles. One GeV is roughly equivalent to the mass of a proton.

However, none of the hints so far have been enough for physicists to announce that the particle has been "discovered," or to claim there is enough evidence to say for certain that it exists.

Fermilab director Pier Oddone said he was "thrilled with the pace of progress in the hunt for the Higgs boson," noting that scientists from around the world have combed through hundreds of trillions of proton-antiproton collisions.

"There is still much work ahead before the scientific community can say for sure whether the Higgs boson exists," added Dmitri Denisov, DZero co-spokesman and physicist at Fermilab.

"Based on these exciting hints, we are working as quickly as possible to further improve our analysis methods and squeeze the last ounce out of Tevatron data."

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20120307-11	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Grand Canyon, Colorado

20120307-10	23:42	Charis	Happy International Women's Day!
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To all my awesome girl friends, today (Mar. 8) on International Women's Day, I hope you'll take a moment to celebrate yourselves. Having lived abroad most of my life, I've come to realize that no matter what our origins, culture, upbringing, or circumstances may be, human beings throughout the world are more similar than different. And though we use different means and languages to share of ourselves, our emotional expressions clearly signal that a common thread binds us all. We all know pain and joy, we all lose and search, forget and remember, struggle and achieve. In any language or culture, human beings are highly capable of self-evaluation and self-expression. Each of us is a living stanza in a universal poem. What you have to remember is that not all poems rhyme. Some of the most beautiful poems in the world don't. They flow on their own. Because each stanza has its own importance and reason for being.

<http://www.internationalwomensday.com/>

20120307-01	11:18	SteveG	"Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle"
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We love our new official Hoosier rifle more than life itself...

Now that Indiana is getting some of the important issues out of the way, maybe they will start work on some economic issues to create jobs.

"Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" by Mary Beth Schneider, *Indianapolis Star*

Mar. 7, 2012, (<http://www.indystar.com/article/20120307/LOCAL/203070307/Indiana-sets-sights-naming-an-official-state-rifle?odyssey=tab|topnews|text|IndyStar.com>)

(Measure to designate Grouseland as official rifle awaits Daniels' OK.)

Indiana soon will have an official state rifle to go along with the state tree, state stone and state flower.

The Indiana House voted 78-2 on Tuesday to declare the Grouseland the state's official rifle. It is one of only six remaining long rifles made by famed Hoosier gunsmith John Small in the early 1800s.

The measure, earlier approved 48-2 by the Senate and headed to Gov. Mitch Daniels, makes Indiana only the third state with an official gun. Utah became the first in March 2011, when it honored the Browning M1911 automatic pistol, followed in April by Arizona, which chose the Colt Army revolver.

Sen. John Waterman, R-Shelburn, said he decided to pursue honoring the Grouseland Rifle, which is in President William Henry Harrison's Vincennes home, Grouseland, after hearing a few years ago that Pennsylvania was considering naming the long rifle its official gun.

Instead of filing a bill, Waterman got an amendment added to House Bill 1283, which mostly deals with libraries.

Tuesday, state Rep. Kathy Kreag Richardson, the Noblesville Republican who was the author of that bill, tried to keep a straight face as she asked the House to go along with the changes. Asked by one lawmaker how the rifle issue could be put into her bill in the Senate, Richardson noted that the bill pertains in part to the Indiana Historical Society, "and this is a very historic rifle."

Because the rifle issue was added by an amendment, there was no opportunity for proponents of other guns to make the case that their weapon should be Indiana's official big shot.

Waterman, though, said Small's rare guns are in a special class. Small, a Revolutionary War veteran who moved to Vincennes in 1785, was a man of many talents: tavern-keeper, ferry operator, gunsmith, woodworker, silversmith, Northwest Territory legislator, Indiana's first sheriff, Knox County surveyor and adjutant general of the territorial militia under Harrison.

Not to mention, Waterman said with a laugh, "he got shot in the butt" in a 1786 battle with American Indians.

Hoosiers who have never heard of Small likely are familiar with one of his artworks. Harrison -- who was governor of the Indiana Territory and later president for 32 days before dying of pneumonia -- commissioned him to design the seal of the Indiana Territory, which later became the state seal.

Dan Sarell, executive director of the Grouseland Foundation in Vincennes, said Grouseland acquired the long rifle, originally a flintlock that was converted to percussion cap, at an auction in 2004. He is hoping the official state designation for the rifle will not only attract visitors to Grouseland "but tell people the story of John Small."

The Indiana State Museum currently has two John Small rifles on display, along with a handgun that R. Dale Ogden, senior curator of cultural history at the museum, said is the only Small handgun known to exist.

"You don't have one for sale on every street corner," Waterman said.

If they ever are, Waterman hopes Grouseland will benefit. The bill specifies that any duplication, reproduction or sale of a reproduction must be authorized by the foundation.

20120307-04	20:25	Bill	Re: "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" (reply to SteveG, above)
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At least it's not an assault rifle and doesn't involve any derogation of the Girl Scouts.

20120307-05	21:04	SteveG	Re: "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" (reply to Bill, above)
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It just amazes me the crap that politicians waste their time and the taxpayers money on.

[20120307-07](#) 21:32 Pam Re: "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" (reply to SteveG, above)

It's all their little pea brains can handle.

[20120307-09](#) 22:25 SteveB Re: "Indiana Sets Sight on Having Official State Rifle" (reply to all, above)

"...from these cold, dead cornfields!" —Charlton Heston (from Illinois, so he should know)

[20120307-02](#) 12:30 MarthaH "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice"

Cultural Chasm: Afghanistan...

"One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" by Tom A. Peter, USA TODAY

Mar. 7, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2012-03-06/afghan-justice/53392066/1>)

(PAKTIKA PROVINCE, Afghanistan) Ahmad Jan lives just a few miles from the capital of this restive province and its government-sanctioned court.

Even so, if he or his neighbors have a legal matter, they prefer to go to the Taliban or tribal elders for a ruling.

"The Taliban courts don't disturb people and tell them to wait for a long time before hearing a case, or demand bribes," says Jan, an out-of-work laborer. "When you go to the Taliban and ask them for help, they tell you that they need a certain amount of time to study your case, and then they will tell you to come on a special day."

NATO and Afghan forces have had success this past year pushing Taliban forces out of rural areas, especially in southern Afghanistan. These military wins are considered key milestones on the long and daunting road out of Afghanistan — with a targeted withdrawal of U.S. combat forces by the end of 2013.

But the reluctance of everyday Afghans like Jan to embrace a pillar of the Western-backed government — its judiciary — shows the limits of a decade of U.S. nation-building efforts in a country with deeply rooted traditions and a citizenry with fluid allegiances.

"The limited, unresponsive, and unreliable nature of the Afghan justice system is a central source of Afghans' grievances with their government and has opened the door to Taliban shadow governance," according to the U.S. State Department's Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy. "As long as the population views the government as weak or predatory, Taliban approaches to security and justice will continue to be accepted."

Establishing effective, impartial courts and other government services in rural areas like Paktika is considered critical to shifting Afghan loyalty to the U.S.-backed government of President Hamid Karzai. Coupled with the buildup of Afghan army and police forces, the Obama administration hopes that Afghans will be able to maintain security in regions cleared of Taliban by NATO troops in time for the U.S. exit.

But the uneven court system is just one of the many obstacles facing allied forces. Taliban loyalists remain in hide-outs and might be simply waiting out the U.S. withdrawal. Pakistan's military has not moved against militant groups, such as the Haqqani network, which is based on its soil and causing chaos south of Kabul. Doubts have risen about the vetting of Afghan security forces, some of whom killed NATO troops following the accidental burning of some Qurans that led to violent protests over the past couple of weeks.

Yet the justice system is still held out as perhaps the best hope for stabilizing the Afghanistan government while depriving the Taliban of a necessary road back to power.

The Taliban's way

Afghanistan's court system had for centuries consisted of tribal elders hearing complaints and making swift decisions. The rulings were based partly in Islamic law and also Pashtunwali, a code of conduct developed by the indigenous people of Afghanistan known as the Pashtuns. The law became much harsher in the mid-1990s after a group of Pashtun clerics trained in fundamentalist Islamic schools in Pakistan emerged as victors in a civil war following the collapse of a Marxist government in Kabul. Known as the Taliban, the clerics brought order to strife-ridden parts of the country but under a mix of Pashtunwali and strict Islamic law, or *sharia*.

"We cannot change the Taliban," says Sami Yusufzai, an independent analyst in Islamabad, Pakistan. "The Taliban is a really religious force. They don't believe they can adjust with society."

The world first learned of the harshness of the Taliban's *sharia* system when a secret video was smuggled out of the country in 1999 showing a woman dragged before 30,000 people at a soccer match and shot in the head for adultery. Reports from Amnesty International and others said children were being forced to testify against their parents for moral crimes, and then made to witness their executions.

"Administration of justice was swift and harsh," according to the International Crisis Group, an independent organization that advises the United Nations on conflict resolution.

New crimes included not wearing a full burqa or a full beard, listening to music, sending girls to school and having sex outside of marriage — the penalty for which could be death by stoning.

Rights groups — having documented these abuses for years — saw the overthrow of the Taliban as an opportunity for an impartial and fair justice system. Indeed, the U.S. military's counterinsurgency doctrine called for the creation of institutions that would address people's grievances and thus turn their allegiance to the pro-Western government of Afghanistan.

Since the regime overthrow in 2001, the United States has spent \$70 billion on the reconstruction of Afghanistan and developing government institutions. Hundreds of millions of dollars have gone toward establishing provisional courts in cities and providing training for lawyers and judges. The fiscal year 2011 request alone set aside \$250 million to improve the justice system, but problems persist.

"Despite the significant resources devoted to the security sector and a greater focus on the police in recent years, the U.S. and its NATO allies have failed to help build a functioning justice system that can enforce the rule of law," according to a 2011 report by the International Crisis Group. "Strengthening formal judicial institutions is at least if not even more vital to restoring state legitimacy as building the national security forces."

Where the U.S. can't lead

Paktika has fewer than 10 judges when it needs closer to 70, according to the International Security Assistance Force, the U.S.-led command that oversees military operations in Afghanistan. Efforts are underway to bring in more, but in their absence even locals not loyal to the Taliban will use its expedient but controversial courts.

"They've got to come up with a way that's acceptable to them to resolve conflict," said U.S. Army Maj. Eric Noble, the 172nd Infantry Brigade's judge advocate in Paktika province. "We're not looking for the U.S. solution to Afghan conflict resolution and rule of law. We're looking at what do they find as acceptable."

Many people in rural areas like Paktika have shunned government justice because they consider it unfair and corrupt. According to the State Department's strategy report, the Karzai government needs to create "predictable and fair dispute resolution mechanisms to eliminate the vacuum that the Taliban have exploited with their own brutal form of justice."

But half the Afghan population sees courts as the most corrupt government institution in the country, according to a 2010 Integrity Watch survey of Afghan perceptions of corruption. Only two-thirds of Afghans said they have access to courts, and a full quarter said they "felt deprived of justice" because of corruption and a system fed by bribes.

Mohammed Wali, a student in Kabul, says he wound up in the court system after he got into a fight with a cousin. He said his cousin took his case to the district courts and bribed the police to have Wali, his father, and one of his uncles arrested. The men then had to pay a \$250 bribe to be released, an enormous amount considering per capita income is \$502 per year.

"We cannot say that there is no corruption in the courts and justice system," said Abdul Wakail Omari, the head of public affairs for the Afghan Supreme Court. "We cannot deny it, but the problems are not as much as people are saying."

Over the past 10 years, Omari says, 50 to 60 judges have been arrested and disbarred for taking bribes, along with dozens of other court employees, prompting the formation of a special commission to investigate corruption.

The State Department agrees that courts in the capitals of many Afghanistan provinces have improved, with better-trained judges and lawyers who do not demand bribes.

But most of Afghan justice takes place not in the cities but in the hinterlands, where tribal elders oversee laws and where Taliban insurgents continue to mete out sentences in villages where Afghan and U.S. troops lack a strong presence. So the State Department has been focusing on improving these informal courts convened by tribal elders.

Even the most optimistic analysts won't dispute that after more than a decade in Afghanistan, the allied-directed court system is at best a work in progress. At worst, experts say, it's a serious impediment to the survival of the current government.

"You would not find any other example in Afghan history of a court system that is as corrupt and untrustworthy as the courts are right now," said Hassan Walasmal, an independent analyst in Kabul.

One obstacle to improving rural justice, though, is that well-educated lawyers and judges are seldom interested in moving to rural areas where Taliban justice has held sway. The pay is poor; running water and smooth dirt roads are rare. Lawyers who take the postings must often work with illiterate government officials and, in a place like Paktika, insecurity and violence.

Informal justice has often arisen as a concern for human rights groups. The United States Institute for Peace points out that judges sometimes settle matters by awarding women as compensation or forcing them to marry. Women are also excluded from decision-making. And justice is often not final, as shoddy record-keeping means the same disputes can resurface.

"Traditions control life in Afghanistan more than the laws or rules," says Rohullah Qarizada, head of Afghanistan's Bar Association. But locals say tribal justice is improving.

"There is a change in their decisions, and now tribal courts mostly fine people money," said Nadir Khan Katawazai, a member of parliament from Paktika province. "These tribal justice systems get good results, and it doesn't create problems that could last well into the future."

Amnesty International's Asia Pacific director, Sam Zarifi, said the Taliban is already taking advantage of power vacuums in areas like Kunduz province, with disturbing results.

A cellphone video last year in Kunduz showed a woman standing in a 4-foot hole in the ground, her face hidden by a blue burqa. A Taliban leader read off the charge of adultery, and men then rushed forward and pelted her with rocks. After a large rock hit her head she fell over, her burqa red with blood. A man then walked up and shot her with an AK-47.

"Anyone who knows about Islam knows that stoning is in the Quran, and that it is Islamic law," Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid explained at the time. "There are people who call it inhuman, but in doing so they insult the prophet. They want to bring foreign thinking to this country."

Also see:

"Tide Has Turned' in Taliban Zone Amid U.S. Troop Drawdown" by Jim Michaels, USA TODAY

Mar. 7, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/story/2012-03-05/taliban-weak-afghanistan/53389636/1>)

20120307-03	19:50	Art	Re: "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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This is so like Vietnam, it is really depressing. While my heart goes out to all those who will suffer, all Afghan women for one group, we need to get out of there ASAP. They are welcome to kill one another as they wish.

20120307-06	21:30	Pam	Re: "One More Hurdle in Afghanistan: Justice" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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I lived in Afghanistan when I was a teenager, and I learned even then that it's a hopeless place when it comes to modernization. The mullahs controlled everything then, and they do now. It is a corrupt society by our standards and probably always will be. Bribes are part of the fabric, and justice is rough and harsh. Women do indeed have a terrible time there, but I don't think the West can do much to help them. It is a patriarchal society, and women have little or no status. You should watch the film "Osama" for a look at what conditions are like there. I am reading a novel by Zoe Ferraris, "City of Veils." It's about Saudi Arabia, but it depicts the same sort of strict Islamic society and shows what women's lives are like. It is so oppressive, I don't know how women stay sane under such a system. It's not that men never love their wives and daughters; it's just that the whole society demands that women be segregated, even within the household. I have always believed that a society without women is a male-driven, aggressive, brutal one, and these Islamic countries make my point every day. The Middle East is a complicated place, and we are not going to simplify it by imposing our values and practices on people who don't begin to understand the way we look at things. We really are trying to communicate across not just boundaries, but centuries. We are naive if we believe we can significantly alter things. They don't want us there, and we have no business doing anything but protecting ourselves, and I don't think that means preemptive strikes. We need detente more than we need democracy at this point. I've always been eager to help people, but I'm starting to think that I will have to accept that we can't always fix things. Good intentions are not enough, and you all know where they can lead.

20120307-08	10:07	Tom	Video: "The Deal" with Jack Hunter: "Does Rush Want to 'Cut and Run?'" [in Afghanistan]
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"The Deal" with Jack Hunter: "Does Rush Want to 'Cut and Run?'"

Mar. 6, 2012, (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LA1-usxdiA&feature=uploademail>)

<http://www.superawesomepics.com/the-grand-canyon-colorado>

The River in a Chasm Makes a Turn, What Else Can It Do?



—Friends of the Middle,
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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