THE DAILY CLIPS

February 2, 2011

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

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Don Cavellini holds a candle and listens while David Cappel speaks during the Adelante Education Coalition vigil in support of higher education for everyone, which was held at the New Covenant Community Church on Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2011. (Aileen Devlin/The Daily Reflector)

Reflector.com

Vigil for educating everyone
By Ginger Livingston
The Daily Reflector
Wednesday, February 2, 2011

Mariana and Jorge, two Pitt County high school students, want to go to college, but their dreams are being threatened by legislation before the General Assembly.

Mariana, a 10th-grader, and Jorge, an 11th-grader, were brought to the United States illegally by their parents. House Bill 11, introduced last week in the General Assembly, would prevent them from attending the state's community colleges and universities. For now, North Carolina allows the children of undocumented workers to attend those institutions if they pay out-of-state tuition.

About a dozen people joined Mariana and Jorge on Tuesday night at New Covenant Community Church for a prayer vigil opposing passage of the House bill.
“When I grow up I want to be a nurse,” Mariana said. “I want to be something nice. I want to support my mom and dad.”

Mariana said she sometimes cries when she thinks about people wanting to keep her from furthering her education.
“I have dreams, and it's not fair,” she said.

The Adelante Education Coalition of North Carolina, a collaboration of organizations focusing on education issues affecting Latino and migrant students and their families, co-sponsored a series of vigils across the state to rally support to defeat House Bill 11. Juvencio Rocha Peralta with the Association of Mexicans in North Carolina organized the Greenville event.
“They are trying to stop kids from continuing their education,” Peralta said. “It's not fair to allow them to go to school K-12 and then not allow them to continue their education.” Peralta said arguments that the children of illegal immigrants shouldn't benefit from their parents' law breaking does not sway Peralta.

“This country benefits from undocumented workers,” he said. “Why shouldn't they get the benefits of higher education?”

The question about whether these children should participate in higher education could be resolved if Congress would address immigration reform, Peralta said.

“It wasn't my choice to be brought here, but when my parents said go to school, I went to school, and I'm trying to do as good as all the other kids,” Jorge said. He urged the group to help the children of illegal immigrants by giving them a chance at a future.

“If we don't invest in (young people), our future is very dark,” said Don Cavellini, co-chairman of the Pitt County Coalition Against Racism. “The key to creating jobs, stimulating the economy and reducing the state deficit is to invest in educating all people of North Carolina,” Cavellini said. “Exclusion and re-segregation would cost North Carolina dearly now at a time when it can least afford to do so.”

The vigil ended with the attendees forming a circle and sharing why the defeat of House Bill 11 is necessary.

“Sixty-seven years ago it was a different group being picked on,” David Cappel said. “It won't change until we stand together.”

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingston@reflector.com or (252) 329-9570.
Letter: Writer wrong on slavery issue
Wednesday, February 2, 2011

Charles Pace's attempt (Public Forum, Jan 25, “Slavery not reason for war in 1861”) to counter E. J. Dionne's well documented Dec. 28 column on slavery and the Civil War was unconvincing. The historical facts are overwhelmingly on the side of Dionne (Harvard 1973 Phi Beta Kappa and Rhodes scholar). Economics may have been the general cause but the specific economic issue itself (and cause for Southern secession and consequent ensuing civil war) was indeed slavery.

Differences over slavery between North and South have been exhaustively documented and are a matter of record. From the early 1800s there was growing talk of Southern independence and slavery was the fundamental issue. The sparks that started the war were Northern opposition to Southern insistence on slavery in the territories and the election of 1860 — and the die was cast. The Revolutionary War may have made us a nation but the Civil War made us one very great people — North, South, East and West. I recommend Pace read James McPherson's “This Mighty Scourge.” It is the best book to date, in my opinion, about this specific issue (certainly better than Karl Marx's musings).

McPherson, the leading American Civil War historian alive today, was a Harriott Lecture Series speaker at ECU last year. Open to the public, this lecture series is an intellectual high point for Greenville.

COL. JOHN GRAVES, USAF (Ret.)
Greenville
Perdue slices budget; GOP says go deeper

BY LYNN BONNER - Staff writer

Legislators will begin debating a proposal today that would give Gov. Bev Perdue more power to cut this year's budget by at least $400 million - even as their leaders are pressing her to do more.

They want Perdue to agree to cut $700 million before June 30, producing additional savings that would help close next year's projected $3.7 billion budget gap.
"We are hopeful we are going to get to more than $400 million," said Sen. Neal Hunt, a Raleigh Republican who is one of the chief budget writers.
"She has not agreed to that yet."

Perdue spokeswoman Christine Mackey said the governor wanted to see whether agencies could get to $400 million in cuts, then see if more is necessary.

Perdue has already directed agencies under her control to cut their budgets by 1 percent then 2.5 percent, and non-Cabinet departments voluntarily complied. Last month, she asked legislators for authority to order all state agencies to save 5 percent over the next five months, which the proposal will allow.
Agencies can make the required reductions this year without laying off more state employees, Mackey said.

The next budget year, which begins July 1, may be a different story, when the state may face employee layoffs, pay cuts and required employee contributions to health care premiums, said Senate leader Phil Berger. Additionally, the legislature may take more steps to cut the current fiscal budget, he said.

Agency heads anticipated the move to give Perdue more budget power. She and legislative leaders have been talking about it for weeks. Without the legislation, the governor has limited power to order savings on her own because the state is not in crisis and can still pay its bills.

State Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler said his agency voluntarily returned 2.5 percent the governor requested late last year but said he cannot come up with more saving without eliminating consumer services or agriculture programs.

"That pretty much cleaned us out," Troxler said.

The state Department of Public Instruction anticipates Perdue will ask the agency to return 5 percent of its $42 million budget, said June Atkinson, state superintendent of public instruction. The department is prepared to return $2.1 million, Atkinson said, having kept jobs unfilled, delayed purchases and limited travel. The department wouldn't be able to save more than that without laying off people, she said.

The state can get through this budget year and next without laying off more workers, said Dana Cope, head of the State Employee Association of North Carolina.

The group has collected ideas for savings from its members and discussed some with legislative leaders. A public announcement of its full report is planned for Feb. 15.

The state can easily exceed the $3.7 billion target by eliminating tax credits for preferred companies and making other common-sense changes, Cope said.
Cope wants state leaders to consider standardizing the rates the state pays to providers of medical services, whether they're treating Medicaid patients, state employees or prison inmates.

The state could find significant savings, perhaps as much as $1 billion, with the increased buying power that would come from consolidating health care, Cope said, and he has discussed the idea with Perdue's office and legislative leaders.

"It's a whole area North Carolina has not touched," he said.

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Firing line?

Budgeting is a bottom-line business, and the bottom line from an in-depth exploration of the pluses and minuses of laying off state employees in Sunday's N&O is that mass layoffs are an expensive, inefficient way to fill the $3.7 billion hole in North Carolina's budget.

Why? Because the cost to the state of laying off an employee - particularly the first-year cost - is so high. And though longer-term personnel-cost savings are, arguably at least, desirable, it's a "first-year" crisis that stares the General Assembly in the face.

That is, the budget for fiscal 2011-12, beginning July 1, must balance - either through spending cuts, revenue increases (from tax hikes, mostly) or some combination of the two.

A close look at the costs to the state of laying off a worker shows the difficulty of, as reporter Mandy Locke's article put it, balancing the budget on the backs of laid-off employees. It's worth noting that layoffs, in the traditional sense of the word - where someone is laid off for a spell, then called back to work - are not what's going on in the economy these days. These employees would, in effect, be fired.

Minimal savings
Take an average state employee, paid $42,000 (retirement contributions and benefits bring the compensation cost to $54,400). According to information from the General Assembly's Fiscal Research Division, the cost of providing required severance pay, health benefits for a year and unemployment benefits for this employee would run to $32,800. There's also a projected loss of $3,200 to the state in tax revenue. Bottom line: the net first-year saving is $18,400.
That's a painfully small sum, or saving, whether you compare it to the $3.7 billion budget gap, to the loss of public services that mass layoffs would likely produce or to the pain driven home to the fired employee and his or her family.

And here's another way to look at it: The state could cut an unthinkable 75,000 jobs (out of 255,000 total, most of which are in the public schools, since teachers in North Carolina are state employees) and still get only a slightly greater first-year benefit than by retaining the "temporary" tax hikes, including a 1-cent sales tax increase, adopted by the legislature two years ago.

So, keep paying those modestly higher taxes or lay off 75,000 more North Carolinians? The answer should be obvious to legislators properly concerned about the all-around ill effects of high unemployment.

**Vacant? Lose it**
Still, isn't there some way to make headway against the state's personnel costs?

There is, and it comes, as key legislators point out, from attrition. Eliminating a position that's vacant - most likely because the employee moved on and the job couldn't be filled because of a hiring freeze - is far less costly than a firing. And, as of Jan. 1, more than 9,000 state jobs were unfilled. And about 10 percent of employees leave their jobs each year.

Not filling any of these jobs - a tough order, since many are front-line positions such as teachers and prison guards - would save hundreds of millions of dollars. Good management would be required to deal with the consequences of losing many of those positions, but yes, it would be a step toward closing the gap.

The ultimate bottom line is that the problem looming before the legislature and Gov. Beverly Perdue demands a mix of solutions. North Carolina's budget gap can't reasonably be closed by giving its employees the boot.
Illegal immigrant numbers steady

BY BARBARA BARRETT - Washington correspondent

WASHINGTON North Carolina's illegal immigrant population remained steady last year at about 325,000 people, after taking a slight dip the year before.

As the national recession levels off and economic recovery begins slowly to take hold, illegal immigrant levels remained the same through much of the United States, according to a report released Tuesday by the Pew Hispanic Center in Washington. The national estimate for 2010, 11.2 million, was not statistically different from the 2009 estimate of 11.1 million.

"It seems that the decline has halted as of 2010," said Jeffrey Passel, senior demographer at the Pew Hispanic Center and the report's lead author. North Carolina remains the ninth most populous state for illegal immigrants, and the state ranks eighth in the number of illegal immigrants in its labor force. They make up about 5.4 percent of the state's work force.
Twenty years ago, the state had relatively few illegal immigrants at 25,000, but the number has grown 1,200 percent since then.

The state's illegal immigrant population peaked at an estimated 375,000 in 2007.

"I don't think the number surprises me ... even in the wake of all this anti-immigrant sentiment that's been going on," said Lacey Williams, the youth civic engagement organizer for the Latin American Coalition advocacy group based in Charlotte. "I think for a lot of folks, especially those who have built families and homes here, they think of the United States as their home. I'm not surprised also that the number hasn't been going up because the economy hasn't been going well."

Passel said the Pew report can't fully explain why immigration numbers have leveled off.

"We point to economic factors in the U.S. economy, to economic factors in the sending countries, to differences among the states," Passel said. "And there also has been greatly increased enforcement activities at the border in the past 20 years and also at the state level."

**Tougher enforcement**
The Pew report noted that enforcement actions have risen in recent years at both the national and state and local levels.

Deportations have more than doubled nationally over the past decade, at nearly 400,000 in fiscal year 2009. Mecklenburg and Wake counties' sheriff's departments participate in a federal program, known as 287(g), that helps net illegal immigrants.

Since the program started in Wake County in 2008, 3,161 illegal immigrants have been removed. In Mecklenburg County, which started the program in 2006, 7,168 illegal immigrants have been removed.

The number of illegal immigrants remains a flashpoint on immigration issues, though not as intensely as before the recession. Among the debates at state and federal levels are whether to remove birthright citizenship from the U.S. Constitution, whether to prohibit illegal immigrant children from attending public colleges and universities and whether to require all
employees be put through the federal E-Verify electronic database to determine their legal status.

**Employment figures**
In North Carolina, an estimated 250,000 illegal immigrants are in the labor force, according to the Pew study.

"If we had half of those people here illegally and those jobs were freed up, that's 100,000 Americans today that would have a job that don't have one," said Ron Woodard, president of N.C. Listen, a Raleigh-based advocacy group. "That would be a great improvement. We can certainly put a dent in unemployment in a relatively short period of time if we were doing simple things like E-Verify."

U.S. Reps. Heath Shuler, a Waynesville Democrat, and Sue Myrick, a Charlotte Republican, both have signed on as co-sponsors to legislation that would require federal contractors to use E-Verify in hiring workers.

The focus of immigration-related legislation could change with new GOP leadership both in the N.C. General Assembly and in the U.S. House of Representatives.

**Birthright guarantee**
In Washington, 45 House members have co-sponsored legislation by Republican U.S. Rep. Steve King of Iowa to remove the birthright citizenship guaranteed by the 14th Amendment. They include Myrick and fellow North Carolina Republican Reps. Virginia Foxx and Walter Jones.

There currently are an estimated 4.5 million children in the United States who were born here - and are therefore citizens - and have at least one parent who is an illegal immigrant, according to Pew. The report did not include a state-by-state breakdown.

A Pew survey taken in October found a near-even split among registered voters, 46 percent to 46 percent, on whether to amend the Constitution to remove birthright citizenship, according to the report. Among Republicans, 67 percent favored amending the Constitution; 48 percent of independents and 30 percent of Democrats favored a change.
**College admission**

Another estimated 1 million children in the United States are foreign-born and therefore unauthorized. They, too, are the subject of pending legislation. A bill in the state House would prohibit undocumented high school graduates from attending any public colleges or universities in North Carolina.

Students in the Charlotte region planned to hold a vigil against the bill Tuesday evening at Uptown's Marshall Park.

"Because it doesn't make any sense. Why would we deprive kids of their future?" Williams asked.

The Pew study is based on data from the federal government's March 2010 Current Population Survey, conducted jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor and Statistics.

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Panic shot through a Cairo dormitory as resident assistants screamed at students to get into their rooms. Several Georgetown University students, there on a study abroad program, heard furniture being pushed against doors as makeshift barricades. They saw guards stationed in the front of the dorm, armed with metal sticks and a fire hose.

"My roommate and I got into my room and locked the door," said Nafees Ahmed of Bethesda, a Georgetown junior, who described the ordeal in a video conference call Tuesday with university officials and reporters. "I went into survival mode, and I got my sneakers on and made sure that I had all of my necessities with me."

It turned out to be a false alarm, but in those tense moments, several of the Georgetown students decided it was time to get out of Egypt.

Fifteen Georgetown students were preparing to start classes at the American University in Cairo when pro-democracy demonstrations erupted last week. Suddenly, there was no Internet access - just news from televisions tuned to al-Jazeera - and the only way to call home was on a university land line using a phone card.
On Sunday, Georgetown officials gathered in Washington and decided to evacuate the students, all juniors, to the school's satellite campus in Doha, Qatar. On Monday, as hundreds of college students from other schools fought for spots on evacuation flights chartered by the State Department, the Georgetown students had commercial plane tickets in hand.

"Getting you to a place where we could have this kind of a conversation was our first priority over the past few days," Georgetown President John J. DeGioia told the students during the conference call.

Several other area schools evacuated their students this week. George Washington University had 14 students studying in Cairo and Alexandria; 12 have left and two are staying with relatives in Egypt. American University had 11 students in Egypt, seven of whom landed in other countries Tuesday morning and four of whom were scheduled for flights later that day.

For many of the Georgetown students, the protests started as a curiosity. But fascination gave way to concern as the demonstrations and ensuing violence seemed to move closer and closer.

One student said she had to keep her apartment windows closed so tear gas would not seep in. Another talked about how he walked two blocks to a picked-over grocery store, carrying a large rock for defense. Several said they were shaken by the sound of gunfire, unsure whether it was warning shots.

"It wasn't always about what you saw; it was about what you heard," said Richard Rinaldi, a business student from New Jersey. "One of the most mind-blowing parts of all this was just being anywhere in the city and just listening to the cacophony of traffic and the call to prayer and gunfire, all at the same time."

Getting all 15 Georgetown students to the airport in time for an afternoon flight was a challenge. One student was staying at the American University's New Cairo Campus and had to take a private car. The others were staying in another dormitory or nearby apartments, and had to fight for spots in a packed bus.
The drive to the airport was harrowing - past burned-out cars, tanks and clouds of black smoke. Some protesters carried sticks, others held up their hands in peace signs. Some of the Georgetown students debated whether it was safe to take photos en route.

The airport was a chaotic mess, the students said. Travelers with tickets could barely get through the packed mass of travelers hoping for flights out. Yet all 15 students made their flight and landed safely in Qatar. After a night of sleep, they turned their attention to making plans for the rest of the semester.

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Slight Rise in Donations to Colleges Seen in 2010

By TAMAR LEWIN

The nation’s colleges and universities received charitable contributions of $28 billion in 2010, an increase of 0.5 percent from the previous year, according to the annual survey by the Council for Aid to Education. Support for higher education, measured in total dollars, is at the same level now as it was in 2006, the council said. But adjusted for inflation, it was 8 percent lower last year than in 2006.

“We’re still not out of the woods,” said Ann E. Kaplan, director of the council’s Voluntary Support of Education survey. “Charitable contributions to education are recovering very slowly.”

Stanford raised $599 million from private donors last year, more than any other university. It was followed by Harvard, which raised $597 million, and Johns Hopkins University, which raised $428 million. But all three raised less in 2010 than in 2009, the survey found, as did most of the top 20 institutions.

While the survey included 996 institutions, the top 20 colleges and universities accounted for a quarter of all gifts to higher education last year. Four of the top 20 universities — the University of Southern California, Duke University, Indiana University and the University of California, Berkeley — received charitable contributions in 2010 that were more than 10 percent greater than the previous year.

Over all, alumni giving and participation declined last year, while donations from companies and foundations increased modestly.

The share of alumni who contribute to their college has been declining for years, even when the economy was strong. According to the survey, alumni participation averaged 9.8 percent last year, compared with 11.9 percent in 2006 — and the average gift was $1,080 last year, compared with $1,195 four years earlier.
Today's guest blogger is R.S. Zaharna, an associate professor of communication at American University who experimented with hosting class on Facebook during a snowstorm last week. (University profile)

The first e-mails about the threat of snow came in shortly after noon, not from the university but from the students: "Professor, supposedly we are getting 5-8 inches of snow this evening, and I'm worried about getting home from class. Do you know if we are still definitely going to hold a session? If so I will obviously try my best to make it."

I doubted there would be 5 to 8 inches, but I knew that it was possible classes would be canceled. In Washington, D.C., just a few inches of snow are enough to send the nation's capital into a tail spin, snarl traffic and otherwise endanger students who commute to the American University campus where I teach. Last year, we had two back-to-back blizzards that shut down campus for a week. This year, colleagues farther up the East Coast are getting their turn.

Last year's blizzards, nightmares though they were, forced me to take a second look at technology, especially the part about connecting and interacting. Coincidentally, I had just written a book highlighting connectivity and interactivity as defining features of the global communication era. In theory, I know about the potential of using new technology to connect and interact. The problem was, I had never put theory into practice. But that February 2010 storm, dubbed Snowmageddon by the media, gave me long, house-bound days to re-consider not what the technology could do for me, but what I could do with technology.

I took some tiny steps. The snow melted. I went on sabbatical. And, that was it.

Two weeks ago, I returned from sabbatical. Last week the snow, and the panic, returned.
Soon after the first student e-mailed me her snow advisory, others started e-mailing their "what if..." weather-related concerns. I was trying to deal with this blizzard of e-mail, and the snow hadn't even started.

That's when I remembered our class Facebook page. I posted an update on the page and told the students I would only cancel if the university canceled. That way I did not have to reply to every single panicky request.

Setting up this Facebook page was one of the first things I did after I created my spring syllabus for this class, International Public Relations. It wasn't my idea; it was something I learned from students and junior colleagues when I returned from sabbatical. After eight months of being in research la-la land, stepping back onto a high-speed, wi-fi campus was like moving from the cave wall paintings to, well, digital walls. I attended a one-day university-sponsored teaching symposium and zeroed in on technology sessions to get myself up to speed. The line that really stuck with me was: "If you want to fish, go where the fish are." The fish, it seems, were all on Facebook, and I wanted to cast my net.

I set up our "AU -- International Public Relations/Communication" Facebook page. I'm not a "digital native," so followed my notes very carefully: Facebook sign-in. Left column "Groups." Open/private, secret. Click "open."

There it was. My line was in the water.

On Wednesday, I used the page to post my own "Snow Advisory.". The snow had finally started, but the e-mails suddenly stopped.

Wow, it works!

Then the official word came. The University would close at 3 p.m. My 5:30 p.m. class was canceled - at least the on-campus version was canceled. A student posted this news on the class wall.

My next Facebook post: "I'm thinking ... stay tune..." (Yes, it should have been stay tuned, but I was into digital speak.)

At 4 p.m. I alerted students that I would post a "creative challenge" at 5 p.m. I also sent e-mail alerts and posted an announcement on the traditional teaching site.

Their assignment: Students would use the cultural assignments that were due for that night's class to re-design a brochure for a digital storytelling summer camp for teens to better appeal to diverse ethnic communities. I had planned to do this in class, with students working in groups.

Then I realized I didn't know how to upload the brochure they needed for the assignment.

It worked.

At 5 p.m., I posted the "Creative Challenge." To keep the spirit light, I switched it from a "must do" assignment to a "try to" effort.

"Class" began as scheduled at 5:30. Students were online. They were posting. They were into the assignment.

I was giving feedback, posting my comments. No, wait. I wasn't posting comments. I was writing them, but no one could see them. Then, I accidentally hit the "return" key. My posts were up and I was back in business.

I tried to keep the discussion going with prompts and questions, but I need more tips on providing quick online feedback. Resorting to "wow" and exclamation marks has its pedagogical limits.

I tried to keep comments short .... tried to remember the dots... to signal "ongoing, please continue"...

GREAT experience! (Three exclamation marks in digital speak.)

I learned a lot, and the students did an incredible job. They provided solid, thoughtful answers that referred to their reading and research. And they seemed to enjoy the experience. One even participated while she was riding the Metro. Not everyone made it to my virtual class, but those who didn't were catching up, posting their ideas the day after the storm.

So the next time it snows, I won't be ice fishing; I'll be Facebook fishing.

(And you can read the full class transcript on Facebook.)
Egyptian students in U.S. hopeful for homeland

By Larry Copeland
USA TODAY

Egyptian students in the USA, riveted by the historic drama unfolding at home, say that they are proud of the protesters there and hopeful that the U.S. government will show more support for demonstrators demanding the ouster of President Hosni Mubarak.

"I'm feeling very, very, very excited," Aly Megahed, 28, a doctoral student in industrial engineering at Georgia Tech in Atlanta, said Sunday. "I'm concerned about the absence of security or police in the whole country. At the same time, I'm really proud and optimistic about the future. I'm proud of my Egyptian people who said, 'We need a change. We need to end 30 years of dictatorship. We need to improve our life situation.'"

Megahed, who has lived in the USA about 3½ years, said he believes a legitimately elected democratic government is just ahead for Egypt.

"I really think that it's going to happen," he said. "I see the future as a democracy established in Egypt, where Egyptians will, for the first time, get a president and a parliament that is a representative form of government."

Megahed said any fears that Mubarak will be replaced by religious extremists or a Muslim Brotherhood-dominated government are unfounded.

"That is totally incorrect," he said. "That is what the (Mubarak) regime has been pushing to keep itself in power, to frighten the U.S. into supporting it."

Mohamed Mattar, 20, a junior in mechanical engineering at the University of Michigan, said he's very disappointed with President Obama's response.

"I started thinking about what President Obama said in Cairo at the start of his presidency," he said. "I was so happy to see him come to my country and make a speech. He was promising that people should stand up for their rights."

"Right now, we're not hearing from him anymore. Where is all that talk about people being free, and this is what the United States stands for?" he said.

The students are trying to keep in close contact with their families in Egypt.

"There is a lot of worry, excitement and a lot of hope," said Mahmoud Sharara, 28, a doctoral student in agricultural and biological engineering at the University of Arkansas. "I'm talking to my family constantly."

Taghrid Samak, 28, a computer scientist, spent the afternoon getting updates from relatives.

"From the streets of Alexandria, people have organized street patrols, traffic control and around-the-clock neighborhood watch," she said. "The local media is trying to scare the public by exaggerating the amount of violence and chaos. The police abandoned the streets since Friday evening, and unleashed thugs and gangs to wreak havoc. Regular people are standing guard everywhere in Alexandria, with knives, sticks, etc., to protect the streets in the absence of police, or against the looting of the police."

Sharara, in the USA since 2008, said Mubarak is trying to portray the situation as a choice between "a dictatorship or radical Islamism," he said. "But it's not. Those are not crazy religious zealots out on the streets."