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THEY SAID IT

Where the precise effects of government policy on particular people are known, where the government aims directly at such particular effects, it cannot help knowing these effects, and therefore it cannot be impartial. It must, of necessity, take sides, impose its valuations upon people and, instead of assisting them in the advancement of their own ends, choose the ends for them. As soon as the particular effects are foreseen at the time a law is made, it ceases to be a mere instrument to be used by the people and becomes instead an instrument used by the lawgiver upon the people and for his ends. The state ceases to be a piece of utilitarian machinery intended to help individuals in the fullest development of their individual personality and becomes a "moral" institution--where "moral" is not used in contrast to immoral but describes an institution which imposes on its members its views on all moral questions, whether these views be moral or highly immoral. In this sense the Nazi or any other collectivist state is "moral", while the liberal state is not....

Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 1944.

OF DIFFERENT BELIEF SYSTEMS.

In an interview last week with *The Daily Beast's* Howard Kurtz (formerly of the *Washington Post*), Fox News chairman Roger Ailes declared that President Barack Obama "just has a different belief system than most Americans." This was, we think, a rather amazing statement, particularly from a man who runs a news operation, even Fox News.

It is also a statement for which we have some affinity, given that, in many ways, it mirrors one of our most enduring arguments about the differences between the political left and right, or the post-modern and the traditional. Obviously, we didn't make the claim about Obama, since no one had ever heard of him twelve years ago, when we first began discussing our "clash of moral systems." But Obama is the figure-head of the American left today and it is therefore unsurprising that his belief system would seem alien to a "man of the right," such as we presume Roger Ailes to be. Here's how we summed up this clash in April 1998, at the height of the Monica Lewinsky scandal:

Our theory holds that the public controversy over whether Bill's alleged ethical and moral transgressions "matter" can best be understood as a battle between two competing moral systems, in a war that has been going on in Western society for at least 700 years.

In this Issue

Of Different Belief Systems.

Mexico, Chavez, and Our
President, the Comedian.

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One side in this conflict can be described as traditional Judeo-Christian. The foundation of this belief system was established some 3,300 years ago with the receipt of the Decalogue by Moses at Mt. Sinai.

Besides Old and New Testament teachings, interpreted and clarified by such scholars as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, who integrated Platonic and Aristotelian concepts respectively, this system embraces a host of traditions, customs and mores that developed in Western society over many centuries. It is supported by a rich heritage of art and literature, and historic struggles, both religious and secular. The twin concepts of “sin” and “truth” help bind this system together.

The opposing system espouses beliefs that are often referred to today as “post-modern.” This system is roughly based on the concept that there are no ultimate, overarching truths, and that judgments about right and wrong are little more than the means by which some people control others, or as Nietzsche, an icon of the movement, put it, the outward expressions of will and power.

The only “sin” recognized by adherents to this system is making judgments about the choices of others. The concepts of “right” and “wrong” are considered to be wholly subjective. Individuals are encouraged to make up their own minds about such things, and neither society nor any person has a right to “judge” those decisions.

If we have any problems with Ailes’ comment, they are not the problems that most political observers would have, summed up dutifully by Ailes’ interviewer, Kurtz: “That seems a rather loaded phrase – different

belief system – even if you strongly disagree with most of Obama’s policies. It fits the view of those who are trying to paint the president as being outside the mainstream.”

No, our problem is that we’re not entirely sure that we’d say that Obama’s belief system differs from that of “most Americans.” We hate to sound pessimistic, particularly during this week of giving thanks. But it’s hard to deny that the traditional moral system we outlined above is under siege almost everywhere and from a great many directions.

Take a look at the headlines, for example. Today, we read that the FBI has raided three prominent hedge funds as part of what *The Wall Street Journal* calls a “high-profile insider trading investigation.” The *Journal* notes that more raids could be on the way and that:

The moves by the FBI follow an article by *The Wall Street Journal* describing an insider-trading investigation that is expected to encompass consultants, investment bankers, hedge-fund and mutual-fund traders. The investigation is said by people close to the situation to eclipse in size and magnitude past insider-trading probes.

For the past couple of weeks, the biggest story in the nation has been the implementation of the Transportation Security Administration’s new pre-flight screening process, whereby passengers are compelled either to submit to a full-body scan or to a TSA employee’s full-body grope. This strikes as overkill or, at the very least, foolishness, given that such procedures are almost certainly unlikely to prevent a terrorist attack. But what we find most interesting and distressing about the whole business is the process by which the new procedures came into being. According to *USA Today*:

The companies with multimillion-dollar contracts to supply American airports with body-scanning machines more than

doubled their spending on lobbying in the last five years and hired several high-profile former government officials to advance their causes in Washington, records show.

L-3 Communications, which has sold \$39.7 million worth of the machines to the federal government, spent \$4.3 million to influence Congress and federal agencies during the first nine months of this year, up from \$2.1 million in 2005, lobbying data compiled by the Center for Responsive Politics show. Last year, the company spent \$5.5 million on lobbying . . .

Rapiscan Systems, meanwhile, has spent \$271,500 on lobbying so far this year, compared with \$80,000 five years earlier. It has faced criticism for hiring Michael Chertoff, the former Homeland Security secretary, who has been a prominent proponent of using scanners to foil terrorism. Officials with Chertoff's firm and Rapiscan say Chertoff was not paid to promote scanner technology. It spent \$440,000 on lobbying in 2009.

The government has spent \$41.2 million so far on Rapiscan's machines.

OSI systems, the owner of Rapiscan, is run by a man named Deepak Chopra. And where did Mr. Chopra recently go? On a trip to India. With President Barack Obama. To "promote trade."

The best part of all of this, though, is that the lobbyist for L-3, the company that spent so much and received so much in return is a woman named Linda Daschle. Her husband Tom, of course, is the former Democratic Senate Majority Leader and onetime nominee for Secretary of Health and Human Services in the Obama administration. As you may recall, he had to decline the nomination after it was exposed that he was a tax cheat.

Last week, Charlie Rangel, the charming "rogue" Congressman from Harlem and the erstwhile most powerful tax-writer in the country (as Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee), was convicted of 11 counts of violating the House ethics rules, mostly for cheating on his taxes. In a show of solidarity with the shocked and fed-up American people, Rangel's fellow Congressmen agreed to censure him for his violations, which is to say that they agreed simply to state the truth about his actions and have them entered into the Congressional record.

Also last week, the House Ethics Committee decided to postpone the ethics trial of Congresswoman Maxine Waters. Why, you ask, did they do that? According to Mrs. Waters, the postponement amounted to vindication, although *The New York Times* apparently thinks differently. To wit:

A newly discovered exchange of e-mails led the House ethics committee on Friday to delay its trial of Representative Maxine Waters, a California Democrat accused of helping steer bailout money to a bank in which her husband owned shares.

The e-mails are between Mikael Moore, Ms. Waters's chief of staff, and members of the House Financial Services Committee, on which Ms. Waters serves. The e-mails show that Mr. Moore was actively engaged in discussing with committee members details of a bank bailout bill apparently after Ms. Waters agreed to refrain from advocating on the bank's behalf. The bailout bill had provisions that ultimately benefited OneUnited, a minority-owned bank in which her husband, Sidney Williams, owned about \$350,000 in shares

A person directly involved in the investigation said the new e-mails could show that members of her staff continued to work on the bank's behalf.

“It may directly contradict a bit of Maxine’s story, if not the actual facts, the way she has told it,” said the person, who did not want to be identified because of the sensitivity of the trial.

The list of this type of moral shabbiness, sadly, goes on and on. And on and on. And on and on.

Is this to say – as one might presume from our above discussion – that Barack Obama somehow advocates such things as insider trading, tax fraud, ethics violations, and what amounts to the legalized bribing of America’s public servants? After all, if we say that the traditional moral code would oppose these things, are we really saying that those who embrace the post-modern moral code would somehow justify them?

Of course not. But that’s the subtlety in the clash between the codes and the invidiousness of the embrace of non-traditional moral systems.

On the surface, there might appear to be precious little difference between the two codes. In practice both lead to the opposition of many of the same acts, and it is only in that rare theatrical event that light is shed on the prominent differences between the two; events like Bill Clinton’s sexual predation against a White House employee little older than his daughter.

In truth, though, the differences are not simply many but critical. And the embrace of the post-modern ethic figures prominently in the degeneration of behavior detailed above. Russell Kirk explained it this way:

A society in which men and women are governed by belief in an enduring moral order, by a strong sense of right and wrong, by personal convictions about justice and honor, will be a good society—whatever political machinery it may utilize; while a society in which men and women are morally adrift, ignorant of norms, and intent chiefly upon gratification of appetites, will be a bad

society—no matter how many people vote and no matter how liberal its formal constitution may be.

As we have noted countless times in these pages, the great moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre warned of the consequences of replacing the traditional moral code with the post-modern affinity for self-generating moral whims. The real risk in abandoning the traditional moral system and its teleology isn’t the creation of a different moral rationality; it’s the rejection of the entire process of moral rationality altogether, which has been precisely the experience of the modern West. Or, as MacIntyre put it:

[The post-traditional realm will] oscillate between a freedom which is nothing but a lack of regulation of individual behavior and forms of collectivist control designed only to limit the anarchy of self-interest. The consequences of a victory by one side or the other are often of the highest immediate importance; but, as Solzhenitsyn has understood so well, both ways of life are in the long run intolerable. Thus the society in which we live is one in which bureaucracy and individualism are partners as well as antagonists. And it is in the cultural climate of this bureaucratic individualism that the emotivist self is naturally at home.

All of which is to say that although Obama and the left in general would, at least consciously, reject the notion of fraud and corruption that predominate in our times, such outcomes are the necessary result of the left’s “different belief system,” that rejects the traditional morality of Western Christendom.

Two weeks ago, right around the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, two men gave two different speeches on the definition of “Europe” and the future of the European enterprise that, we believe, illustrate this point further. As the incomparable George Weigel, biographer to Pope John Paul II, put it:

On the night of November 9 (which is also the anniversary of Kristallnacht in 1938 and the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923), Herman Van Rompuy, the Belgian president of the European Union Council (and thus, by some reckonings, “president of Europe”), spoke in Berlin’s Pergamon Museum on the challenges facing European democracy in the 21st century. Three days earlier, in a homily at the venerable Spanish pilgrimage shrine of Santiago de Compostela, Pope Benedict XVI addressed a similar set of questions: Where will Europe find the civilizational energy to fuel its future as a distinct cultural enterprise? What, in fact, is “Europe”? Is it a set of pragmatic arrangements for mutual economic benefit? Or do its political and economic institutions express something like a common civilizational community? And if the latter is the case, then what are the sources of that community’s values and identity?

The answers given by Van Rompuy and Benedict could not have highlighted more sharply the different roads down which Europe might travel.

Von Rompuy, post-modernist extraordinaire, did his very best to define the ethical foundations of Europe – and therefore the ethical values that will lead the continent into the future – and in so doing gave the game away:

Alongside diversity — and diversity is certainly a strength of our societies — we still need, in each of our societies, a sense of unity, of belonging together. This sense of unity can lie in shared values; or in a language, a shared history, a will to live together. . . . And this will springs above all from the stories we tell each other.

Think of the ancient Greeks: The stories of Homer created bonds through the centuries. They have us spell-bound tonight. It can be the stories of war and peace, or Olympic exploits or saint-like sacrifice, of a prison stormed or a Wall which came down.

Such stories do what a treatise on “values” cannot achieve: They embody “virtues” in an understandable way, virtues shown by men and women in real situations. Courage, respect, responsibility, tolerance, a sense of the common good.

To keep such European virtues alive, to transmit their age-old qualities to our children and grandchildren, that will be one of the great challenges for the future.

As Weigel noted in response:

Here is the post-modern theory of the triumph of “narrative” run so far amok that it becomes self-parody. Putting aside the question of whether, on present demographic trends, there will be all that many “children and grandchildren” to whom to tell stories of Attic courage, or the figure-skating gold medals of Sonja Henie, or the fall of the Bastille, or the breaching of the Berlin Wall, Van Rompuy’s European Story Hour is just that: a disconnected conglomeration of “narratives” telling no one compelling tale.

It’s the stories that matter to Von Rumpuy, not the shared cultural heritage, the shared religious heritage, the unique set of institutions, beliefs, and values determined by this common heritage. What matters to Von Rumpuy and the European national project is “diversity” and “tolerance” and the triumphs of great individuals who may be lionized. This is shallow, pitiable, and morally erratic, to say the least. The embrace of the “narrative” as a foundation for ethical beliefs and behaviors leaves the determination in hands of mere men and their impulses, a recipe for moral degeneration and eventual catastrophe.

By contrast, Pope Benedict harkened back to Europe's shared heritage, its shared culture and, as he has done repeatedly, implored Europeans to rediscover that common heritage. Again, to borrow from Weigel:

In his homily at Santiago de Compostela, Benedict offered a far more richly textured vision of Europe's civilizational foundations than Herman Van Rompuy managed. Unintentionally responding to (and rebutting) the European Council president's encomium to the "Gods of Olympus," Benedict drew his congregation's attention to the Biblical author of the Book of Wisdom, who was "faced with a paganism in which God [or the gods] envied or despised humans" and who countered that Greek imagery with a question: "How could God have created all things if he did not love them, he who in his infinite fullness has need of nothing? Why would he have revealed himself to human beings if he did not wish to take care of them?" The men and women of the 21st century, the pope continued, "cannot live in darkness, without seeing the light of the sun. How is it, then, that God, who is the light of every mind, the power of every will and the magnet of every heart, be denied the right to propose the light that dissipates all darkness? That is why we need to hear God again under the skies of Europe."

What we have here is the clash of moral systems writ large: the traditional on the one hand and the post-modern on the other. Both advocate a return to moral behavior and both insist that a moral populace is the critical component to a functional society. But whereas one finds its moral guidance in the wisdom of ages, in the commonality of shared experience, and the eternal nature of truth, the other seeks to find direction in the heroics of the narrative, the capriciousness of individual human knowledge and the wisdom of the hour.

It is not, as one might presume, that one belief system is moral and the other immoral. It is, rather, that one is detached from man's ego and from his will to impose it on others, while the other is both fickle and entirely narcissistic, virtually compelling its imposition on the disinclined and creating what amounts to a vacuum which any fad might fill.

The latter, of course, is the moral system embraced by the modern left and, by extension, by Barack Obama. Obama may believe that his conceptions of ethical comportment are unimpeachable, but as history has demonstrated repeatedly, he is certainly wrong.

We only wish that Roger Ailes wasn't wrong as well, and that this moral hubris really was different from that of "most Americans."

MEXICO, CHAVEZ, AND OUR PRESIDENT, THE COMEDIAN.

One of the most bizarre and uncomfortable moments of this election season took place in the Arizona governor's race and specifically during the September 1 debate between incumbent Republican Governor Jan Brewer and her challenger, Terry Goddard. Goddard, seeking to dismiss Brewer as a liar and a crackpot and seeking further to dismiss the state's infamous immigration law (signed by Brewer), asked the Governor about her previous claims that there had been beheadings on the Arizona side of the border as a result of Mexico's drug cartel war. Goddard scolded his opponent, "Jan, I call on you to today to say, there are no beheadings. That was a false statement, and it needs to be called out right now."

That's when things got ugly.

Brewer stammered. She stuttered. She sat there dumbfounded. She groped and she grumbled. And finally, she chose to ignore the question altogether. Over the many, many years we've been watching political debates, we've seen some awkward moments, but none quite as bad as this one. It was painful to watch, to put it mildly. That it didn't cost her the election is a testament, we guess, to the mood of the voters.

What was most interesting and ironic about the whole incident, aside from Brewer's excruciating deer-in-the-headlights response, was that the Governor wasn't really lying, as Goddard charged, she was simply playing the prophet. The fact was that the grizzly drug violence spilling over from Mexico into her state was escalating relentlessly, and it was just a matter of time before at least one head would fall. And lo, just four weeks after Goddard mocked Brewer for even suggesting that such a thing was possible, the *Associated Press* reported the following.

The gruesome case of a man who was stabbed and beheaded in a suburban Phoenix apartment has police investigating whether the killing is potentially the most extreme example of Mexican drug cartel violence spilling over the border.

Martin Alejandro Cota-Monroy's body was found Oct. 10 in a Chandler apartment -- his severed head a couple feet away. One man suspected in the killing has been arrested, and a manhunt is under way for three others.

Detectives are focused on whether the men belong to a Mexican drug cartel, and they suspect that Cota-Monroy's killing was punishment for stealing drugs. The brutal nature of the killing could be designed to send a message to others within the cartel.

As beautifully revealed by that uneasy incident in the Arizona governor's debate, the principal problem with the dispute over immigration, immigration law, and the necessity of "closing" the border is that the two sides -- represented roughly by the two parties -- have two completely different and incompatible conceptions of what the problem is, what it means, and how best solve it.

The pro-immigrant left tends to think that the "law and order" argument is pure posturing, a feeble attempt at rationalizing restrictionist policies, made by

scared white people who loathe immigrants. As such, they view the immigration debate as strictly pertaining to domestic politics. It's us against them, with the "us" being the enlightened Americans, and the "them" being the know-nothing Neanderthals and Tea Party nutjobs.

At the same time, the right, in general, thinks that the issue is one of national sovereignty. That is not to say that everyone on the right sees the issue in precisely the same way. Some see immigration itself as the problem, while others view the porous border as the issue. We ourselves have always been strong supporters of what would amount to an open immigration policy, but have grown increasingly concerned about the security of the nation's borders since 9/11 and most especially since the Mexican drug cartels began their full-scale assault on what passes for a "government" in Mexico.

To the left, this is a matter of fairness, diversity, and integration. To the right, it's a matter of defining and defending the nation, of deciding who can enter, when, and under what circumstances, and then enforcing this decision. Moreover, it's about protecting America's citizens and legal aliens from threats that are not only real and serious but also intended to exploit the historical liberality of the nation's immigration policies.

So, who is right?

Well, obviously we have our biases. But there is no denying that the evidence increasingly shows that our biases -- and those of people like Jan Brewer -- are more than justified. Whether Democrats like it or not, the fact is that the "country" of Mexico exists today in name only; the drug cartels now control large swaths of territory and continue to overwhelm, evade, and slaughter any and all who get in their way.

Consider this: In nearly nine years of war in Afghanistan and nearly eight in Iraq, the United States has lost a grand total of, roughly, 5,800 men and women. By contrast, in less than half that time, four years next month, the Mexican cartel wars have cost

that country nearly 28,000 lives. And please note that Mexico's population is roughly one-third of that of the United States.

Not surprisingly, given the nature of the violence and its propensity to spill across the border, American states have been forced, in the absence of federal attention, to confront the issue on their own. As the *AP* reported last week:

In recent years, the cartels have become bolder and more ruthless.

They cross the border with AK-47s on their backs, wearing military camouflage. They recruit in prisons and schools on the American side. Spotters sit in duck blinds along the Rio Grande and call out the positions of the U.S. Border Patrol.

To combat the cartels, the Texas Department of Public Safety is launching a counterinsurgency.

Tactical strike teams send field intelligence they gather to Austin to a joint operation intelligence center, or JOIC in military terminology . . .

President Barack Obama and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano have recently said the Mexican border is more secure now than it has been in 20 years . . .

Texas Governor Rick Perry, whom many Republicans consider a potential presidential candidate, has asked for further federal help and has even suggested that, in an effort to combat the growing border violence, the United States should consider following the precedent set by Woodrow Wilson, of all people, in 1916.

Recall that during the Mexican Revolution, Poncho Villa and his Villistas were responsible for increased violence along the border, including a raid across the border on Columbus, New Mexico. In response, Wilson, the eccentric "progressive" hero, sent General

John J. Pershing to Mexico to quell the violence and to capture Villa. Today, Perry is suggesting that the federal government again send military troops into Mexico, this time to battle the drug cartels and to end their violent assault on both the Mexican and the American people.

It is important, we think, to note that none of this violence in Mexico and along its border with the United States takes place in a vacuum. The Obama administration and its supporters may like to think of this as a limited, domestic issue, but nothing could be further from the truth. Virtually the entire southern half of the Western hemisphere is, in some way or another, caught up in this mess and is waging war against or on behalf of the drug cartels that threaten American sovereignty and security today and could do so to a far greater extent in the next few years.

Consider, if you will, the following editorial report published last week by *Investor's Business Daily*, which gives just a taste of the immensity of this war and the potential ramifications for American security.

Years ago, Americans worried about Venezuela's leftist Hugo Chavez becoming a new Castro – with oil. It happened. Now he's filling his cabinet with drug lords, and the threat morphs into something creepier.

Last week, Chavez promoted Major General Henry Rangel Silva to general-in-chief, the top position in the Venezuelan military command. It was a rogue act because, in 2008, the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control named Rangel and two other Chavez loyalists as "Tier II Kingpins" for material support of drug trafficking.

The U.S. designation came of an administrative process so strict and thorough the U.S. government could indict someone if it's right – and be sued if it's wrong. There have been no lawsuits.

Rangel is said to provide material support for Colombia's FARC communist terrorists, who control 60% of Colombia's cocaine production, pushing it into Mexico and other destinations.

With Mexico endangered by local cartels' trade with Venezuela's government-linked suppliers, the link to Mexico's drug war is very real. And it's a national security problem for the U.S. – a big one . . .

With seven other Chavez loyalists also on the Treasury's list (but not yet announced) the rot is far deeper than the U.S. wants to admit.

The *IBD* editorial ends by questioning whether the Obama administration wants a captured Venezuelan drug lord, Walid Makled-Garcia, to talk or whether it wants to ignore him and his "shocking revelations" even as "war continues to rage in Mexico."

We hope that this is a relevant question for someone in the Obama administration. But we doubt seriously that it resonates with the President himself, who seems blissfully unaware of what Chavez is, what he is doing, or the threat he poses to the stability of the Western hemisphere. Yesterday, as Air Force One was returning from Lisbon, Obama stuck his head into the press cabin and quipped that they would be returning to Washington via South America since he wanted to stop and "see Chavez." Media reports note that the President was "joking," though we hardly see the relevance of that distinction. How, we wonder and worry, could a guy who is supposed to be responsible for the security of this nation even contemplate such a "joke?"

In any case, it is clear that Obama would rather not think about global security, much less the national security implications of the war in Mexico and the external involvement in that war of people like Hugo Chavez. According to several sources, including the *Jerusalem Post*, Russia's S-300 advanced air defense system, which Putin had intended to sell to Iran before

United Nations sanctions precluded that sale, is now headed for Caracas. Whether that system will be employed by Chavez or, more likely, sold to his friend Ahmadinejad is unclear. But still, the Russians and the Iranians continue to get cozy with Chavez.

Add that to longstanding reports that Hezbollah has established camps in Venezuela; that Chavez's allies in Nicaragua are taking disputed territory, by force, from neighboring Costa Rica, which has no army; and that the Russians have agreed to build nuclear reactors for Chavez in his oil-rich country, and alarm bells should be ringing nonstop in Washington.

Unfortunately, if the alarms are ringing, President Obama and his administration are ignoring them. As the blogger Bryan Preston notes, Obama today "enjoys warmer relations with the dictator Chavez than with the elected governor of Texas." To this end, *Fox News* reported in August that "Gov. Rick Perry's meeting at the Austin airport with President Barack Obama on border security lasted a mere 34 seconds, and Perry had to hand a letter on the issue to presidential adviser Valerie Jarrett because Obama declined to personally accept it."

All of this, of course, is in addition to Obama's admonition to Hispanic voters to "punish their enemies" by voting for Democrats and against Republicans like Perry and Brewer and in addition to the fact that Obama's Justice Department is suing the state of Arizona over its attempt to deal with the immigration problem.

The bottom line here is that while much of the world watches in horror as Mexicans are slaughtered, as the Mexican government is incapacitated, and as the hemisphere's leftist thugs manipulate the threat by helping America's enemies, the Obama administration focuses on the domestic policy implications of immigration and immigration reform.

When we first starting writing about Mexico, its drug war, and the possibility that that war could cause serious security and humanitarian issues, we treated the

story as something of a “black swan,” a term defined by its popularizer Nassim Taleb, as a high-impact, low probability event.

We no longer think of it that way. Most certainly, the probability of this becoming a major issue has moved from low to high. It remains to be seen whether it will be a high-impact issue, but there is no longer any question whatsoever that the drug cartel war has a real potential to cause sever problems for the United States, in addition to the 100,000,000 remaining residents of Mexico.

Whatever the case, one thing is certain, that being that no one will be surprised when and if the guano hits the fan, except perhaps Obama himself, who apparently still thinks that all of this blathering about the border is reactionary twaddle that, more to the point, provides him an opportunity to pick up some votes.

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