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Opening Remarks

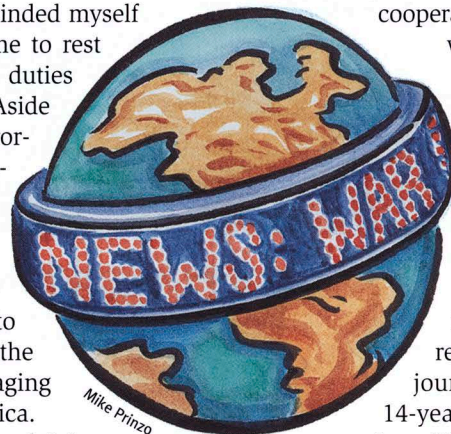
Keeping in Touch With the Global Village

As a member of the Global Village, I often find myself playing catch-up. After all, it can be a time-consuming chore to follow world events, especially without a coterie of geopolitical consultants, international relations experts, and multilingual translators available on short notice. Just when I could actually remember that Hamid Karzai was Afghanistan's interim government leader and not a town between Mazar-e-Sharif and Jalalabad, I reminded myself that this was no time to rest easy and shirk my duties as a global citizen. Aside from the war on terrorism, there were plenty of other issues to monitor, such as the threat of India and Pakistan turning each other into nuclear rubble, and the Ebola virus rampaging through parts of Africa.

Now I'm not complaining about the unpredictable pace of world events. In fact, I consider it a privilege—as much as a responsibility—to know what's going on in the world. Oh, sure, there are days when I wish I was a self-absorbed isolationist, ratcheting on about the evils of free trade and the splendor of homegrown vegetables. Then, however, reality sets in, and I remember it's 2002.

Unfortunately for us, parts of the Global Village seem to have been left behind in the 18th century. Sure we can pat ourselves on the back for ushering in this brilliant Age of Information, but loading ourselves up with gigabytes of trivia and reaping the rewards of the good life don't sweep despair, poverty, and ignorance from the shadowed corners of the globe (or those in our own neighborhoods). As we've learned, ignoring such conditions can leave the door open for extremists to enter and exert their own twisted takes on reality. Not every destitute person in the developing world turns into a suicide bomber.

But, as two experts note in the feature article "Time for Action" by Margaret Costello (page 22), disparities in wealth and access to resources can lead the disenfranchised to terrorism and violence. As you'll see in the article, one benefit of our fight against terrorism is that we have created an unprecedented opportunity to capitalize on the cooperation among civilized nations. It's a blue-sky thought, but we must hope this cooperation will lead to a



world that's more respectful of human rights and more active in its quest to rid poor countries of deadly diseases and improve their living standards.

Thinking with this international mindset reminds me of my first journey abroad. I was a 14-year-old member of a western New York State wrestling team that traveled to Colombia and Venezuela for what was called a "cultural exchange." Though I had never flown, spoke no Spanish, and had only a vague idea of where I was headed, it turned into an incredible experience. I remember the friendly welcomes we received in our travels, the stunning scenery, and—as a true cultural sacrifice—being served soda in warm bottles. Above all, though, I remember a face-to-face encounter with a few street kids in Bogota. They were grimy and barefoot and covered with sores. They were looking for handouts and got shooed away by our guide. Until then I'd never had the cold, empty eyes of poverty stare me in the face. It wasn't pleasant, but it made me realize how fortunate I was in a world that has more than its share of misfortune—and how important it was for me to understand that.

JAY COX
Editor