

War Reporting

DAILY INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

WASHINGTON, D.C.

DECEMBER 21, 2016

Mr. President-elect, we know you may not want to hear today's briefing.

Ten days ago, you told Chris Wallace: "I don't have to be told -- you know, I'm, like, a smart person. I don't have to be told the same thing in the same words every single day for the next eight years. Could be eight years -- but eight years. I don't need that. But I do say, 'If something should change, let us know.' Now, in the meantime, my generals are great -- are being briefed. And Mike Pence is being briefed, who is, by the way, one of my very good decisions. He is terrific."

Terrific.

The day before that interview, Fox News tweeted: President-elect @realDonaldTrump: "We're going to start saying 'Merry Christmas' again!"

We hear you.

Nine days after that tweet, Patrik Jonsson wrote in The Christian Science Monitor:

Given an election where more evangelical Americans voted for twice-divorced Donald Trump than they did for church-going George W. Bush, [David] Cox has witnessed a major mind-set shift among many fellow Evangelicals – from trepidation, even fear, to hope – a sense, he says, of "being accepted again." ...

For many Evangelicals, the Obama administration's promotion of transgender rights on bathroom choice, as well as the mounting number of lawsuits against religious business owners has felt like persecution.

Some 32 percent of American evangelical leaders say they currently experience persecution for their faith, while 76 percent believe they will experience persecution in the form of social, financial, and political pressure in the future, according to an October survey by the National Association of Evangelicals.

That sense played heavily into Trump's victory: 26 percent of the electorate last month was made up of white Evangelicals – a record, according to exit polls. Clinton won only 16 percent of those votes.

Sir, nine days after you reminded the country that we're going to start saying "Merry Christmas" again, a Christmas tree fell in Berlin.

Its star shattered on the ground.

12 people crushed beneath a truck's wheels.

Pools of blood mulled with wine.

Mulled.

Mulled wine.

Did we say mauled? They were mauled.

No, we said mulled.

Mull it over.

DECEMBER 4, 2013 - Bill O'Reilly on the Factor: "It is quite clear to anyone with a brain that there is a war between traditional Americans and secular progressives in this country...I hope Jon Stewart will reconsider the situation because in his heart he knows I'm right. Christmas is a huge symbol of the cultural struggle in this country."

*The First Noel, the Angels did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.*

DECEMBER 13, 2016 - Bilal Abdul Kareem in Aleppo for Al-Jazeera:

"It is extremely cold. The place where I am staying has no proper walls - I have hung plastic sheets and a blanket in the large holes made by a recent air strike. The big-hearted Syrian people treat me - a journalist and the only black American in town - generously. They know I

can communicate their stories to the world only when they allow me to charge my phone and laptop in one of the few remaining places with a generator and fuel.”

*They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the East beyond them far
And to the earth it gave great light
And so it continued both day and night.*

“In order to cook, people take broken bits of furniture, a brick and a few stones, place their pot on top of it and then light a fire ... Even the cooking needs to be done in hiding, out of fear of attracting government planes, or those who are hungry and have no food of their own.”

*And by the light of that same star
Three Wise men came from country far
To seek for a King was their intent
And to follow the star wherever it went.*

“The air strikes are relentless. They operate using a ‘double tap’ method that is designed to kill any Good Samaritans who come to the aid of the injured. They strike once then wait a while; then, when people gather to try to remove those stuck under the rubble, they strike again.”

*This star drew nigh to the northwest
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest
And there it did both Pause and stay
Right o'er the place where Jesus lay.*

“The courageous White Helmets are no longer functioning; their ambulances cannot run without fuel or fear of being targeted. Some people risk bringing the injured to clinics in cars or pick-up trucks, if they have a few drops of fuel left. I have even seen people use wheelbarrows to transport severely injured loved ones.

If you make it to one of these 'clinics,' a new kind of nightmare awaits you there - they are crammed with people, lying on the floor in pools of blood. There is so much blood that the doctors and nurses wear boots as they slip from one patient to the next."

*Then entered in those Wise men three
Full reverently upon their knee
And offered there in His presence
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense.*

"These clinics cannot offer anything beyond emergency medical treatment, suturing wounds and trying to carry out emergency operations. Their only aim is to stop the bleeding; they can do no more than that. And the moment the doctor is able to stop the bleeding, the victim must leave. The clinics are dangerous places. The more human beings there are assembled in one place, the more likely that place is to be targeted."

*Then let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord
That hath made Heaven and earth of nought
And with his blood mankind has bought.*

"But now we hear reports of hundreds of men disappearing in one place, and of men being lined up for summary execution in another. It only adds to the fear of turning yourself over. It is desperate now. The rain will stop soon and the slaughter will begin again. There must be a humanitarian corridor now. Today. Tomorrow will be too late for many of us."