

Eagle Forum Report

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Slow Boiled Frogs

SOFT-CORE TOTALITARIANISM

by C.J. Baker, M.D., an internal medicine physician with 25 years in clinical practice. His work has appeared in the Journal of the American Medical Association and the New England Journal of Medicine. From 2012 to 2018, he was Clinical Associate Professor of Medical Humanities and Bioethics at the University of Rochester.

We have witnessed the destruction of medical ethics during the COVID era, which I have named “soft-core totalitarianism.”

I believe it aptly describes the sociopolitical — or is it sociopathological? — condition in which we find ourselves in the post-COVID world, both in the United States and throughout the other Western so-called liberal democracies. It certainly seems to describe the direction in which our collective culture is heading.

Let’s define *soft-core totalitarianism* as a political system, characterized by two features:

- First, there is centralized, autocratic control of the state by the executive branch of the government and its cronies (the *totalitarianism* part).
- Second, *by design*, the offenses to civil liberties are applied subtly and gradually enough, the standard of living is kept high enough, and a sufficient menu of seductive distractions are intentionally provided, that most individuals either don’t object, or don’t even notice (the *soft-core* part).

Soft-core totalitarianism can be readily contrasted with its hard-core counterpart, recent examples of which would be the killing fields of Khmer Rouge-era Cambodia, or the enforced starvation conditions of contemporary North Korea.

As with soft-core pornography, this comparison favorably disposes soft-core totalitarianism to the more pliant and undiscerning among us, who might say, “Well, yes, I suppose it isn’t ideal, but at least it’s not that horrible hard-core stuff!”

Also like soft-core pornography, soft-core totalitarianism is designed to possess a titillating and seductive quality that opposes one’s better moral judgment. To the weak-willed and soft-headed, the statement “You’ll own nothing and be happy” holds a similar appeal to “All the classiest girls, ready to talk about your deepest fantasies, just a phone call away.”

Soft-core totalitarianism was predicted by past seers who tried to warn us about where Western Civilization was headed. The leavening of tyranny with the intentional supply of banal distractions, creature comforts, and legalized drugs pepper their descrip-



tions. They repeatedly describe a kind of semi-anesthetized, semi-tolerable dystopia:

“Films, football, beer, and above all, gambling filled up the horizon of their minds. To keep them in control was not difficult.” ~ George Orwell

“There will be, in the next generation or so, a pharmacological method of making people love their servitude, and producing dictatorship without tears, so to speak, producing a kind of painless concentration camp for entire societies, so that people will in fact have their liberties taken away from them, but will rather enjoy it, because they will be distracted from any desire to rebel.” ~ often attributed to Aldous Huxley

“Give them bread and circuses, and they will never revolt.” ~ Juvenal

Ring any bells? If not, consider the following, all of which occurred contemporaneously to the COVID-era lockdowns, school closures, travel restrictions, mask and vaccine mandates and other assorted assaults

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on our civil rights:

- Liquor stores were deemed essential from the beginning and remained open for business throughout the entire duration of the COVID lockdowns with the forced closures of many other businesses, such as gyms.
- No fewer than 17 U.S. States legalized recreational marijuana use since the COVID lockdowns began in March 2020.
- 33 U.S. states have opened legalized sports betting markets since the Supreme Court struck down the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act in May 2018.
- Over \$220 billion has been wagered in sportsbooks in the U.S. since 2018.
- The U.S. Border Patrol seized over 15,000 pounds of fentanyl at the Mexican border in 2022 — three times as much as in 2020.
- 110,000 Americans died of drug overdoses in 2022.

Still skeptical? Let me put it another way. I am no Orwell or Huxley (and certainly no Juvenal), but please indulge me, Dear Reader, as I offer you my own soft-core totalitarian dystopian narrative:

As it happened, it was the Ides of March. Clinton Barker's wife shook him awake. It was five-thirty, half an hour before his alarm was set to go off. "Come downstairs," she said, "you've got to hear what they're saying on television."

A talking head on the screen was spouting instructions, the likes of which Clinton had never heard before.

"Everyone is ordered to remain in their homes," the talking head announced. "I repeat: remain in your homes. Schools are closed until further notice. Workplaces are closed, except for those deemed essential by the authorities."

Clinton Barker's three young children, also glued to the television screen, howled with delight. "No school!" They cheered in unison. "NO SCHOOL!"

Clinton's wife shushed them to silence.

"Authorities are insisting: we all have to do our part," the cypher in the suit continued. "If we all stay in our homes for just two weeks — two weeks to flatten the curve, two weeks to stop the spread of the virus — then all will be well. Do your part and stay in your homes. Stay home with your families, your children. Think of it as a vacation. Relax and spend time with the family. Kick back and check out what's on Webflix. In fact, Stephanie has some wonderful recommendations. Stephanie?"

An attractive blonde woman with a pneumatic figure, sitting next to the cypher, chimed in.

"So many great shows to watch on Webflix these days, Bill," the blonde chirped. "There's a fantastic new documentary on wild animal breeders called The Liger King. You have to see it to believe it. There's also a thrilling new family adventure series, about a group of treasure-hunting teens, called Barrier Reefs. The whole family will love it. Plus there's so many great series out there...no one could possibly be caught up on all of them: Tournament of Kings. The Contraltos. Turning Evil. As for me, Bill, I'm going straight home after this and I'm just going to binge."

Clinton Barker's mind raced. What is happening? What if they lock us down longer than they claim? How will we feed the children? How will we pay the rent? How will we...

As weeks passed, Clinton's first fear was indeed realized — the lockdowns persisted, much longer than initially claimed. But all around him, no one seemed to mind very much. The authorities made sure of that. The televisions ran nonstop, and just like the

pneumatic blonde, everyone Clinton spoke to on the phone seemed to be binging on streaming entertainment. The grocery stores remained open, and of course, so did the liquor stores.

Before long, the state announced that marijuana had been legalized. Soon thereafter, Clinton received a check from the government, sufficient to cover a few months' groceries. Even the rent was not a problem. The state announced a moratorium on all rent collection until further notice.

Sound familiar?

For those of you still skeptical of my thesis, save your time and read no further. I wish you good luck; I suspect you will need it. To paraphrase Sam Adams, may your chains set lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that you were my countrymen.

For those of you who agree that we are indeed living in an age of soft-core totalitarianism (and which, I fear, is the inevitable gateway to the hard-core variety), here are potential remedies.

- We must fight tooth and nail against every incursion on civil rights and liberties, regardless of how it affects our creature comforts or our standard of living.
- We must insist that every government action be legal passed by law through the elected legislature and challenged in court if unconstitutional.
- We must fight against executive orders and declarations of emergency called at the drop of a hat. These extralegal abuses must be stopped.
- We must hold accountable those individuals, especially those who are unelected, who are guilty of crimes against liberty, civil rights, and humanity. If individuals are not appropriately punished, systems will continue to decay.

May God have mercy on us all. 

POTHEADS IN THE BARRACKS

by Major General Perry G. Smith, Army National Guard, retired; Major General Allen Harrell, Army National Guard, retired; Colonel Stewart Tankersly, Army National Guard, retired; Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin; Scott Jones, U.S. Army, retired; Commander Theresa Hubbard, U.S. Coast Guard Reserves, retired; MSgt Rex F. Chilton, U.S. Air Force, retired; TechSgt David Coram, U.S. Air Force, veteran.

Even though U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers (R-AL) never served in the military, he is chairman of the House Armed Services Committee and he has joined President Biden's efforts to weaken the U.S. Armed Forces.

Last week, HASC voted to advance the annual must-pass defense budget bill, the National Defense Authorization Act. Approved by Rogers, the bill includes a dangerous provision pushed by U.S. Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) that should concern all Americans: a prohibition on marijuana testing for military enlistment. Yes, that's right: let the potheads join the military.

This change goes against basic military common sense. That's why it's puzzling that Rogers would ignore the outreach of conservatives and veterans and, instead, support stoner soldiers.

According to the pro-marijuana group The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws' congressional scorecard, Rogers has a C+ rating (most Republicans receive Fs or Ds). His grade is higher than many liberal Democrats and just slightly lower than President Joe Biden's B-.

Rogers has historically supported Democrat-led pro-marijuana bills. Time and again he has voted to financially legalize marijuana by supporting the Chuck Schumer-backed SAFE Banking Act. In 2019, he voted for a provision introduced by far-left U.S. Reps. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and Barbara Lee (D-CA) to prevent the Justice Department from enforcing the law against states that permit le-

gal weed. Apparently, blocking marijuana testing in the military is just the latest in a series of pro-pot votes by Rogers.

As veterans, banning marijuana testing deeply concerns us because our military already has a marijuana problem. New data from the Department of Defense shows that marijuana is the most used drug in the armed forces. Pot accounted for 73.4% of all unique positive drug test results among active-duty service members. Drug use can also have significant negative effects on our soldiers' physical and mental health. Allowing more drug use will only worsen the problem.

Please recall that American Sniper Chris Kyle was murdered by a fellow veteran suffering from marijuana psychosis.

Consuming any illegal drug is a red flag, but it also calls into question the integrity of the individual as it shows a complete disregard for rules. Drug use by soldiers in the business of defending our nation is a dangerous proposition. These soldiers train as they fight, with real ammunition in high-stress environments on minimal sleep patterns, spending days in harsh climate environments. They operate heavy equipment such as large trucks, tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles, and also fly advanced helicopters. Imagine soldiers consuming marijuana and then operating the above equipment. Before you say that marijuana is safe, think about those

killed at the hands of drivers high on marijuana in Alabama alone. This bill would unnecessarily put the safety and security of our nation and our service members at increased risk.

Additionally, soldiers who choose to smoke marijuana and break the law typically have other significant issues that lead to dishonorable discharges for insubordination, conduct unbecoming and going AWOL.

Being a member of the armed forces requires following rules that individuals may disagree with, but



ignoring rules altogether is unacceptable. Drug use can show a lack in discipline and good decision-making skills, something necessary for the success of our armed forces.

Additionally, drug use shows a lack of respect for the individual, their body, mind and health. If an individual is willing to put their own health and safety on the line, we would have no reason to believe they would not risk the health and safety of others.

Proponents of the Gaetz provision tout it as a remedy for our military personnel crisis. From their perspective, our country can increase the number of military recruits by removing marijuana use as a disqualifying factor. Despite military personnel issues being real, there are three glaring problems with the Gaetz and Rogers approach.

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First, we should address the root issues of military personnel problems rather than settling to admit potheads. Re-analyzing military benefits, promoting patriotism, and creating a more positive national perception of the military will all increase enlistment. Additionally, young men and women do not enlist to train on proper pronoun use and sexual harassment of transgender soldiers; they enlist to fight for their country against enemies foreign and domestic. Enlistment is down because the system is broken. Allowing drug use is not the answer.

Second, banning marijuana

testing would create more problems than it would solve. We know that drug use decreases military readiness, attentiveness, discipline, and judgment. Even if we were able to increase enlistment, we would risk admitting recruits that will not be ready to serve. Worse, mental health problems will continue to rise. Chronic marijuana use is linked to schizophrenia, psychoses (remember Chris Kyle's murderer), substance abuse disorder and worsened PTSD. Allowing marijuana users into the military will also increase the overall healthcare burden.

In addition to the negative mental

NEVER AGAIN

by Anne Schlafly, Chairman, Eagle Forum

All of us must make sure that the mistakes of the COVID pandemic shutdown are never repeated.

The important lesson is to never give in to FEAR. In March 2020 when many Americans obediently followed the government's diktats to self-imprison, they did so because they were afraid. "The Authorities" used emotion, not reason or facts, to make Americans afraid. An irrational fear of sickness caused healthy Americans to distrust their family and friends and choose to hibernate in their basements. In my community, the local government even closed the taxpayer-paid public parks!

Over half of Americans do not know how to swim and most non-swimmers are very afraid when they get in the water. As a result, they panic and are more likely to drown. Knowledge is power. To know how to swim eliminates the fear of water. If Americans are to prevent a repeat of the disastrous shutdown of our lives and livelihoods, we must practice safe citizenship. We cannot allow unelected ministers of health

any attempt to cancel our liberties. We should regularly encourage our friends and families not to give in to fear, but to practice citizenship.


Only if we use our strength can we overcome fear. In 2020, I, with a visible smile on my face, would walk into a room of mask-wearers and slowly others would have the courage to remove their masks. There is tremendous power in resisting fear, because not only are you stronger, but everyone around you gains strength.

Is your community assessing their pandemic preparedness? For example, the Virginia legislature has contracted with a company to prepare a pandemic response plan. Will this plan include our individual civil rights and liberties? Will this plan close churches and schools? Now is the time to exercise our civil rights as free-thinking individuals who do not succumb to fear.

As President Franklin Delano Roosevelt said in 1933, "This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

health consequences, chronic marijuana use precipitates the increased risks of heart attack, stroke and cancer. These medical complications do not stop with the soldier. They impact the entire unit, as well as the soldier's future family. All cannabis damages the sperm and egg, as well as the developing baby. Thus, Rogers' move will have disastrous generational consequences.

Finally, banning marijuana testing altogether is an extreme response to a problem for which there is already a solution. Both the Air Force and Navy grant waivers on a case-by-case basis to recruits who test positive for marijuana. Most would agree that there might be unique circumstances where past drug use has an explanation and would not affect a soldier's ability to serve. But these cases should be treated as special, and recruits granted waivers at the discretion of the military. Completely prohibiting marijuana testing removes a useful tool that the military should have during the recruitment process.

Thankfully, the battle is far from over. The Senate can push back against this misguided provision and strip it out of the NDAA. As veterans, we urge Congress to get rid of the dangerous Gaetz provision and for Rogers to explain to his Alabama constituents why he supports banning marijuana testing for military recruits. Let us honor our fallen soldiers by keeping high the very standards that have made America great. 

EAGLE FORUM

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