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—For section.....Voices/Essay
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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Hi, Jimmy: You might not like the editing I've done here — I don't often edit contributions this heavily or directly — but I worry about how the tone of your original was coming through. I think front-loading it with the disclaimer set it up to be misread and misunderstood, and you had too many specifics about the mouse and too many direct connections with the boat strike. I think by pulling back the details, making the comparisons more gentle, and more subtly integrating your clarification about your convictions, your real message comes through. At least that's my intent. Do let me know what you think. All the best, Jeff

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

#####BEGIN HED####

1 Of mice and inhumanity

#####END HED####

#####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 'I knew of no laws or rules of engagement around what
3 to do with a surviving mouse. And yet, I rescued my enemy.
4 Admiral Bradley had very clear laws and international rules of
5 engagement that he chose to disregard and instead killed two
6 injured, nonthreatening human beings.'

#####END SUBHED####

7 TEXT BODY:

#####BEGIN TEXT#####

8 THIS MORNING, in my rural Vermont home, I found myself
9 facing an unexpected moral dilemma.

10 A couple of weeks ago, after setting traps, I had killed 17
11 mice. Today, I discovered one more dead mouse on my basement
12 workbench and another, very much alive, dangling from a trap on
13 the floor after a 3-foot fall onto the concrete.

14 *Now what? I asked myself. Should I finish off this
15 terrified, helpless, injured creature?*

16 I rehearsed both options: the quick, grim efficiency of a
17 second attack, or the slower and more cumbersome task of
18 rescuing it.

19 As I approached, the mouse twisted frantically, doing its
20 confused best to escape what it surely assumed was my fatal
21 decision.

22 I hesitated, picked up my hand-held grapple, and found I
23 could free the mouse without harming myself or making its fear
24 any worse. Once released outside, it vanished into the snow in
25 the blink of an eye.

26 Walking back to the house, it struck me: If this same
27 scenario had played out in the hands of my government, the
28 outcome would have been different.

29 A second strike would be rationalized as the only
30 acceptable choice — after all, mice can cause structural damage
31 and even house fires. Eliminating the “threat” would be labeled
32 smart, defensive, and necessary.

33 * * *

34 PLEASE ACCEPT my apologies if you feel I've trivialized
35 drug policy and the lives of two survivors of the Sept. 2
36 Venezuelan boat strike.

37 Let me be perfectly clear where I stand: Without
38 evidence of criminal activity and the opportunity for due process,
39 the nine boaters killed by the first strike and the disregard for the
40 rules of law and engagement for killing the two survivors (e.g.,
41 the Geneva Convention defines the ethical and strategic

42 responsibility to war survivors), I personally find the U.S. actions
43 abhorrent.

44 But I did find that this small incident in my daily life
45 resonated with something in the bigger world.

46 There's at least one interesting difference between me
47 and Admiral Bradley, the commander of the Joint Special
48 Operations Command who oversaw the boat strike.

49 I knew of no laws or rules of engagement around what to
50 do with a surviving mouse. And yet, I rescued my enemy. Admiral
51 Bradley had very clear laws and international rules of
52 engagement that he chose to disregard and instead killed two
53 injured, nonthreatening human beings.

54 In my basement, I had everything I needed to rescue and
55 release my lone survivor and risk its return attack on my
56 windowsills and wiring. A U.S. Navy ship — with thousands of
57 personnel, advanced aircraft, and technology capable of
58 retrieving wreckage from the bottom of the sea — had more than
59 enough capacity to rescue two human beings clinging to a
60 destroyed vessel.

61 If I could have looked my government in the eye, I would
62 have like to say: "Get a military-grade grapple. You certainly have
63 one."

64 * * *

65 I HAVE NEVER served in the military, and I hold deep
66 respect and gratitude for those who have.

67 But had I been in the position of making that decision, I
68 hope I would have found the moral clarity and courage to say,
69 "Rescue them. Warm them. Feed them. Confine them safely. Treat
70 them with dignity. Follow the rules of engagement and the law.
71 Protect their due process."

72 And to those eager to slash government spending?
73 I'm willing to bet a house full of mice that rescuing two
74 survivors clinging to a capsized motorboat costs far less than
75 firing another missile from one of the most advanced — and
76 expensive — weapons systems on Earth.

#####END TEXT#####

BIO/COATTAIL:

#####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL#####

77 **JIMMY KARLAN** is professor emeritus at Antioch
78 University in Keene, New Hampshire.

#####END BIO/COATTAIL#####

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LINKS:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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