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## IN YOUR WORDS

## 2nd Ebola case in U.S. stokes fears

Once again, reassurances that all is under control, and yet new cases appear. When are we going to admit that we really are not prepared, or know exactly what we are dealing with? All the while, planes continue to fly out of impacted countries and we think we'll be able to effectively screen each person. It's insane.

JEFFB. PLANO, TEX.

Keep calm and carry on. This isn't the Blitz. A vaccine was shipped out Thursday to the W.H.O. from Canada. Trials are expected to begin this week. It is sad that a nurse was infected, but so far only one patient in the U.S. had died. Remember, many more die every day in the United States from gun violence, suicide, smoking, alcohol, traffic accidents and prescription drug abuse.

MARK NEWCASTLE, STINSON BEACH, CALIF.

As a nurse, this terrifies me. This nurse was wearing protective gear as suggested by the C.D.C. — which is just a measly gown, gloves, mask and goggles. Why then are the people in Africa wearing spacesuits if we don't need that? Obviously our protective equipment isn't enough. And as nurses in this country, we aren't trained to care for patients with Ebola.

JEN, N. Y.

## Steeplechase's most perilous jump

You don't have to be an animal rights advocate to know that the jump is too difficult. It's not only the horses who are subject to unreasonable risk, but also the riders. Fans who pretty much know that there will be serious injury are not sportsmen, they're accident junkies.

MICHJAS, PHOENIX

This is simply cruelty to animals. It is a shame that these riders think it is sport to take their horses over a jump — to see which horses can survive. Outrageous.

SBOBOLIA, NEW YORK

See what readers are talking about and leave your own comments at [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com)

## IN OUR PAGES

International Herald Tribune

## 1914 Germans Waste Ammunition

LONDON Still more news of the operations in northern France is forthcoming to-day [Oct. 12] from the now famous "eye-witness" present with Field-Marshal Sir John French's General Staff. In the instalment just issued by the War Office Press Bureau, the "eye-witness," writing on October 9, continues his narrative of events as follows: In spite of the perfection of their arrangements for ranging and observation, there has been much waste of ammunition by the Germans. For instance, within an area of two acres on our side of the Aisne there are over one hundred craters made by their heavy high-explosive shell.

## 1964 Paris Depots 150,000 Pigeons

PARIS More than 150,000 pigeons have been deported from Paris since the start of 1963, but more than 400,000 remain, Paris officials reported. The officials think they have found the most effective method of trapping the pigeons: large nets propelled by a device like underwater spearguns. About 100 pigeons can be trapped in the net. They are then shipped to country homes. Efforts to trap the pigeons in innocent-looking lofts failed. The birds simply refused to enter the lofts and continued to perch on the cornices of buildings.

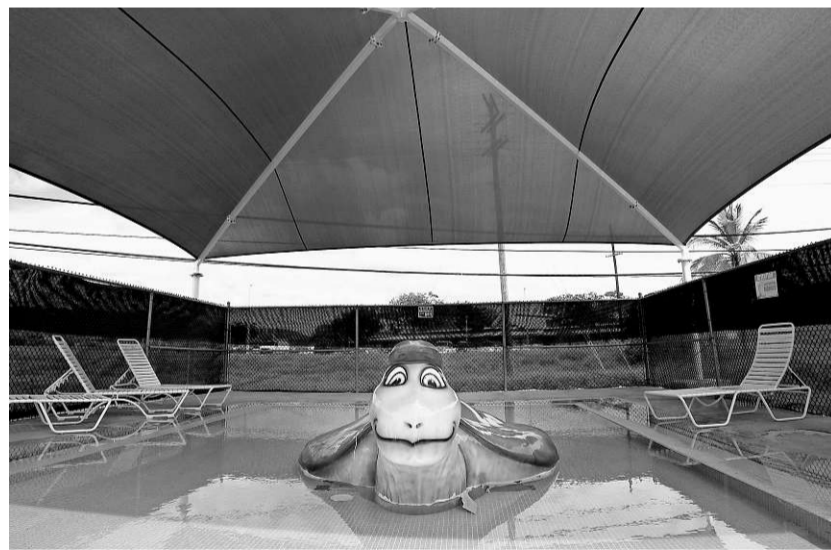
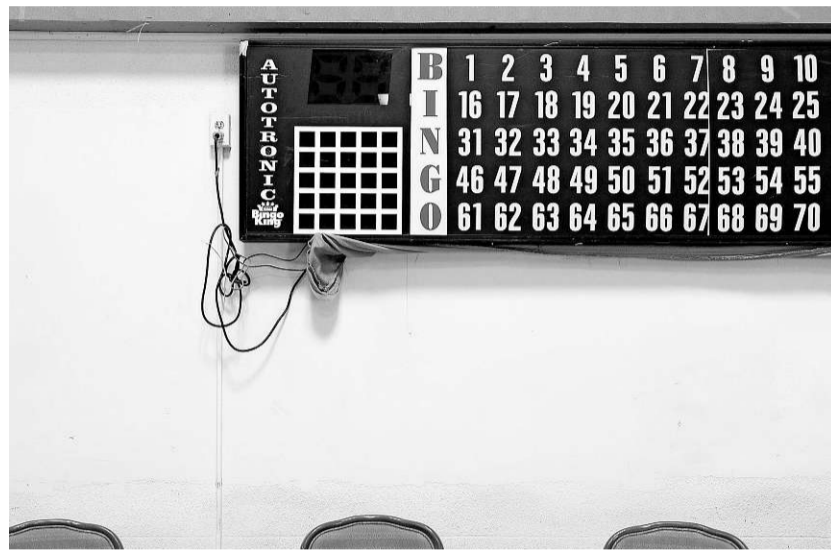
Find a retrospective of news from 1887 to 2013 at [iht-retrospective.blogs.nytimes.com](http://iht-retrospective.blogs.nytimes.com)

## Guantánamo, reframed



**AN EYE FOR JUSTICE** Debi Cornwall brings a unique perspective to her documentary photographs of the American military prison at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba. She has made several trips to the facilities where 149 detainees are being held, many without formal charges. Her project, "Gitmo at Home, Gitmo at Play,"

marks her return to photography after practicing civil rights law at a firm specializing in overturning wrongful convictions. "I wanted to look at this all-American place and ask if this is who we want to be," Ms. Cornwall said. "Is America at its best in this place?" [lens.blogs.nytimes.com](http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com)



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEBI CORNWALL

## Fixing flaws in U.S. drug sentencing



## Anand Girdharadas

## LETTER FROM AMERICA

This summer, some veterans of the United States government's war on drugs gathered in Indiana. It was a meeting of prosecutors and federal agents involved in counternarcotics cases. At one point, someone handed out a piece of paper packed with statistics that law enforcers might boast of: indictments returned, prosecutions made, convictions won.

Then Steven M. Dettelbach, the top federal prosecutor for the Northern District of Ohio, took his turn to speak. He stood before his colleagues and tore up the sheet.

Some years ago, it might not have gone over well. But the winds of American justice are changing, and his colleagues erupted in applause, he recalled in an interview. "It was making a point that we all felt in the room," he said. The era of justice by "bean counting" was finally receding.

An important domestic priority of the Obama administration, and in particular of the departing attorney general, Eric H. Holder Jr., has been the overhaul of federal sentencing for drug-related offenses. Since 1980, the general population has grown by a third, but the federal prison population is nearly nine times as large as it was then, according to the Justice Department. Much of that growth flowed from "tough on crime" policies like mandatory minimums, which condemned small fish in the drug food chain to stiff penalties that even judges could not bend.

A growing body of research has concluded that these policies have backfired, robbing communities of fathers and neighbors and workers, and intensifying the chaos and poverty that nourish crime.

Mr. Holder announced last month that, one year into new sentencing rules, the federal prison population had dropped by about 4,800 inmates — the first drop in 34 years. For the first time in decades, the department says, crime rates and incarcerations are decreasing simultaneously.

That's the view from Washington, the macro picture. The other day, Mr. Dettelbach shared the view from the trenches, where prosecutors are gradually regaining flexibility that began to be taken from them in the 1980s — and in the process, they are rethinking their roles.

"We had over the last 20 years in the country developed a system — which was not the system we had had for years and years before — where the default, in all but a very few circumstances, was that the most serious crime with the highest sentences had to be charged and pursued in every single case," he said.

He calls the new sentencing "a tremendously empowering change, because it's a return to the idea that prosecutors are trusted to exercise their discretion."

The new leniency takes various forms. New cases up for indictment face an office review: Was this defendant really involved in the core of the drug operation? Did the wiretaps suggest a hardened trafficker or rather a needy addict or some gangster's dupe? And old cases won by the office have been re-examined, with prosecutors recommending to superiors in Washington that some current convicts be released early.

"No longer is it just asking the question, 'How much drugs can we put on them?'" Mr. Dettelbach said. "We're asking the question: 'What did he do? What was his history before this?'"

The federal government is far from getting out of the business of punishing the drug trade. But this past summer, when Mr. Dettelbach's office announced charges against two drug rings, it indicted 57 people — while punting to state court approximately a dozen others who were deemed smaller fry. Shorter sentences are likely there.

Hardly a revolution. But behind those numbers are hints of a shift, visible across the country, in the self-conception of America's prosecutors.

Every system has its hardships. Under the old one, Mr. Dettelbach said, prosecutors shuddered at some of the outcomes. Now they have the power of leniency, which is "stressful stuff," he said. Terminating the algorithmic approach gives them a tremendous new burden: "making significant, justice-based, moral decisions about what should happen to people."

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## Siegfried Lenz dies at 88; sought lessons in Germany's past

BY WILLIAM YARDLEY

Siegfried Lenz, a German writer acclaimed for novels and stories that frankly explored his country's role in the rise of Nazism, died on Oct. 7 in Hamburg. He was 88.

His death was announced by his long-

## OBITUARY

time publisher, Hoffmann & Campe.

Along with Günter Grass, Heinrich Böll and other German writers who rose to international prominence after World War II, Mr. Lenz was a member of Gruppe 47, a literary cohort that encouraged democracy, free expression and confrontation with Germany's Nazi era. His stories often placed Nazism in the context of broader German history and identity.

Mr. Lenz had already published several well-received novels before he reached a wider audience with what is regarded by many as his most important work, the novel "The German Lesson." Published in 1968, it tells the story of Sigi Jepsen, a young man in a school for juvenile delinquents who is required to write an essay on "The Joys of Duty." The essay soon

grows into a book, an aching recollection of how his father, a German police officer in a small northern coastal town during the war, became obsessed with enforcing an order to stop an artist — one of the officer's old friends and a beloved mentor of Sigi — from painting.

"The policeman, bent on doing his duty, asking no questions and giving no quarter, emerges in this masterful portrait not as another caricature of a Nazi robot but as a complexly ordinary human being whose devotion to what he regards as his duty is every bit as intense as the artist's devotion to his art," the novelist and biographer Ernst Pawel, reviewing an English translation of the book, wrote in *The New York Times* in 1972.

Mr. Lenz was known for a sardonic wit. At one point in "The German Lesson," the police officer catches the artist with a sketch pad, only to learn that it is filled with blank pages. When the artist "confesses" that he had made several invisible drawings, the officer promptly confiscates the sketch pad.

"You know what the game is, Max," he tells the painter. "You know what my duty is. These sheets are going to be examined."

Max responds: "Yes, yes. Go on, have

them examined, for all I care. Have them put into the mincing machine, for all I care. You won't succeed in destroying them."

Mr. Lenz admired William Faulkner's distinctive use of memory as a literary device and the way he linked personal and historical trauma. Many of his own stories insist that memories and the past be accepted and honestly recounted, no matter how disgraceful they might be, because distorting them can lead to new tragedies.

Reviewing another of his novels, "The Heritage," in 1981, Salman Rushdie wrote in *The Times* that its theme was "the vast gulf between Germany's past and present: a gulf created by the Nazi's unscrupulous use of the idea of homeland, heritage and history to justify and legitimize xenophobia, tyranny and the doctrine of ethnic purity."

Mr. Rushdie praised the book, a fable about a rug weaver who preserves but later destroys relics in a museum in East Prussia, as "an attempt to rescue the past from its exploiters: a fable of reclamation, the very writing of which entails a kind of heroism."

Mr. Lenz wrote several dozen novels and books of short stories and was regu-



Mr. Lenz in 2011. His stories put Nazism in the context of broader German identity.

larly at the top of best-seller lists in Germany. In 1999, he received the Goethe Prize, awarded every three years. Well into his 80s, he wrote another best seller, "A Minute's Silence," a novella about a teenager's romance with his young teacher and his anguish in recalling how the affair ended in tragedy.

Mr. Lenz's wife of more than 50 years, Liselotte, died several years ago. Complete information about survivors was not immediately available.

Mr. Lenz was born on March 3, 1926, in