

Let the US Army Replace the Apollo Bridge
by
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Valley News Dispatch 5/09/96 Community Columnist

A few months ago, Dr. Srebren Dizdar, Bosnian Secretary of Education toured the Apollo area. He noted how similar our landscape was to his homeland. He also commented on the similarities of the people. He should have also noted the similarities between the bombed out bridges of Bosnia and the pock marked monstrosity known as the Apollo bridge.

If you are not familiar, an environmental pollutant flakes into the Kiski River as lead based paint slowly chips off the Apollo bridge, leaving behind a grotesque, rusty gateway into the town of Apollo. Its bad enough that the citizens of the area have to put up with a steel grate bridge that is hazardous when it rains or snows, but it is an absolute disgrace to have an unsightly eyesore for a portal into a town with pride and a rich history and tradition.

Today PennDot through the direction of the Ridge administration is proclaiming that they are committed to maintenance first. Sadly, they are doing their best to put worthwhile projects like the Kiski Valley Expressway on the back-burner. But even if we are made to accept that few new projects are to take place, how does this explain the lack of attention given to the Apollo bridge? PennDot admits that the Apollo bridge is clearly a maintenance project. They also admit that its a project they strongly considered. But the bridge did not make the final cut. Other maintenance projects presumably on the other end of the state were considered more important.

Pennsylvania's statement to the Apollo area is clear. We are not worth the expense of repainting a bridge. In fact, the Apollo bridge is not even on something called the 12 year plan. If this was a portal into an affluent Pittsburgh suburb like Fox Chapel, I suspect that this problem would be remedied immediately with or without a gas tax.

On television, I watched the US army build a bridge across a river in Bosnia in less than two days under harsh conditions. It came as no surprise that the bridge looked 100% better than the Apollo bridge. And then an idea occurred to me. Since PennDot cannot get it done, call the US Army.

I called the army. When I relayed what I had witnessed on television, the Sergeant proudly proclaimed that he had helped span the Rhine River in Germany in less than 4 hours. When I asked if the Army practiced building bridges in the US, he answered that they do it all the time. This was best news I had heard in a long time but there was a hitch. The army takes bridges back down again when they are done. Being ever the hopeful optimist, I asked if the army had ever built permanent bridges. Again the Sergeant answered that this had been accomplished in some third world countries.

I asked if there was a shortage of material or manpower. He told me that the army had plenty of material stockpiled away and that the manpower was overwhelming. I then asked how long it would take to permanently span a river about 50 yards across. He told me that they could accomplish it easily in a day especially if there were existing piers in place.

Finally the Sergeant asked me what I was getting at. I told him that I wanted to know if the army wanted some practice by building a bridge across the Kiski River. The Sergeant then let out a laugh and asked if I was wanting to replace that old Apollo bridge. He told me that if I got someone in Congress to give the orders, he was willing and able to serve his country.

Maybe I am a bit prejudiced but I think Apollo deserves as much as third world countries. Its a sad day when citizens have to turn to the army for help but in Pennsylvania we don't have a choice. Let's call our Congressman. Bring in the troops.



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