

**O P I N I O N**



**Rachel Marsden**

**American Voices**

U.S. President and Commander-in-Chief Barack Obama has managed to accomplish such unimaginable foreign affairs inversions during his tenure that the heads of my U.S. intelligence agency pals are spinning.

The Pentagon continues to churn out daily airstrikes against the Islamic State as if it's playing a video game — with about the same real-world effectiveness. The result is that Russia, for the second time in as many years, has offered to step in and help get a grip on the situation in Syria, with Iran playing Robin to Russia's Batman. Guess who ends up being the Joker?

In 2013, Obama considered asking Congress for its blessing to stage a military intervention in Syria because efforts to build a Syrian rebel faction to take out Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had failed. Obama was spared the trouble when Russia stepped in to defuse the situation — but not before some of the “rebels” had taken their new skills and toys and rebranded into the Islamic State.

That situation has led to a flood of migrants of unknown identity and background into Europe.

In the wake of a shell landing in its embassy compound in Damascus, Russia is vowing support for the Syrian government in defeating the Islamic State. This positioning is both nuanced and strategic. Notice that Russia isn't saying it's going to send in troops. Instead, it's going to “assist Syria” — the ally under siege from terrorists — to defeat the enemy. At a time when U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is responding to all of this with the usual “Assad must go” rhetoric, Russia's insistence on positioning Assad as the frontman for the solution to a problem that the United States can't resolve could weaken the U.S. position on the issue of Assad's removal — particularly if the Assad regime defeats the terrorists and accomplishes what America and its allies couldn't.

The current U.S. foreign policy disaster has also unfathomably given Iran the opportunity to position itself as an agent of stability in the region by contributing to the defeat of the Islamic State.

With Iran and Russia now filling the vacuum created by ongoing American incompetence, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu just visited Moscow to discuss Middle Eastern security with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“Israel and Russia have a common interest in ensuring stability in the Middle East,” Netanyahu said after the meeting with Putin. “I am here because of the difficult security situation, which, as you know, has become more and more complicated on our northern borders over these last years, and particularly over these last weeks.”

Netanyahu then expressed concern that Iran would set up a “terrorist front (against Israel) on the Golan Heights.”

Russia is a longtime ally of Iran and Syria, but Putin condemned attacks on Israel and added that “the Syrian army today is not in a state to be up to opening a second front. It has enough to do just trying to save Syria's own statehood.”

There is actually an upside to all of this for America, however inadvertent. It's not a bad thing for the U.S. to wean itself off the Middle East.

Judging from comments made by Republican presidential contenders during last week's debate, many believe that leadership on the international stage requires blunt-force military intervention. This makes about as much sense as trying to get fit by doing nothing but maximum-weight bench presses. Recent history demonstrates that this approach has only bolstered the enemy.

American leadership should focus on securing energy independence, which will enable the U.S. to pull up anchor in the Middle East for good and deal with the region more selectively.

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**Letters to the Editor...**

*The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.*

To the Editor:

Regarding his letter two weeks ago, I have clarified with Bill Antilla, both in writing and in person, that I never said the VFW or the American Legion supports the Black Butte Trail.

The written and audio minutes of the meeting he referred to confirm this. I am sorry he was misinformed.

Chuck Humphreys

♦ ♦ ♦

To the Editor:

Two weeks ago, *The Nugget* published a Letter to the Editor by Bill Antilla stating that Chuck Humphreys falsely testified “local veterans groups, including VFW Post 8138, support the so called Sisters to Black Butte Trail” — during a Sisters Parks & Recreation District Board meeting. Mr. Antilla also asked Mr. Humphreys to retract his statement in writing to the *Nugget Newspaper*.

I was present at the SPRD meeting. I

neither heard, nor do the written minutes or audio record support Mr. Antilla's accusation.

Mr. Antilla's sources of “intelligence” were grossly inaccurate. Rather than launching a public attack, it would have been preferable if Mr. Antilla had first verified the accuracy of the allegation and had first met with Mr. Humphreys to convey his concern about what he had been told was a mis-representation of his organization.

Following publication of his letter, Mr. Antilla was politely advised, in private, that his statement was factually incorrect. This was done with more than enough time for him to rectify his error in the following week's paper. I had every reason to expect that anyone in his position would have had the decency and courtesy to have done that, including an apology for false allegations.

In my book, shooting first and asking questions later is not an effective strategy

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**Sisters Weather Forecast**

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Mostly sunny 74/39	Mostly sunny 72/36	Sunny 73/35	Mostly sunny 67/33	Mostly sunny 72/35	Mostly sunny 71/na

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