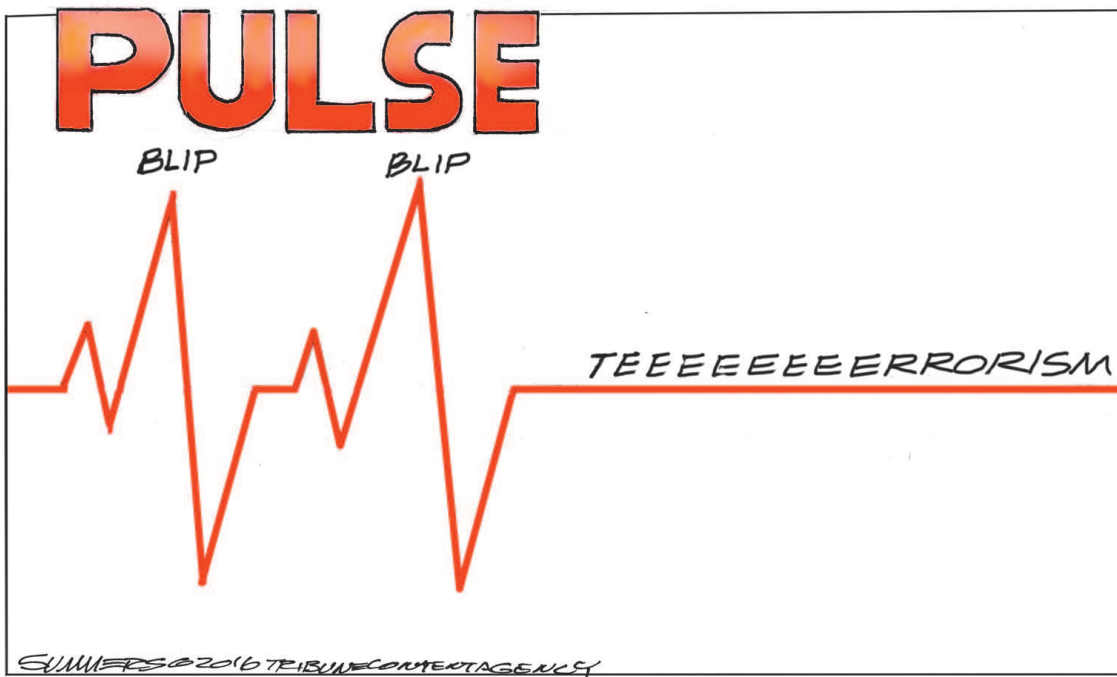


O P I N I O N



John Kass

American Voices

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 Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned.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:

There has been a dramatic increase in aircraft noise in Sisters Country over the past few months. It sounds like plane after plane is flying over Sisters, creating a dawn-to-dusk drone of noise.

Originally only on weekends, the annoying drone is now happening on weekdays as well. This is not due to random private planes transiting the area. Instead it is due to the new skydiver operation at Eagle Airport. The skydiver plane makes numerous flights a day, endlessly circling over the area as they fight to gain altitude at full throttle. While the noise is not uncomfortably loud, it is nearly ever-present on days weather conditions allow operations. You can hear it from Crossroads to Squaw Creek Estates, Aspen Lakes to Tollgate. Sitting on your patio or at an outdoor restaurant in town, the drone is there, like a neighbor endlessly using a leaf blower. You realize how annoying it is when silence finally returns after the skydivers drop and the plane lands.

For the neighborhoods northeast of the airport, the many-fold increase in takeoffs is dramatic, as the skydiver plane is particularly

loud. The airport expects the skydiver business to expand, and one could expect more planes and flights in the future as the operation gets established. The entire Sisters area is impacted by noise pollution just so a few folks can skydive for a few minutes. Talk about a negative cost-benefit ratio. What a price we all have to pay for one small business.

This is only the first tiny step in the airport's grand expansion plan, with 40-60 additional hangers, condos with hangers underneath and more. One should be ready for sightseeing choppers flying overhead and other commercial operations. The sky, so to speak, is the limit. The headgear of residents will need to change from cowboy hats to protective earmuffs, as Sisters becomes known as "The Noisiest Little Town in Oregon."

Lets all encourage the good folks who own the airport to be good neighbors, limit the skydiving, and undertake a more modest, Sisters-friendly expansion plan. Contact the City Council as well.

BTW, I was a skydiver in years past,

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The dead were still being collected at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando — the scene of the worst mass shooting in our nation's history — when I thought I heard something.

On Twitter and the TV news, the facts were slow to arrive but the sweeping conclusions came instantly. Donald Trump, President Barack Obama and other members of the righteous right and left were pushing their agendas.

I recognized the sound of the politics. It was like the barking of dogs.

I walked out to my vegetable garden, where I could pray for the souls of the dead and put my hands to work in the dirt and try to think things out in a quiet place.

I mean no disrespect to the dead or their families. Nor do I mean to trivialize the weight of this tragedy. But working the dirt seemed better to me than listening to the barking on cable TV.

So I started digging while saying prayers for the dead, the trowel working in my hand as I spoke the words for them. Out there alone, on my knees, cutting the earth with that trowel, I sang an Orthodox hymn asking that their memories be eternal. And I thought of their families.

The shooter, Omar Mateen, reportedly called 911, pledged his allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and then shouted "Allahu Akbar" as began pulling the trigger.

Donald Trump, who has whipped the left into a frenzy by calling for a ban on Muslim immigration, bragged Sunday on Twitter that he was right about radical Islam after all.

Trump is putting himself at the front of the movement to do something — anything — about Muslim terrorists, but he isn't advocating an all-out war with Islam. In fact, he's a bit too non-interventionist for many of the establishment Republicans who dominated foreign policy in the Bush years. Some

of them are already jumping to the Democratic war hawk, Hillary Clinton. Even among those who stay with the GOP there's an impulse to target Islam, which could further demonize American Muslims and our allies like Jordan in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, Obama infuriates Trump and many others by refusing to mention "Islam" and "terror" in the same sentence. And the president refused again Sunday.

Obama's presidential address to the nation began with the proper reverential tone. But then he fell back on political tricks. He used his speech to make a push for gun control. And he avoided all mention of Islam.

I don't want a war with Islam, and I understand that many on the right would march us down that path or at least isolate the U.S. from the Muslim world.

But the president appears ridiculous here.

The 2009 terrorist attack at Ford Hood, Texas, by U.S. Army Major Nidal Hassan — killing 13 people and wounding more than 30 — was deemed mere "workplace violence" by the military under Obama's command. Hassan referred to himself as a soldier of Allah.

By refusing to say the words "Islam" and "terror" in the same sentence, Obama stays his course and looks stubborn and foolish, as if he sees no pattern in the Boston Marathon bombing, the San Bernardino rampage and the Orlando massacre.

Truly, it would be wrong to target peaceful Muslims, but can't there be some rational middle ground for discussion on this point?

Self-radicalized terrorists with Islamic ties, born or raised in the U.S., are the new threat. We need a real debate on what to do. Because there will be more attacks like the one in Orlando.

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Sisters Weather Forecast
Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday Chance Showers 58/36	Thursday Chance Showers 56/36	Friday Chance Showers 59/35	Saturday Mostly Sunny 67/39	Sunday Mostly Sunny 75/42	Monday Sunny 78/NA
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