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School-shooting threat deserves serious action

Small-minded terrorism warrants vigorous investigation, prosecution

“School lockdown” are words no child or parent ever should have to hear. They are a symbol of this time, and words that our grandparents would have a difficult time understanding: “School lockdown? Did the custodian forget to lock the door after class Friday?” If only it was something this innocent.

Last Thursday afternoon’s frightening phone call to Long Beach (Wash.) Elementary School claiming that a mass shooting was imminent set off an impressive response. A lockdown is, after all, a practiced defensive strategy. A lockdown is all about protection.

Students, teachers and staff did what they needed to do, taking shelter behind locked doors, keeping quiet, working to avoid drawing attention. Law officers from every agency hurried to all the Peninsula’s schools, ready to lay down their lives if necessary to defend innocent people. Everything worked as well as it could. All these actions are worthy of praise.

In reasonably short order, it became apparent that all this was someone’s idea of ... what? Fun? Sadism? Political protest?

Much of an afternoon of class time was lost, but no lives. Fear and deep concern stabbed the

hearts of parents. Some children were deeply traumatized by the experience. We live in a dire time when even small kids know that evil can touch them in the form of gunshots on a beautiful spring day. It should appall us all that this is true and that so much innocence has been lost.

This crime, though not of the same magnitude as an actual school shooting, deserves to be investigated and prosecuted to the maximum extent possible. It is incomprehensible that someone would so horribly break the peace in such a manner. This was, in its small-minded and idiotic way, a form of terrorism.

We should live our lives in awareness that this is a safe place. Some miserable person’s contemptible action must not be permitted to taint local childhood. Living well is the best revenge, but it will feel even better if an arrest is made and this threat maker is locked up.

Oregon farmland outpaces stock market

Wisdom of land use planning benefits all Oregonians

“Things look different here” was an advertising headline that Oregon adopted some years ago. Unlike some slogans, this was not overstatement. Oregon *does* look quite different from its coastal neighbors. Drive north from Portland into Clark County, Wash., and you’ll see the difference. Urban sprawl has consumed rich farmland.

Unlike Oregon, Washington has no statewide land use planning. Thus it has no effective way to preserve farmland. In King County you may see remnants of a once vital agricultural sector. In California you see the same phenomenon.

Farmland propelled the 1973 Oregon Legislature to enact statewide land use planning. Specifically it was the rich alluvial soil on which Charbonneau sits. After the city of Wilsonville approved the Charbonneau development, state agriculture officials realized this was land with topsoil 40 feet deep. Thus homes sit atop some of Oregon’s richest, prime farmland.

Writing in our sister newspaper, the *Capital Press*, Eric Mortenson reports that research by a land use advocacy group indicates “Oregon farmland might be the best investment of the past 50 years.” The American Land Institute says that Oregon farmland has appreciated at a rate high than the stock market from 1964 through 2012.

In some parts of rural Oregon, land use laws have become contentious — not allowing development of farm land. The numbers in the American Farmland Institute research are a strong indicator how farmers benefit from the system.

For most Oregonians the benefit is aesthetic. By preserving agricultural landscapes — instead of letting crop land be paved over — our state protects its most precious asset, which is livability. And the people get it. Mortenson notes that seven attempts to repeal statewide land use planning have failed at the ballot box.

Has the NRA already won?

By CHARLES M. BLOW
New York Times News Service

It is now fair to ask whether the National Rifle Association is winning — or has in fact won — this era of the gun debate in this country.

Gun control advocates have tried to use the horror that exists in the wake of mass shootings to catalyze the public into action around sensible gun restrictions.



Charles Blow

But rather than these tragedies being a cause for pause in ownership of guns, gun ownership has spiked in the wake of these shootings.

A striking report released Friday by the Pew Research Center revealed that “for the first time, more Americans say that protecting gun rights is more important than controlling gun ownership, 52 percent to 46 percent.”

One of the reasons cited was Americans’ inverse understanding of the reality and perception of crime in this country. As the report spells out, in the 1990s, people’s perception of the prevalence of crime fell in concert with actual instances of violent crime. But since the turn of the century, things have changed: “A majority of Americans (63 percent) said in a Gallup survey last year that crime was on the rise, despite crime statistics holding near 20-year lows.”

Furthermore, it used to be that the people most worried about crime favored stricter gun control, but “now, they tend to desire keeping the laws as they are or loosening gun control. In short, we are at a moment when most Americans believe crime rates are rising and when most believe gun ownership — not gun control — makes people safer.”

The report adds: “Why public views on crime have grown more dire is unclear, though many blame it on the nature of news coverage, reality TV and political rhetoric. Whatever the cause, this trend is not without consequence. Today, those who say that crime is rising are the most opposed to gun control: Just 45 percent want to see gun laws made more strict, compared with 53 percent of those who see crime rates as unchanged or dropping.”

Another cause is most likely the intermingling of politics and high-profile crimes. As *The Christian*



AP Photo/Mark Humphrey
 Wayne LaPierre, left, executive vice president of the National Rifle Association, speaks during the annual meeting of members at the NRA convention April 11 in Nashville, Tenn. At right is Jim Porter, NRA president.

Science Monitor reported in 2012: “As sure as summer follows spring, gun sales rise after a mass shooting. It happened after the shooting rampage at Columbine High School in Colorado in 1999. It happened after the Tucson, Ariz., shootings last year that killed six. Now, after the killing of 12 people last week at a movie theater in Aurora, Colo., gun sales are spiking again — not just in Colorado but around the country.”

It continued: “Self-protection is part of the reason. But a bigger factor, say gun dealers, is fear of something else: politicians, specifically, their ability to enact restrictions on gun ownership and acquisition of ammunition. When a high-profile shooting takes place, invariably the airwaves are full of talk about gun control.”

It appears to be an extreme example of unintended consequences, or a boomerang: The more people talk about gun control, the more people buy guns. And not only do gun sales surge, but apparently so does NRA membership. As *The Huffington Post* reported in 2013: “The National Rifle Association’s paying member ranks have grown by 100,000 in the wake of the December school shooting in Newtown, Conn., the organization told *Politico*.”

The report continued: “In the week after the shooting, *Fox News* reported that the NRA was claiming an average of 8,000 new members a day. High-profile mass shootings are often followed by periods of increased interest in the NRA, but representatives said this rate was higher than usual.”

It was after the Newtown shooting that President Barack Obama established a task force, led by Vice President Joe Biden, to develop a proposal to reduce gun violence, which the president said he intended to “push without delay.”

Those proposals, including expanded background checks (which were characterized as “misguided” by the NRA’s Chris Cox) and a ban on some semi-automatic weapons, were roundly defeated in the Senate, although polls showed about 90 percent public approval for expanded background checks.

In fact, this month *The Washington Times* reported: “The American firearms industry is as healthy as ever, seeing an unprecedented surge that has sent production of guns soaring to more than 10.8 million manufactured in 2013 alone — double the total of just three years earlier.”

It continued: “The 2013 surge — the latest for which the government has figures — came in the first full year after the December 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, signaling that the push for stricter gun controls, strongly backed by President Obama, did little to chill the industry despite the passage of stricter laws in states such as New York, Maryland, Connecticut and California.”

One may begrudge and bemoan the fact, but it is hard to deny it: The NRA appears to be winning this round.

The queen travels by van

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON — See Hillary ride in a van! Watch her meet everyday Americans!

Witness her ordering a burrito bowl at Chipotle! Which she did wearing shades, as did her chief aide Huma Abedin, yielding security-camera pictures that made them look (to borrow from Karl Rove) like fugitives on the lam, wanted in seven states for a failed foreign policy.

There’s something surreal about Hillary Clinton’s Marie Antoinette tour, sampling cake and commoners. But what else can she do? After Barack Obama, she’s the best known political figure in America. She has papal name recognition. Like Napoleon and Cher, she’s universally known by her first name. As former queen consort, senator and secretary of state, she has spent a quarter-century in the national spotlight — more than any modern candidate.

She doesn’t just get media coverage; she gets meta-coverage. The staging is so obvious that actual events disappear. The story is their symbolism — campaign as semiotics.

This quality of purposeful abstractness makes everything sound and seem contrived. It’s not really her fault. True, she’s got enough genuine inauthenticity to go around — decades of positioning, framing, parsing, dodging — but the perception is compounded by the obvious staginess of the gigantic political apparatus that surrounds her and directs her movements.

Why is she running in the first place? Because it’s the next inevitable step in her career path. But that’s not as damning as it seems. It can be said of practically every presidential candidate. The number of convic-

tion politicians — those who run not to be someone but to do something — is exceedingly small. In our lifetime: Ronald Reagan. And arguably, Barack Obama, although with him (as opposed to Reagan) a heavy dose of narcissistic self-fulfillment is admixed with genuine ideological conviction.

Hillary Clinton’s problem is age, not chronological but political. She’s been around for so long that who can really believe she suddenly has been seized with a new passion to champion, as she put it in Iowa, “the truckers that I saw on I-80 as I was driving here?”

Or developed a new persona. She will, of course, go through the motions. Her team will produce a “message,” one of the most corrosive, debased words in the lexicon of contemporary politics — an alleged synonym for belief or conviction, it signifies nothing more than a branded, marketing strategy.

Hillary Clinton’s problem is age, not chronological but political.

She will develop policies. In Iowa, she’d already delivered her top four, one of which is to take unaccountable big money out of politics. This is rather precious, considering that her supporters intend to raise \$2.5 billion for 2016 alone and that the Clinton Foundation is one of the most formidable machines ever devised for extracting money from the rich, the powerful and the unsavory.

She will try to sell herself as



Charles Krauthammer

champion of the little guy. Not easy to do when you and your husband have for the last 25 years made limo-liberal Davos-world your home. Hence the van trek to Iowa, lest a Gulfstream 450 invade the visual.

Clinton’s unchangeability, however, is the source of her uniqueness as a candidate: She’s a fixed point. She is who she is. And no one expects — nor would anyone really believe — any claimed character change.

Accordingly, voters’ views about her are equally immutable. The only variable, therefore, in the 2016 election lies on the other side, where the freedom of action is almost total. It all depends on who the Republicans pick and how the candidate performs.

Hillary is a stationary target. You know what you’re getting. She has her weaknesses: She’s not a great campaigner, she has that unshakable inauthenticity problem and, regarding the quality most important to getting elected, she is barely, in the merciless phrase of candidate Obama in 2008, “likable enough.”

But she has her strengths: discipline, determination, high intelligence, great energy. With an immense organization deploying an obscene amount of money. And behind that, a Democratic Party united if not overly enthusiastic.

That’s why 2016 is already shaping up as the most unusual open-seat presidential race in our time: one candidate fixed and foregone, the other yet to emerge from a wild race of a near-dozen contenders with none exceeding 20 percent.

So brace yourself for a glorious Republican punch-up, punctuated by endless meta-coverage of the Democrats’ coronation march. After which, we shall decide the future of our country. Just the way the Founders drew it up.

Editorials that appear on this page are written by Publisher Steve Forrester and Matt Winters, editor of the *Chinook Observer* and *Coast River Business Journal*, or staff members from the *EO Media Group’s* sister newspapers.