

OPINION

Hood River News

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Well, so much for that idea...

Iran fallout

Make Trump stand down

I had learned that you should always shout louder than your aggressor. — From “Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood” by Iranian emigre Marjane Satrapi.
“Persepolis” is the title of a Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel about Satrapi’s experiences growing up in the 1970s Revolution in Iran.

It is also the name of a historic city that is just one of 52 cultural sites in Iran that President Trump has astoundingly and disturbingly said he would target if Iran responds in kind to the drone attack assassination of the Iranian General Qassem Soleimani.

The bombing has both galvanized opponents of the U.S. and suddenly pushed the already-volatile Middle East nearly to the precipice of war. It is the latest example of Twitter-driven “decisions” made by the impetuous and dangerous American president.

He now has the temerity to call his tweets “Media Posts,” in yet another Orwellian twisting of words by this unpredictable man.

Where, indeed, are the adults in the room, be they in the Oval Office or at Mar-A-Lago?

The mere fact that Trump ordered the killing of Soleimani from his Florida resort is concern enough — that he did so not from the Situation Room, the place so designated for life-or-death, drastic actions. Or from any other place where cooler — and less-distracted and less spiteful — heads might prevail.

Trump has set a new, low standard for petulant, ill-thought military decision-making by any commander-in-chief. He chose the kill-Soleimani option with a rapidity that surprised his Pentagon advisors, and did so without any notification of American allies, let alone U.S. Congress.

And to threaten bombing cultural sites as re-retaliation to the “hard revenge” the Iranians have vowed, is not only suggesting the U.S. military be ordered to commit a war crime, but a threat to decency and respect for cultures everywhere.

When they took power the Taliban we have fought at the cost of thousands of American lives for nearly two decades committed their own offenses against holy and cultural sites in ancient Afghanistan, dynamiting shrines and centuries-old statuary.

We cannot stand by and put the United States of America on that same shameful plane.

Put another way, threatening to bomb Petropolis would be like Teheran threatening to bomb Philadelphia or the ancestral Hopi settlements.

All this to wage war over the corpse of an Iranian general the American people had never heard of way back in 2019.

Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley of Oregon, both Democrats, have spoken out in concise and powerful terms against the president’s reckless action.

Wyden correctly called for Congressional oversight to take hold of all future military action, if any, against Iran.

Merkley released the following statement regarding what he termed “the spiraling national security concerns stemming from President Trump’s reckless and impulsive actions and statements”:

“President Trump and Secretary Pompeo are either dangerously inept or colossally ignorant, and have done enormous damage to U.S. security.

“In short order they have...

“Turned massive demonstrations in Iran against the Iranian government into massive demonstrations against the U.S.;

“Turned demonstrations in Iraq against Iranian influence into demonstrations against U.S. influence;

“Mobilized the Iraqi parliament to vote to expel the United States forces from Iraq;

“Given Iran an excuse to cancel the restraints on their nuclear program that Iran had agreed to and followed for four years before the Trump administration broke the agreement;

“Strengthened the role of Iranian militias in Iraq, expanding Iranian influence — the exact opposite of our goal of reducing Iran’s influence in Iraq;

“Caused U.S. forces to set aside their operations against ISIS in order to prepare to defend themselves against attacks by Iran;

“Placed U.S. forces and assets in the region at greater risk of attack;

“And, most dangerously, set in motion an escalation of attacks that could generate a war between the U.S. and Iran.
“Now all sane Americans must strive to stop the escalation into war.

“We must insist on following our U.S. Constitution, which gives Congress, not the president, the power to decide to go to war.

“Our founders argued that the cost of war in blood and treasure is far too great to be decided by any one person.
“They were right.”



Our Readers Write

‘Congress’ duty on war’

I’m horrified and irate that Trump ordered the assassination of Gen. Qassim Soleimani, a top commander in Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps. This would be equivalent to a foreign government assassinating our vice president outside the Toronto airport.

This was not a defensive action, and comes at a time of escalating tension with Iran. We need skilled diplomacy with Iran, not an isolated, erratic nut with a trigger. The U.S. Constitution specifically tasks Congress with decisions on war, so where are they?

In recent years, and despite Trump’s thorough incompetence and dangerousness as a leader, Congress has ceded authority over the military to the Executive Branch.

Congress is a co-equal branch of government that holds tremendous power to check Trump’s recklessness. Congress must step in immediately to rein in Trump’s catastrophic escalation to war with Iran. Sen. Ron Wyden, Sen. Jeff Merkley and Rep. Greg Walden, we need you to clearly and unequivocally state that you condemn this strike and are opposed to war with Iran.

Trump has positioned us on the precipice of war, and Congress may be our only hope of stopping it.

Bonnie New
Hood River

Only making things worse

The killing of Iran’s top general might have longterm strategic value if he is hard to replace, immediate value if he has not yet revealed his claimed to be imminent plan to do us harm. But I have an idea his replacement was his top student and that he put his immediate plans into writing or made them clear otherwise.

So killing him doesn’t decrease the dangers and arguably actually increases them.

So, what was the real purpose for doing something so drastic that even the Israelis never did? Well, revenge feels sweet.

Well, revenge feels sweet. So I guess that feeling is one motivation.

And Trump’s need to show he is not Obama and the storming of our embassy will not be Benghazi is also big here, the main thing says my son, Cody.

(It’s all about the base.)

And the need to distract us from the recent exposure of further proof that withholding of vital aid from Ukraine was known to be illegal and ordered directly by Trump is there in the mix.

Unless Iran cannot adequately replace their guy, unless we got him before he shared his latest fiendish plan with his staff, this was a pop-off impulse that has no value and will certainly make things worse in every respect.

Bob Williams
Hood River

City Work Plan Session Jan. 11

Jan. 11 is the city council’s annual Work Plan Session. The city has received over 60 responses to their request for input regarding the 2020 Work Plan. This confirms that we do have an engaged citizenry, which is great. This was also demonstrated by the massive volunteer support recently for Measure 14-67.

Last year, the city’s first goal was “Create opportunities for an inclusive and diverse housing inventory.” I think this is a worthy goal and I’m not alone. Housing has been a top priority for many years now, and the recent Housing Needs Analysis (HNA) update reveals how policy choices of the last 5 years have fared, and it’s a bit of a mess.

The city’s 2015 HNA called for nearly 100 new housing units per year. The update states that since 2015, only 207 units were permitted. And, rather than multi-family (missing middle) housing that the city claims we favor, almost all of it was single family.

How could this happen? Here are some possibilities.

Past leadership did not follow the recommendations of their HNA.

■ They aggressively prioritized unproductive policies (STR regulations and housing on parks).

■ City was slow to address user (builder) requests for a more efficient permitting process.

■ Reliance on planning models meant for large urban areas that are unlike Hood River.

Maybe Hood River isn’t Portland and we should stop trying to be?

Hopefully the city will share results of the 2020 Work Plan survey and make a good-faith effort to consider the input

provided. The voters who spoke loudly last November are expecting the council and administration to value well intended public engagement as they chart the future course.

We now know one thing for sure — the city has continually failed their top goal. What we don’t know for certain is what has been neglected as they focused so intently on other time-consuming projects.

My desire is for the city to prioritize infrastructure and public safety. Those are two things that will facilitate development of needed housing, protect the safety of citizens and the integrity of our neighborhoods as Hood River grows.

Brian Towey
Hood River

Bag ban not enough

Thank god for the Single-Use Bag Ban. Oregon has finally stepped up to the plate and is taking climate change seriously. We Oregonians can swell with righteous pride as we pack our recycled, natural fiber or some other eco-friendly reusable bag with groceries wrapped in plastic and Styrofoam, placed in plastic produce bags, packaged in plastic containers with the additional plastic security seal wrap. And since we are so eco-conscious, we can reward ourselves with an all-natural treat wrapped in plastic from the natural food section and wash it down with a 100 percent local organic beverage in a plastic bottle.

And why stop at groceries. Almost everything we consume is in some way touched by plastic. We even use plastic bags to pick up dog feces. You are thinking, “But the bags are biodegradable.” They are, but only if the landfill has the appropriate bacteria and conditions.

Currently it is impossible to live a plastic free existence in our community. However, it is not impossible to do. There are grocery chains in the UK that have reduced plastic by roughly 80 percent. In a years’ time, they were able to get rid of over 2,000 plastic items. Do we have the will to do something similar here, or are we too complacent to change?

The Oregon Legislature can pretend it did something to fight climate change, but they really didn’t. The gesture is so insignificant that it is meaningless, if not harmful. One can ignore the floods, the droughts, the wildly raging fires, the loss of viable agricultural land, until

the crisis hits and it’s too late.

So, go grab a bottled water and sit outside in the 50-degree winter weather, and think about how progressive we are for banning single use bags.

Glen Patrizio
Hood River

‘Sick feeling’

Mr. Earle’s Jan. 1 letter “Christian Oppression” triggered very powerful emotions for me. There are a small number of people in the U.S. who justify suppression of equal rights for women and those with non-traditional sexual orientations based on their interpretation of Christian doctrine. However, these practices exist all around the world and are not unique to Christianity. I become deeply concerned with any claims that 100 percent of any group deserves complete blame for the shortcomings in a society.

I was raised in the Jewish faith and learned when I was 10 that some of my relatives were murdered by Nazis, who convinced millions of Germans that every Jewish person had to be exterminated. The world looked away from this for years. At age 54, it is still hard to believe so many people could be convinced of this idea based solely on religious beliefs.

Currently in Myanmar, the Buddhist government leaders have encouraged the rape, torture, detention and murder of its Rohingya citizens merely for being Muslim. This was an unprovoked assault on a religious group who had been living peacefully in their society. The world is currently looking away.

President Trump wants to ban every citizen of certain countries from entering the U.S. because a tiny percentage are terrorists. He characterized several countries as sh#%holes to create tiers of human value. We have also been told that only the “worst” citizens from neighboring Mexico come across the border illegally into the U.S.

The president’s words create the same “us versus them” scenarios we saw in Germany and see in Myanmar today. I feel Mr. Earle’s letter, albeit well-intentioned, may have inadvertently entered the same type of group blame and fear that is all too common in our world. All this blanket condemnation makes me feel a little sick.

Steve Kaplan
Hood River

Letters Policy

We welcome “Our Readers Write” submission on any topic (though “thank you” letters, in most cases, will run on the Community page, so feel free to write them).

The basic elements of the letters policy is this: 350 words, maximum, and attach your name and hometown (for print) and daytime phone (not for print).

Anonymous or “name withheld by request” letters are never published. Letters are subject to editing for length, and will be edited, or declined, based on content that is malicious or identifiably inaccurate.