

POLITICS AS USUAL: The Week that Was

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

It's been a truly frightening few weeks in global politics. With the latest 'test' of missile capabilities, the North Koreans seem hell bent on demonstrating that they too have the big boy weapons and are not afraid to use them.

The Russians are sufficiently rattled by this activity and the US response to it - that they have scrambled jets and mobilized aircraft carriers. They've even made pointed statements to 'other' countries to not provoke the North Koreans any further or risk serious reprisals.

We have Syria's Bashar al Assad continuing to wage war on his own people while at the same time denying it is even happening. It's 'fake news' he maintains. As if the tiny babies and little children (filmed by CNN and some very brave Syrian reporters) writhing in agony on a flatbed truck, mouths gasping for air like carps on the deck of a fishing boat, foam oozing out of their mouths, are figments of our collective imagination. The horror of those images are so deeply unsettling that I cannot begin to fathom how anyone would continue to argue in support of his regime regardless of the strategic advantage it may provide in the war on ISIL.

We have the emerging threat of laptop bombs on planes, a threat of such credibility that the US is considering an immediate ban on laptops in carry-ons on any inbound flight to the States, although I am not clear how that will really help the situation. If there are bombs in laptops, will they not still be bombs as checked luggage? Seems to me that laptops will have to be banned entirely. But what will that mean to international business travel? How many of us travel for work or play with laptops, iPads, kindles, iPhone, BlackBerrys, etc? Imagine now that all of that will be banned? It will radically alter how we all travel for business or for pleasure.

We have the terrifying Ransomware taking data hostage across the globe wreaking havoc on banking, medical care, even national security. Over 100 countries have been affected. Given that we virtually live our lives online, the evident vulnerability of our critical systems would seem to warrant an immediate international collaborative effort to improve cyber security.

And then we have Trump in the Oval Office. Firing the person who is leading the investigation of him. Firing the person who warned him that his own national security head was compromised by the Russians. And now, handing out secrets like candy to hostile agents if the reporting of the Washington Post, New York Times, Reuters, MSNBC among others are to be believed. Or frankly, if one is to believe Trump himself who tweeted out that he has every right to decide what 'facts' he gives out, whenever and to whomever he pleases.

So, parsing his tweet then, one could infer that he did give out classified information but that Trump thinks he is perfectly within his right to do so?

So, where does that leave all of us? In Canada, we haven't really heard a meaningful peep from our fearless leader or leaders about all of this, which is astonishing, frankly, given the sheer scope of the pending security issues that we are facing.

Yes, Senate shenanigans, and the housing crisis are important issues, but national security would seem to be of more importance. We have the opportunity here to be the grown-ups in the room. Leave aside partisan politics here and abroad and work together to fight common enemies. The threat to democracy, and our way of life is real. It's time for a real response.