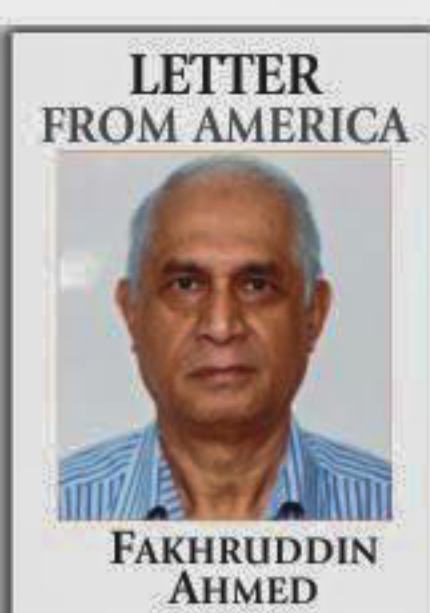


Orlando massacre underlines the urgency to crush ISIS



LETTER FROM AMERICA
FAKHURUDDIN AHMED

MUSLIM Americans were having a good week last week. As Americans watched the nationally televised funeral for Muhammad Ali on June 9, they learned a new word: *janaza* (Muslim funeral). June 10 was even better. The world watched as America paid tributes to "a man of peace." America and the world heard recitations from the Holy Qur'an on live television during the month of Ramadan. Respecting Muhammad Ali's wishes, all faith traditions – Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Native American – offered invocations. Then, as Muslims woke up for *sehri* (early morning meal) in preparation for Sunday's fast, the Orlando massacre happened and changed everything!

A 29-year old ISIS-inspired Muslim terrorist walked into an LGBT nightclub in Orlando, Florida around 2am local time, and gunned down 50 innocent human beings, and injured 53 others. As of writing, 27 remain in the hospital, six in critical condition. Most of the victims were Hispanic. There are reports that the gunman, Omar Mateen, who was born in New York of Afghan immigrant parents, had visited the club several times before. It is not clear whether he was a patron or was simply scoping his target. Mateen's first wife implied that he may have been bisexual.

Donald Trump quickly exploited the tragedy. Convinced that talking about Muslim terrorism plays to his strengths ("is probably why I'm number one in the polls"), he released a torrent of tweets after the massacre, congratulating himself for his own perspicacity in gauging the "true nature" of the terror threat to America. "Appreciate the congrats for being right on radical Islamic terrorism," Trump tweeted, though he modestly added that "I don't want congrats." Trump also tweeted, "I called it," and reiterated his support for a ban on Muslims, adding that Muslim Americans "must face the consequences for" the Orlando massacre.

Trump called on Obama to "resign in disgrace" because he won't use the words "radical Islamic terrorism," insinuating that Obama secretly supports the terrorists. Trump's self-aggrandizement, especially his failure to offer condolences to victims' families, drew sharp rebuke from Republicans and Democrats alike. ("Trump's 'yapping' about Islam helps ISIS," Obama retorted.) President Obama and Hillary Clinton's

native Afghanistan, gave him a good education, a good job and a good life; yet, he hated America. He hated his first wife, beat her regularly and forced her to leave him. Himself a minority, he hated all minorities, and although the LGBT community had done him no harm, he hated them with all his heart and soul. The world was not good enough for Mateen. He wanted to leave this world in a blaze of glory, taking as many

help. They knew that Mateen had violent proclivities, abused his wife and was a hater, especially of the LGBT community; yet, they did nothing. Their inaction resulted in the murder of 50 innocent Americans and the maiming of 53 others, making them indirectly culpable.

Mateen was on the FBI's radar, and was questioned three times by the FBI since 2013. In those interviews, Mateen reportedly

weapons (semi-automatic firearms) legally. The gun lobby is also opposed to the FBI learning that someone on their watch list has purchased firearms. Although guns have killed millions of Americans over the years, the National Rifle Association (NRA) and other gun lobbies hide behind the Second Amendment of the US Constitution that stipulates: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

The gun lobby's mantra is: "Guns Don't Kill People; People Do." Another right-winger, former Australian Prime Minister (1996-2007) John Howard, disagrees. He said: "There's no good pretending these issues (gun violence and extremism) don't relate." Following the Port Arthur shootings in Tasmania in 1996 in which 35 people died, Howard introduced strict gun control laws in Australia, which reduced the nation's gun-related deaths dramatically. "The decision to enforce total prohibition on automatic and semi-automatic weapons back then drastically reduced the number of mass shootings and the likelihood of them occurring in the future," Howard added.

There are thousands of disaffected youth, belonging to all races and religions in America. They don't exact vengeance on the society by killing innocent Americans. As the San Bernardino couple last December and Mateen last week demonstrated, some Muslim youths do. In both cases, ISIS was their inspiration or excuse.

Even average Americans now understand that ISIS does not represent mainstream Islam. ISIS is a bunch of terrorist murderers, misogynistic rapists, brutal masochists who have only one solution to every problem: kill! It is unfathomable why anyone with an iota of intelligence would fall for their vacuous propaganda. But many Muslim youths – both boys and girls in the West and the East – do. The youths project their own failings on ISIS propaganda, making for an explosive mix. The only way for the world to rid itself of this scourge is to crush and obliterate ISIS from the face of the earth.



PHOTO: AFP

responses were appropriately dignified and sombre. This was the 14th time President Obama had to console the families of victims of gun violence.

There is so much blame to go around for the worst incident of gun violence in America's history. First, the perpetrator Omar Mateen. By all accounts, he was violent and a man filled with hate. He hated everything and everybody. America nurtured him in tranquility, away from the violence of his

innocent lives with him as possible. Little did Mateen realise that the blaze of glory that he was seeking is hellfire!

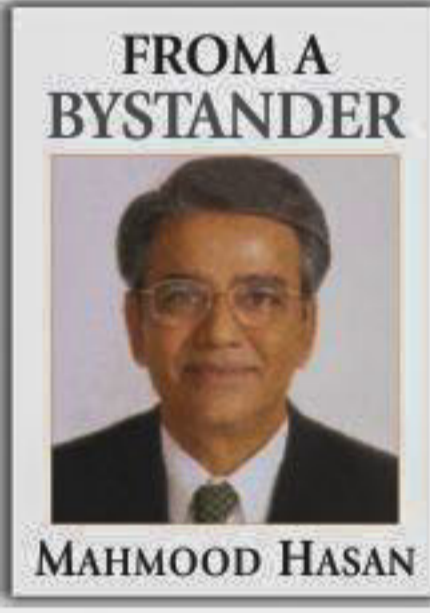
Mateen's parents also bear responsibility. Mateen was disciplined 31 times in elementary school, and was suspended from high school for 48 days. He was abusive in language and violent in intent to the extent of praising 9/11. Yet, Mateen's father called him "normal." Since Mateen was mentally unstable, they should have sought medical

expressed sympathy for Al Qaeda and Hezbollah (ISIS did not exist before 2014). It is intriguing why America's premier intelligence agency would interview a potential terrorist three times and still conclude that he posed no threat! Shouldn't the FBI have barred Mateen from owning firearms?

American gun lobby is so powerful that even those under FBI surveillance can purchase not only hand guns, but also assault

The writer is a Rhodes Scholar.

The tussle over South China Sea



FROM A BYSTANDER
MAHMOOD HASAN

DEFENCE ministers and military chiefs of the Asia-Pacific region were in Singapore from June 3-5, 2016 for the 15th session of the annual Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD). Organised by the London based International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), the Asia Security Summit is a highly rated "Track One" inter-governmental forum, which brings together 28 countries from Asia, Europe and America.

Over 600 delegates converged at the Shangri-La Hotel, from where the dialogue got its name. Participants spent a busy time at the plenary and break-out group meetings, which allowed in-depth discussions on critical regional security issues.

The three-day conclave was inaugurated by Thailand's Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha. The large Chinese delegation was led by Admiral Sun Jianquo, Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff Department of China's Central Military Commission. Defence Secretary Ashton Carter led the American delegation, which included Senator John McCain, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and six other senators.

However, China's assertive activities in the South China Sea became the single most important topic of discussion at the plenary. The US and Japan have been contesting China's sovereignty claim over the area. The dispute is basically over the "freedom of navigation" in the high seas, meaning the South China Sea, which is now a theatre of major-power rivalry.

China occupied several rocks in the South China Sea, and started to convert them in 2014 into artificial islands. It built an air field and stationed fighter aircrafts and missiles in one island. Beijing says that it has historical evidence that the sea was within its jurisdiction for centuries. But littoral states – Brunei, Republic of China (Taiwan), Malaysia, Vietnam and Philippines also claim sovereignty over certain parts of the sea. The 3.6 million square kilometre area is rich in marine resources and vast oil and gas reserves, and international trade worth more than \$5 trillion pass through the South China Sea every year.

The US is not directly involved in the dispute, but as part of Washington's "Asian Pivot", it rejects the Chinese claim, stating that the South China Sea hosts vital global shipping lanes, and has called upon China to respect international law. US Navy ships and aircrafts in the area were challenged by China.

What is worrying for the Americans is that China is planning to declare an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the South China Sea. The ADIZ will prohibit military aircrafts from any others country patrolling over the area. China can also declare the area as its Exclusive Economic Zone, which can restrict commercial shipping and over-flights over the area.

Philippines has already challenged China's claim over SCS and referred the matter to the UN Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague. China stated that it did not recognise the court's jurisdiction over the matter, while a ruling from the court is expected soon.

In an attempt to beleaguer China, the US Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter called upon Asia Pacific countries to build a

"principled security network" – meaning a series of partnerships that adheres to values and facilitates resource-sharing. He further warned that China was erecting a "Great Wall of self-isolation". "The United States is fully committed to this principled security network," he said.

Taking a tough stand, Admiral Sun Jianquo said that China did not "make or fear trouble". "We were not isolated in the past, innocent lives with him as possible. Little did Mateen realise that the blaze of glory that he was seeking is hellfire!

Mateen's parents also bear responsibility. Mateen was disciplined 31 times in elementary school, and was suspended from high school for 48 days. He was abusive in language and violent in intent to the extent of praising 9/11. Yet, Mateen's father called him "normal." Since Mateen was mentally unstable, they should have sought medical

China is part of the ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting-Plus (ADMM+), Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan while reflecting on Asean sentiments skilfully called for "an inclusive strategic architecture . . . mutual respect that all countries . . . pursue peaceful resolution of conflicts within a rules-based order."

Interestingly, while Aston Carter was blowing hot at China in Singapore, a smiling

John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, landed in Beijing for the annual high-level Strategic and Economic Dialogue (June 6-8, 2016) with China.

Indeed, China-US relations are vast and complicated. Had it not been for its inordinate economic dependence on China, which limits America's options against the country, Washington would have imposed strict sanctions against Beijing. China is the

largest creditor of US (\$ 1.26 trillion - 2015) and bilateral trade aggregates over \$600 billion (2015). If China offloads even a part of US government securities, the US economy will be in deep trouble.

On the other hand, China's trade (\$ 366 billion, 2014) and vast investments in ASEAN also discouraged these countries from taking any strong anti-China posture, as they are also an important partner of China-sponsored Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Besides, China has embarked on separate deals with ASEAN members to neutralise their claims over the South China Sea. Europe's courtship for Chinese investment also deters Europeans from going head-on against Beijing.

Although the US is irked with China's assertive role in East Asia, it is in fact alone in this tussle. Actually instead of confrontation with China, Secretary Carter and his senators tried to develop a strategy to contain China.

The Shangri-La Dialogue has once again demonstrated that China is a major world power. It is determined to assert its economic strength and military power in its immediate neighbourhood and extend its maritime boundary as far out as possible. Beijing will use tact and diplomacy to stay in the South China Sea, irrespective of the PCA verdict. As nations grow stronger, their security fears grow concomitantly.

The main idea of the Shangri-La dialogue series is to develop a regional security framework for the Asia-Pacific region, like the one in Europe. But thus far, these conferences have not produced any tangible decision on how best to address security issues of the region.

The writer is a former ambassador and secretary.

QUOTABLE Quote

VINCENT VAN GOGH
Painter

The fishermen know that the sea is dangerous and the storm terrible, but they have never found these dangers sufficient reason for remaining ashore.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Farm sight
- 5 Final
- 9 Talk at length
- 10 Extreme
- 12 Eye-related
- 13 Caravan carrier
- 14 Back-bones
- 16 Industrious insect
- 17 Shade providers
- 18 Salon creation
- 21 Look upon
- 22 Big haulers
- 23 Paris river
- 24 Lawyer's customer
- 26 "Stand" band
- 29 Golf setting
- 30 Moore of movies
- 31 Director Howard
- 32 Polishes
- 34 San Antonio landmark
- 37 Chemically inactive
- 38 Book after Jonah
- 39 Like the Rockettes
- 40 Beginner
- 41 Spruce or sequoia

DOWN

- 1 Limber
- 2 Not too late
- 3 Beef cuts
- 4 Formerly
- 5 Jean -- Godard
- 6 In the style of
- 7 Gospel writer
- 8 Market movements
- 9 Romantic dozen
- 11 Choir voice
- 15 Holy places
- 19 Uncle's wife
- 20 Glacier maekup
- 22 Golf pegs
- 23 Army address
- 24 "Settle down!"
- 25 Folly
- 26 Fail to follow suit
- 27 Come into view
- 28 Fogs-hrouded
- 29 Pask tight
- 30 Casual eatery
- 33 Sword part
- 35 Spoil
- 36 Cry of insight

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

DISH OHARA
EATHAN MIMED
FARGO ADAGED
ALI VAN ZAP
TINGES BOLT
CELLPHONE
OTHER
GRAYAREAS
POET LREADER
ADD ATL MAE
RISER DRIVE
EVOKE SIRES
SAXES MERE