

Editorial ? The common thread: extremism

At first blush, the two events seemed to bear no relationship to one another.

The one event took place in Washington D.C., when President Donald Trump issued a slew of executive orders seemingly designed to demonstrate once and for all that his administration was going to be markedly different from that of his predecessor, Barack Obama.

One of them was aimed at starting construction of a huge wall along the border between the U.S. and Mexico, and another set the stage for replacement of Obamacare with something else.

Those two weren't at all surprising, having been lynch pins in his successful campaign for the presidency. But what few had expected was the travel ban issued for residents of seven muslim-dominated countries, and a complete stop ordered to admission of Syrian refugees who didn't fit the President's definition of "religious minorities."

The other event occurred in Quebec City, with a 27-year-old francophone standing accused of murdering six worshippers in a mosque and wounding 19 others.

White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer told a press conference the massacre provided "a terrible reminder of why we must remain vigilant, and why the President is taking steps to be proactive, rather than reactive."

Sorry, but we see it rather differently.

Based on comments by others who knew him, the 27-year-old Laval University student who faces six charges of first-degree murder and five of attempted murder is a fan of Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen, leader of France's far-right National Front party.

Those two politicians appear to have a lot in common. They are demagogues who specialize in half-truths and fear-mongering and are particularly hostile to immigration from Muslim-dominated countries.

Was it purely coincidental that the mosque massacre took place so soon after the Trump administration's bans targeting Muslim-majority countries and Syrian refugees?

Don't be surprised if the alleged shooter, Alexandre Bissonnette, attributes his deadly activity to fear that Muslim immigrants were going to overwhelm Quebec and impose their traditions and will on other Quebecers.

Friends traced his apparent radicalization to a visit to Quebec last March by Le Pen, who hopes to follow the path taken by Trump and win the French presidency.

Like Trump, a Twitter fan, she uses it to oppose immigration and warn that France's Muslims want to impose Sharia law on the country.

As we see it, the travel ban and most of the Trump executive orders are classically based on falsehoods and half-truths.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the case of the bans on travel and Syrian refugees.

Had the new U.S. President ever bothered to check the facts, he would have discovered that there isn't a single instance of anyone having come from any of the seven Muslim-majority countries who committed a terrorist act in the U.S.

Nor, for that matter, has any refugee from Syria's civil war done anything that would provide grounds for the ban, let alone engage in terrorism.

And a little research by Trump or his aides might also turn up the fact that most, if not all, of the Syrian refugees are peace-loving folk who would make excellent U.S. citizens.

As for the new President's claim that the travel ban is needed until his administration comes up with improved vetting of applicants, all evidence shows that the existing system is not only extreme, but takes up to two years and thus far has not led to any would-be terrorist slipping through.

And Trump might be advised to consult Canada's immigration officials, who might explain how we brought in 40,000 Syrian refugees last year without any evidence to date that even one was a potential terrorist.