

Ka-Boom -- Happy Hangover Day.

Written by Alex Baer

Sunday, 05 July 2015 17:24 - Last Updated Sunday, 05 July 2015 21:46

July Fifth: July Fourth, plus one, and counting. Happy Hangover Day, gunpowder aficionados.

(I'll bet many of you are thinking that the rest of us are admiring the many black marks of your scorched-earth policies on the sidewalks and roadways of our Freedom. Actually, we are not. No, we're frankly puzzled, looking down at those *gunpowdered starbursts*, how it is that primates have toddled and dawdled along this far. We're amazed that this universe has treated so well the unlikely equation of *Curiosity + Opposable Thumbs + Tool-making Ability*, and how it got us this species, ourselves, us -- how it got us anywhere at all, let alone not having gotten us smeared, long ago, across the landscape of our own night terrors.)

And now, an update on terrorism:

An array of agencies fielded an impressive assortment of watchful agents yesterday, hoping to spot and snare any "lone wolf" terrorists lurking here or there, bring them all in, in some sort of grand finale. You will see some reports about this today, about their efforts.

Meanwhile, here's how my personal pie chart breaks out in terms of terror:

Part of me is relieved to know that trained, dedicated men and women are available to keep watch, even on holidays, whatever their agency designations -- from the ATF to the Zyzzyva Bureau.

Another part of me becomes reflexively suspicious whenever a "terror alert" goes out, because it makes me think we're gearing up to invade yet another country, and are laying the groundwork for yet another round of, as Firesign Theatre might say, "Beat the Reaper."

Part of me wonders the philosophical preoccupation of contemplating ourselves as our own worst enemy in such equations.

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And part of me wonders if anyone knows, or cares, that the people in my neighbor are living right next door to terrorists -- terrorists who have no manifestos, have no conflict with this country, have no alien flag to fly.

No, the people next door are simply barrio *gangsta wannabes* filtering north from LA -- terrorist who have decided to terrorize this particular neighborhood.

- (Their acts may or may not be conscious decisions on their part, as decisions require brains, and there has been no demonstration of brains being present in any of their numerous activities -- especially those which really start to cook and crank up, along with the violent booming of the even more violent lyrics and music of gangsta rap, at 10:30 or 11:00 at night, and slide on to 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, no matter what the day or date.)

While agencies were hunting for *terrorists-foreign*, the bulletin on *terrorists-domestic* did not receive wide distribution. Maybe the fax was broken. It would figure. Facts are often broken, left unrepaired. Especially on holidays.

Last night -- which is to say, more precisely, at 2:14 a.m., this morning -- the usual tableau of drunken brawls and shrieks and howls was punctuated by Day Nine of fireworks. There were the legal ones for this geographic state. Then, we again moved on to the ones smuggled across state borders. Then, we moved into a brand new, today-only (we hope) phase, the professional pyrotechnics -- in this case, the big, overhead, 200-foot-up, exploding star-bursts some call star shells, or "grand finale" shells.

The reports on these make your ears ring, and the sound is like the Hammer of Thor, carrying into the hills for miles. (You've been to big fireworks shows -- you already know how these work, how they look, how they sound.)

These shells launch like mortars, sailing high, before exploding their 300-foot (or more) glittery, starred-and-spangled wingspans. Which is to say, they do when *professionals* set them off.

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This morning, at 2:14, they were set off by *brainless, giggling, drunken, gangsta-morons*. They managed to get the star shells 80, or maybe a hundred feet, off the deck before they unfolded their hot glory -- and then rained their hot particulate matter back down to earth, back down in our yard, back down on our roof, back down on the neighborhood.

(Pause here for a deep breath.)

It's been hot here -- heatwave hot. Things are unseasonably dry. It's a country-ish setting hereabouts. There is lots of dry tinder about. There is cut grass, and hay, in fields right next door, and up the street, and all around the gangsta place. All around where they have their single-hay-bale shooting gallery set up.

Last night, we lucked out -- none of us in the neighborhood were awakened to backyard blazes no fire-fighting equipment could access or hope to stop. No, we were awakened by the sound of Incoming.

And -- have I ever mentioned how cash-strapped and resource-hungry some emergency responder units are, out in the sticks? -- the boys and girls in blue, and red, and day-glo lime and orange, and so on, they were all kept pretty busy last night, by us, by our fellow Americans, by our neighbors, by our co-conspirators, by our colleagues and cohorts who were out making somewhat poor, or incredibly poor, decisions last night.

Heatwave night, just missed a full moon, dodged a bullet there, so to speak....

It's been one thing after another, every night, for the 44 days and nights since the gangstas moved in. Every day. Every night.

And, you know, you'd be surprised at the response of the authorities to these acts of terrorism. In this community, Teabaggers and Libertarians and Republicans of all stripes control the town and county. They wiped noise ordinances off the books. They trimmed laws and regs that might have helped restrict do-it-yourself shooting galleries. They trimmed emergency response staff. They trimmed patrols.

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And now, we have domestic terrorism as the result of all that trimming.

There was a recent county-wide vote to try to prop up all that cutting, and try to resuscitate public health, welfare, and safety services again. It squeaked by and passed. That was before the gangstas came. The money is working its way through the system. It's like imagining a snake eat, trying to wonder where the money is now, when it will work its way to improved services...

As shell-shocked as the neighborhood is that this sort of terrorism can arrive here, and thrive here, unchecked -- and as stunned as we were to have been launched from our sleep, and our beds, by incoming rounds of star shells in the *little-number-hours* of this morning -- I think we are grateful to have not found ourselves awakened in clouds of smoke or blood.

As grateful as we are for small favors, it is getting weary and tiresome living here, among heat, lack of sleep, sudden and prolonged noises. This is when people can sometimes make even poorer choices than usual.

I've made up my mind, though. I've got cancer, a brain tumor, I'm recovering from a seizure. I can't do the jail time for many of the things I find myself daydreaming about doing. And I remind myself again that I am not a violent person by nature or trade or training.

Just as I consider the amount of personal loss this sort of domestic terrorism costs -- and it is terrorism, whether driven by drinks and drugs or by dogma -- my spirit, I have to wonder what this sort of domestic terrorism costs the children who live in that house.

We have seen two, maybe three, through the bushes and trees. They're about waist-high to the adults. They are present for all the brawls, for all the purple cursing that the funny papers would show as stars and planets and exclamation points.

These kids all know the words, all of them. They should. Those same words are screamed at

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them all day and all night, along with signs of loving concern, such as "Get the **** out of my ****ing face and get your ***** ass to bed!"

As crappy and as terrorized as our days are in this neighborhood, now, since the gangstas moved in, they are short in number compared to those of the kids. The kids have been living such terrors since Day One.

We're newbies. We're just now starting Day 45.

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Remember when someone's right to do something used to be defined, more or less, by someone else's right to not have to to be forced to experience that same right? That your right to swing your arm around ended where the tip of my nose began?

Ah, nostalgia.

We are now define rights in this terrorized country of ours as "All bets are off." If you care to add a few gerunds and expletives and startling nouns to the end of that sentence -- in big, *holly wood-action-movie-star* style, so much the better.

Well -- so much the more *accurately said*, at least. The concept of *better* checked out of this fleabag hotel some weeks ago, skipping its rent, fleeing with only some of its clothes, it left so fast.

But, yeah -- where DO these kids today learn their ways? And where will the kids of *these* mere children learn *their* ways?

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I'd like to see a terrorism task force tackle the hell of that one.

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You know, I wonder if my neighborhood has considered reprisals from the gangstas. There are always reprisals. Didn't seem to stop us when we stole this country from the people living on it when Europeans arrived, looked around, and said, *Heyyyyyyy, we could really do something here!*

I suppose there is some hope that those early reprisals didn't work, so these newer ones might not, either. There is a lot of sadness in that thought, in that reality, of reprisals and change. Mixed feelings seem to be the only feelings in stock anymore.

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If anyone's keeping track, that buoyant, post-seizure feeling has moved on. I tried to keep it alive, having had the revelation of such an intense and super-concentrated focus on the evolution of my life revealed to me, via another brush with death.

But, evolution has us wired to constantly seek, and ask ourselves, *What's new?* □ *What's different?* □ *What's changed?* □ *What's new?* □ *What's different?*

Evolution didn't teach us to seek, and ask ourselves, *What's valuable?* □ *What's worth keeping?* □ *What should be shed?* □ *What should we be thankful for?* □ *What should we change?* □ *What's worth keeping?*

Too bad. I think humans could have used a lot more of the latter. It might have helped us in our survival, too -- in our long-term survival. Not just the short term.

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But, I don't fault anyone for the fade of my Very Own Personal, Cosmic Wow. After all, I never met anyone else who had one. And, if you haven't had one, there is no way to relate to the experience. This is understandable, I think. People don't know how to respond to something that far beyond their experience, that far outside their orbit.

Like terrorism Or being blatantly stupidity, or being an uncaring or indifferent or brainless moron, or being a drunken, partying gangsta with access to star shells.

Or like being someone who survived military service, a heart attack, cancer, a brain tumor, a seizure, a terror attack in a formerly calm, quiet neighborhood...

Like being someone who sees such change, and spots children trapped in it, and then trying to measure, and express, the pain contained in that change.

My personal Wow became a limping Not-So-Grand Finale: I'm ready to be somebody else, something besides human. I'm ready to go to some other planet, one which makes much more sense and is kind.

This one -- *this one's all yours now.*