

## Analysis

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E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net  
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online? Carrier may  
also deliver cuffs

He looked like a regular mail carrier, dropping off an unremarkable package at an upscale New York City apartment tower, but neither the man nor the package were quite what they seemed. The mail carrier was really a federal agent, conducting a so-called controlled delivery, a tactic the US government employs to help stem the flow of heroin, prescription painkillers and other opioids fueling the nation's epidemic of fatal overdoses.

Drug-filled packages with misleading labels have become a common sight at John F Kennedy International Airport's (JFK) sprawling mail-sorting hangars, a frontline in the battle against opioids. Many of the parcels originate in China, having been ordered on the web's darker corners. "Nobody anticipated the explosion we were going to face," said Christopher Lau, who oversees the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations office (HSI) at the airport.

Fatal opioid overdoses jumped to a record high of nearly 50,000 last year, more than double the 2013 toll, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Customs agents with X-ray machines and sniffer dogs detect and seize what they can. But to track, arrest and prosecute suspected dealers, the New York HSI office organizes several controlled deliveries each month, taking the packages out to see who claims them.

For this delivery, a Reuters reporter was allowed to ride along and watch the agents in action. The package had arrived on a Friday in August, mailed from Shanghai and filled with 250 gm of fentanyl, a synthetic opioid 100 times stronger than morphine that can kill with a 2-mg dose. It was enough to cut into hundreds of thousands of bootleg painkiller pills, which could sell for \$10 each or more. It is also often added to heroin, contributing to a rise of overdoses by unsuspecting users.

The package was an ideal candidate for a controlled delivery, Lau said. It was addressed to someone called Randy, but there was no record of anyone with that name living at the designated address. And there had been a pattern of earlier packages delivered to the building from China, often addressed to non-existent apartments or apparently fictional residents.

Before the delivery, agents replaced the fentanyl powder with coffee grounds. More than a dozen federal agents set up surveillance around the building, snacking in unmarked cars or pretending to read a newspaper on a nearby bench, all dressed in blue jeans and sports jerseys. They watched the building's glass-fronted lobby, waiting to see who claimed the package.

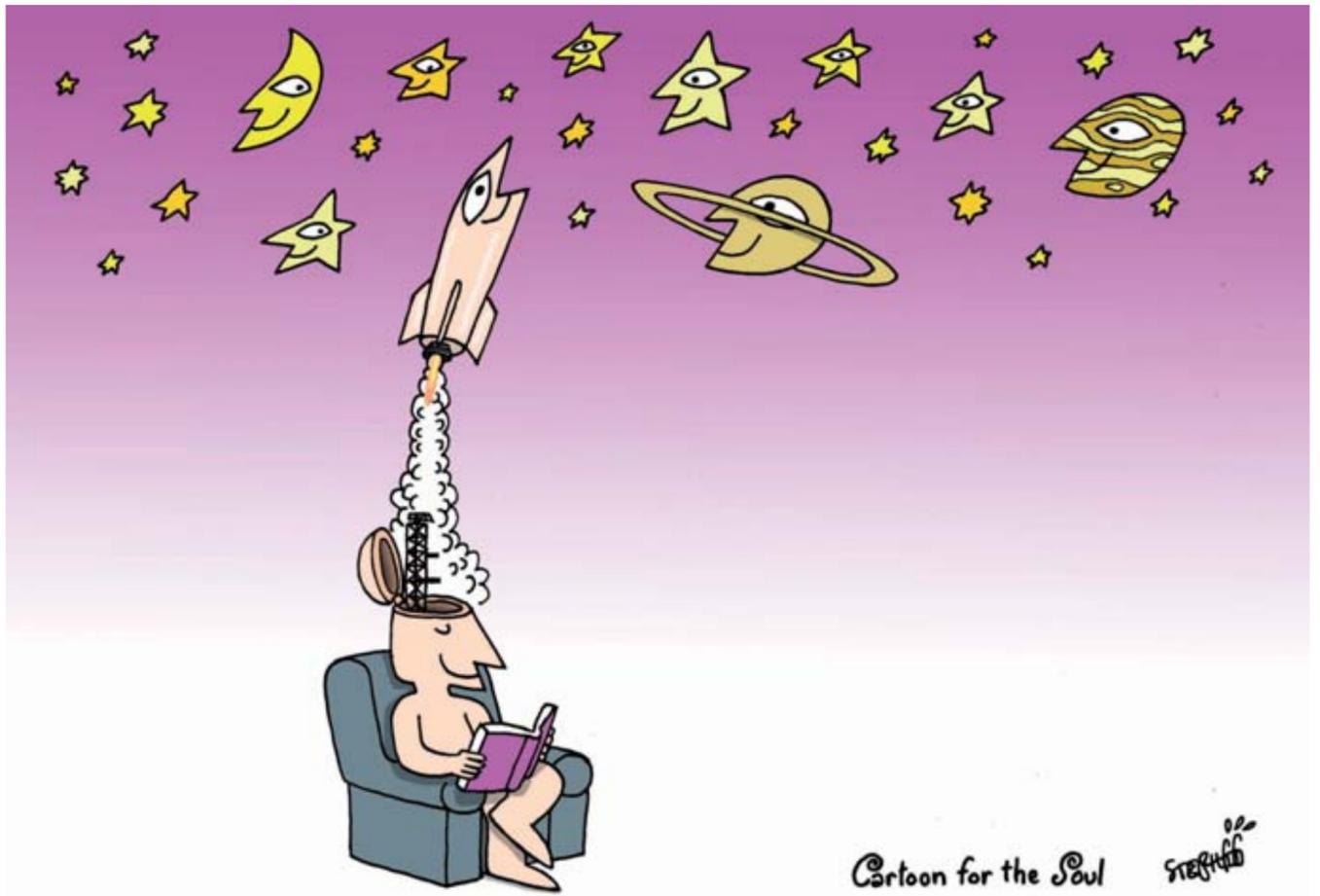
## Online shopping

The volume of drugs coming through the mail has grown in step with legitimate online shopping, customs agents say, as Americans have taken to ordering drugs from overseas via the dark web. Agents suspect that was how the package for "Randy" came to arrive at JFK. It is illegal to import prescription medicines and controlled substances from outside the United States. Chinese laboratories have become the main source of fentanyl in the United States, most of it sent through the mail, the US Department of Justice says.

In 2016, customs agents caught nine packages at JFK containing fentanyl, according to US Customs and Border Protection (CBP). So far this year, they have seized more than 200, in part because of expanded screening and better training, said Anthony Bucci, a CBP spokesman. Outside the New York apartment building, two eventless hours passed before a man emerged carrying a plastic bag. An agent discreetly tailed him. A false alarm.

Then the voice of Walter Rivera, an HSI special agent, came over the radio with a new urgency: "You see the guy who came out with a backpack right here? Gray shirt and ponytail?" Agents had hidden a GPS tracking device in the package. The man with a ponytail fiddled on his phone and then got into a lively cab. "If the GPS goes down the block, that's him," Rivera radioed. Lau watched the GPS move and bellowed, "It's him!" —Reuters

The agents tore off in their cars, sirens wailing. The confused cab driver soon pulled over by a busy sidewalk, and agents handcuffed his passenger, taking back the package. He turned out to be the building's concierge, who had taken the package with him at the end of his shift. He quickly confessed that his name was not Randy. Although agents were able to make an arrest in this case, more than a million international packages arrive each day in the country, and authorities can only screen a fraction of them. No one knows how many packages of drugs slip through the net. —Reuters



## WASHINGTON WATCH

## A must read history of failed peacemaking

By Dr James J Zogby

Seth Anziska's "Preventing Palestine: A Political History From Camp David to Oslo" is a deeply insightful and profoundly disturbing book that traces the tortuous path of Middle East peace-making during the past four decades. It was quite painful to read. Having been a close observer and sometimes participant in many of the developments that have unfolded since the end of the 1973 War, Anziska opened old wounds while shedding new light on the painful events and acts of betrayal that have shaped recent Palestinian history.

Through all of the twists and turns of this period, the brutal wars and the diplomatic initiatives, the one constant that emerges is the Israeli determined refusal to recognize the Palestinian right to self-determination and statehood and the self-serving acquiescence to their intransigence by successive American administrations and key Arab leaders.

The culprits are many. In Anziska's telling of this history, we can find fault with most of the parties to the conflict - all of the US Administrations that were involved during this period: Israeli prime ministers, whether from Labor or Likud; Egyptian Presidents Sadat and Mubarak; Lebanon's Phalange Party; and, in the end, even the PLO's Yasser Arafat.

Digging deep into the official records of the Israelis, Egyptians, Americans, Palestinians, and others who participated in the region's wars and various diplomatic endeavors, Anziska mines government and research center archives unearthing revealing contemporaneous accounts, minutes of meetings, and official communiqués - providing the story behind the story of events as they unfolded.

Especially fascinating were: The internal debates that took place in Israeli cabinet meetings and how, at times, they would don a diplomatic mask of accommodation, while clinging to their firm refusal to surrender sovereignty of Palestinian lands or recognize the existence of a Palestinian nation; the discussions that occurred between President Carter and his aides; the frustrations expressed by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's various foreign ministers over his betrayal of the Palestinian cause; the way Israel's Ariel Sharon rudely manhandled US emissaries and their cowering in the face of his beligerence; the way Israel's Menachem Begin initially sought to pose as the savior of the Christians of Lebanon only to "turn on a dime" after they refused to sign a peace agreement on Israel's terms; the insidious plotting of a Phalange leader with the Israelis to end the

Palestinian presence in Lebanon; and the short-lived, but still worth noting, instances of frustration of US Presidents Carter and Reagan and Secretaries of State George Schultz and James Baker with the Israelis.

What emerges as key to the denial of Palestinian rights is the self-imposed paralysis of American decision-makers in the face of Israeli intransigence - resulting from successive administrations' fears of the domestic political fallout that might follow any pressure the US might apply on Israel. Time and again, US principals grew impatient with Israeli ploys and their headline refusal to recognize and grant national rights to Palestinian, only to back down after advisers cautioned them of the political consequences that might result. There were no American "profiles in courage" emerging from Anziska's book.

Carter, for example, began his term with a pledge to realize a "homeland" for the Palestinians. In line with his Administration's commitment to human rights, Carter was moved to end their suffering in exile and under occupation. The vehicle he envisioned to initiate the path toward this goal was an international all-party conference to end the Arab-Israeli conflict. Carter's efforts were ultimately upended by a combination of: Israel's refusal to participate in any forum that would question their claim of sovereignty over the Palestinian territories; Sadat's resolve to achieve a separate Israeli-Egyptian peace without the Palestinians, despite his public pronouncements to the contrary; and the pressure from the American Jewish community, which caused sufficient enough discomfort within the White House to cause Carter to back away from pressing Israel to cede land or political rights to the Palestinians.

In the end, Carter acceded to the pressure and shepherded the Camp David peace agreement between Israel and Egypt. The agreement, shaped by largely by the Israelis, promised only future discussions on a vaguely worded plan for Palestinian "autonomy" - which in the Israeli lexicon meant that the Palestinians could realize control of their persons, but not control over land. The result, as Anziska notes was that at Camp David Sadat got the Sinai and Begin got the West Bank. And with Israel's southern border secured, Begin was free to attempt to "wipe out" the PLO in Lebanon.

Throughout the next four decades the region witnessed the horrific Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon (together with the aerial bombardments that devastated Beirut and the massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps), two Palestinian uprisings, and repeated failed American efforts at peacemaking. During this time, the US dithered, professing to want to solve the conflict,

but refusing to apply the pressure needed to make it happen.

## Dithering

As Anziska observes, throughout this entire period, the Israelis, while agreeing to negotiate, insisted on their exclusive sovereignty over the occupied territories and their "God given right" to settle in them. These were not topics they would discuss. In communiqués, they repeatedly chided their American interlocutors rejecting the designation "occupied territories" and insisting on the terms "Judea and Samaria". They also rejected the term "Palestinian people", referring to them, instead, as "Arab inhabitants".

As a result of this Israeli intransigence and the weak-kneed American response, the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian lands only deepened. In 1977 there were about Israeli 5,000-8,000 settlers in the West Bank, by 1992 there were 100,000 settlers, and today the number exceeds 600,000. Despite the euphoria that accompanied the Sept 1993 signing of the Oslo Accords, Anziska demonstrates the similarities between what Oslo provided for the Palestinians and the autonomy proposal offered by Menachem Begin at Camp David 15 years earlier. The supposed self-rule won by the Palestinians at Oslo was circumscribed by Israel's insistence that it retain control over land, resources, security, and borders. Like Begin's proposal at Camp David, there would be no Palestinian sovereignty and no truly independent state. Anziska cites many prominent Palestinians who called Arafat to task for his rush to sign what they termed a "flawed agreement."

Menachem Begin, while adamantly rejecting a Palestinian state, at times, spoke magnanimously of extending rights to the "Arab inhabitants in Judea and Samaria" - whom he saw as a "minority" living in Eretz Israel. Anziska quotes Begin saying, "What's wrong with a Jewish majority living together with an Arab minority in peace, in human dignity, in equality of rights?"

Well, here we are in 2018, 40 years after Camp David. The Palestinian dream of an independent state is not only unrealized but is most likely unrealizable. With many Palestinians now favoring a one state solution, they may throw Begin's words back at him and say, "There's nothing wrong with that!" The problem for the Israelis, of course, is that the once "Arab minority" is now a majority and Israelis have only themselves to thank for digging this hole. By "Preventing Palestine", they have given birth a new reality.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute

Back to the wall, Cruz  
decries O'Rourke as  
out-of-touch leftist

Ted Cruz is in the political fight of his life - and he knows it. The conservative US senator from Texas is being outpaced and overshadowed by his progressive challenger, Beto O'Rourke, who is pushing to be the first Democrat in Texas to be elected to the Senate in 30 years. Cruz and O'Rourke faced off in their first debate ahead of Nov 6's congressional elections at Southern Methodist University in Dallas on Friday, and Cruz's strategy swiftly became clear: Paint O'Rourke as too radical for this traditionally Republican state.

O'Rourke, a charismatic congressman from El Paso, has benefited from an avalanche of media attention and a gusher of small donations, raising millions of dollars more than Cruz. Cruz remains favored, but only slightly. Most polls indicate the election is now too close to confidently predict. The race has massive implications for the battle for the US Senate. Democrats need two more seats to gain control and upend President Donald Trump's agenda. Cruz's seat was supposed to be safe, but he conceded at Friday's debate that he's in a battle.

## Defining a party

Cruz's strategy in the debate highlighted how O'Rourke's star-making candidacy can be a double-edged sword for Democrats. With his support of universal health-care, his openness to abolishing the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, and his willingness to consider impeaching Trump, O'Rourke may define the party going forward in a way that could be incongruent with more moderate Democrats who must defend their Senate seats in states that Trump won in 2016.

At the same time, his campaign has kept the spotlight and money away from other races that are critical to Democrats' hopes of taking the Senate in states such as Nevada and Tennessee. Ultimately, even if O'Rourke pulls off what might be considered a political miracle in Texas, it might not matter for Democrats unless they can hold on to Senate seats in places such as Florida, Missouri, and Montana as well.

As for Cruz, his campaign continues to worry about competing with O'Rourke financially and whether Republican voters will turn out in numbers to ensure his victory. He is turning to the White House for help. Trump is expected to appear at a rally in Texas with Cruz next month. The two candidates will face off twice more in debates before Election Day.

## Contentious debate

In the debate, the two candidates clashed over issues such as immigration, gun rights, trade, and protests of the National Anthem, with O'Rourke frequently complaining

that Cruz was misrepresenting his positions. At one point he accused Cruz of "slander". Cruz drew O'Rourke's ire when he suggested that O'Rourke, in supporting protests of police brutality by National Football League players, favored burning the American flag. O'Rourke said Cruz was trying "to mislead" the public. "No one here, including myself, has suggested anyone should be doing that," he said.

He also pushed back at Cruz's suggestion that he supports doing away with the Second Amendment to the US Constitution, which safeguards gun rights. "That's not true," O'Rourke said. After the debate, O'Rourke said Cruz "has a tendency to mischaracterize a position". "If we are talking about NFL players who are kneeling during the National Anthem at a football game to call attention to injustice in this country, he'll talk about flag-burning," O'Rourke said. Cruz's camp responded by arguing that O'Rourke's positions were finally being publicized. "It's the first time he is being directly confronted with his policies," said campaign spokeswoman Emily Miller.

In his closing statement at the debate, Cruz lumped O'Rourke in with New York congressional candidate Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, an avowed socialist, and argued that he was to the left of progressive US senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. After the debate, O'Rourke was asked whether Texas is "really ready for a vision that sounds socialist". "I don't buy into the labels," he replied. Even if O'Rourke doesn't, Cruz showed on Friday that he certainly does. —Reuters