Trendsetting thugs and fascist fashionistas

by Julian Sereno

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's trendy tyrant, made a fascist fashion statement in Washington D.C., the heart of our democracy, on a warm sunny day in mid-May on Embassy Row.

And quite a row it was. Nine peaceful protesters carrying placards denouncing Erdoğan ambled around the sidewalk across Massachusetts Avenue in front of the Turkish Ambassador's residence. As Erdoğan stood near his limo, idly looking on, 24 members of his security team, large beefy men in suits, some with holstered fire arms, brushed aside the understaffed and overmatched law enforcement team tasked with keeping the sides separated, attacked the protesters and beat them to a pulp, kicking and punching them while they were on the ground. They roughed up the police -- federal officers -- who intervened.

Videos of the beatdown have been widely watched on Youtube, and the *New York Times* identified each and every goon and showed each in action. Members of Congress, who saw foreign agents attacking lawful protesters in the very seat of our sovereignty, expressed outrage. Sen. John McCain demanded that the Turkish Ambassador be expelled.

Two Turkish thugs were detained and subsequently released. Then the entire Erdoğan entourage headed home. Before the last goon could even flash his diplomatic get-out-of-jail-free cards, the Turkish Foreign Minister in Ankara called the U.S. Ambassador to demand an apology for the attack on the 24 Erdoğan goons by the nine protesters, claiming the police were complicit.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson called the entire episode "unacceptable" and said the State Department would conduct a thorough investigation, sounding eerily

similar to our very own Senator Richard Burr talking about his committee's investigation into the Trump Campaign's Russian connections.

Thuggishness has been trending ever since *l'affaire* Erdoğan. Just over a week later, the Republican candidate for Congress in Montana special election throttled and body slammed a reporter for asking questions. Now-congressman-elect Greg Gianforte grew annoyed at *Guardian* reporter Ben Jacobs for repeatedly asking him about the Congressional Budget Office's report that 23 million Americans will lose their health insurance with the Republican health plan.

"I'm sick of you guys," shouted Gianforte as the threw Jacobs to the ground and climbed on top of him. "The last time to came here you did the same thing. Get the hell out of here. Get the hell out of here."

"You just body-slammed me and broke my glasses."said Jacobs, who said he intended to call the authorities and asked for the names of witnesses.

Following the example of the trendy Turks, Shane Scanlon, Gianforte's campaign spokesman, lied about it all. He said that the reporter kept aggressively sticking a microphone in the candidate's face which the candidate asked him to stop, and finally defending himself, they both fell to the ground.

He was contradicted by none other than a Fox News crew as well as Jacob's tape. Police came, interviewed witnesses, and Gianforte was charged with misdemeanor assault.

House speaker Paul Ryan called the assault inappropriate and said, "It shouldn't have happened." But he welcomed Gianforte's election nonetheless.

Never to be outdone, President Trump, perhaps inspired by his Oval Office meeting with Erdogan right before the row on Embassy row, shoved the Prime Minister of Montenegro out of his way for a photo op. Dusko Markovic, the

pushed prime minister, was gracious when questioned by reporters, and thanked Trump for his support in getting Montenegro into NATO.

Of course Montenegro survived a Russian attempt at a coup in mid-April, with 14 plotters arrested, including two Russian agents, so what's little love shove compared with that.

Needless to say, Trump would never say "excuse me" or apologize. That would be a fascist fashion *faux pas.* The only one who apologized was the newly-elected U.S. Rep Greg Gianforte. That should take care of his misdemeanor assault charge.

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