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# An out-of-this-world affair

CONAL  
PIERSE

I've always been highly skeptical of the whole "alien abduction" idea, and figured the anal probing stories were just a drunken gay experience that Grandpa won't cop to. However, recent events have changed me from a skeptic to a true believer.

On Monday, 5 February, Colleen Shipman was walking to her car at the Orlando International Airport when she was attacked by a space traveller. No, it wasn't a little green man—or even an oblong gray man for that matter—but rather a crazed astronaut with a can of mace.

Navy Captain Lisa Nowak is now officially facing charges of attempted kidnapping, battery and attempted murder—and, unofficially, of creeping the ever-loving shit out of me. What would cause an astronaut, shining exemplar of our childhood dreams, to do such things? My theory: space dust.

The "official" explanation, however, is that the two women were involved in a love triangle with Commander William Oefelein, a fellow astronaut and veritable space stud. My revised theory: zero-gravity space boning followed by an awkward morning after wherein she's wearing his spacesuit and talking about meeting her parents. Houston, we have a problem.

As a whole, astronauts have always seemed a little unbalanced to me—I mean, their job pretty much entails being shot at the sky. But Ms Nowak

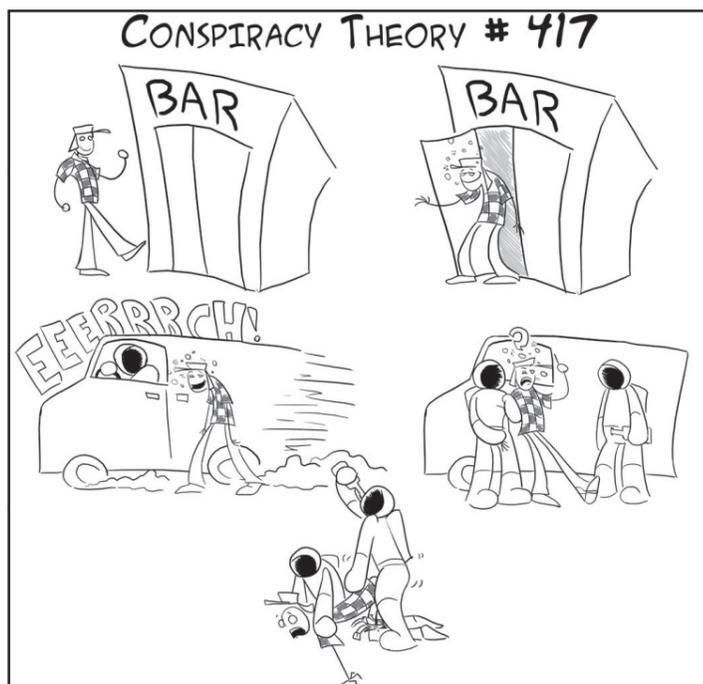


ILLUSTRATION: CONAL PIERSE

has really managed to climb Mt Everest of crazy with this one. When she found out about a potential rival for her space stud, she did what seemed logical at the time: she loaded up her car with bin bags, an air rifle, a steel mallet, a wig and a trench coat to avoid detection (and of course the ever-sensible stack of adult diapers). Whereas the Proclaimers will walk a collective 1000 miles for love, this broad is willing to drive that far without even stopping to piss. I can understand the allure of a spaceship captain, but still, you don't see Chewbacca hauling ass to Endor to deal with that Leia slut.

Nowak's lawyers are currently refuting the murder charges, and I agree with them—this was not attempted murder. I mean, a fucking BB gun? Macaulay Culkin was better-prepared

to kill someone than her. Thankfully NASA was also level-headed enough about the entire affair to ground her, which I'm sure must have helped her case as she must have been a definite flight risk before. Good luck trying to prosecute someone who's on the moon, jackasses.

In the end however, I'm left with an overall feeling of disillusionment with the whole space program. This event has really shattered my worldview and made me question things I once knew to be true. No longer can I write the Roswell incident off as a conspiracy theory, but instead am left wondering if it wasn't just a cover-up for some sex-crazed astronauts. Worst of all, I'll never know if Grandpa was lying, or if he really was raped by a randy Buzz Aldrin.

# Borderline insane techniques

Plans to patrol the 49th parallel with unmanned drones are ho-hum at best

PAUL  
KNOECHEL

Stupidity comes in many shapes and forms. There's your everyday stupidity that consists of pretty harmless things: forgetting you've got something in the microwave, not setting your alarm in the morning, leaving your car lights on. Then there's the really stupid things that are more detrimental: arriving to meet your girlfriend's parents late and still smelling like last night's kegger, or thinking you can drunkenly talk your way out of a public urination fine when cornered by the cops. And finally, there's the, "Holy fucking balls, this couldn't be stupider if there was a lobotomy involved," which is exactly what I said to myself when I saw that the American Department of Homeland Security has started rolling on plans to patrol the entire Canada-US border with unmanned planes.

Now, I haven't said much against the practices of our southern neighbours that I don't find particularly bright. Things like their homophobic laws, their foreign policy and electoral choices have had me scratching my head from time to time, but enough is enough already. To think that they can

put some shiny planes over the longest undefended border in the world and suddenly anyone wanting to harm them will go, "Well damn, I'm out guys. I mean, I'll travel halfway around the world to kill myself and as many civilians as I can, but damned if I'll mess with some remote control planes," is utter lunacy.

**Anyone who's seen a spy film can think up half a dozen ways to elude something that essentially boils down to a security camera, including crossing legally if you have proper ID-or some good fakes.**

This isn't to say that these Unmanned Predator Drones are unimpressive pieces of technology; they've participated in surveillance and air strikes in the Middle East, and patrol the US-Mexic border from such a height that you would never be able to tell that they're there, even though their satellites can read the license plate of a car.

But just because you can watch something cross the border doesn't mean you can do anything about it. Is Homeland

Security going to scramble the helicopters each time someone crosses a little-maintained part of the border without checking in with anyone?

And even assuming the planes are close enough to see anyone trying to sneak into the States, anyone who's seen a spy film can think up half a dozen ways to elude something that essentially boils down to a security camera, including crossing legally if you have proper ID—or some good fakes.

I can't help but think that the effort being put into this is a misplaced one. These drones cost US\$7 million each, and with a range of 1400 km, five would be needed to cover the majority of the border. That's \$35 million just to buy the planes, and doesn't account for maintenance and operating costs. Meanwhile, roughly one million people crossed into America illegally from Mexico last year, and less than two per cent of crates entering US ports are checked coming into the country. Not that I think these problems have any easy solutions, but if you want to throw away some money, it should be on something that makes at least some sense.

The stupidest thing about this though, is that somewhere some old couple is hearing about this and talking about how they'll be safer now that they don't have to worry about a nuke going off in their little town. For their sake, I just hope if one of those little planes go down, it's not in their backyard.