

## **Editorial -**

# **Terrorism in Alaska**

In other countries, business executives and other prominent persons live in fear with the knowledge they may become victims of terrorist kidnappings. In Alaska and throughout the United States, most citizens feel secure with the belief terrorism has not appeared here. Unfortunately, that sense of security is not warranted. Increasingly in Alaska, one group of citizens fears for its safety and well-being.

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# **Terrorism in Alaska**

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Women, especially Native women, have become subject to the very real possibility that they may be abducted, brutally abused and murdered. That prospect hit the Tundra Times close to home recently. On the evening of November 27, Tundra Times Banquet Chairman Arla L. Kemper disappeared without a trace. Her car was found locked and abandoned in a ditch along the Glenn Highway. It is very possible Ms. Kemper was forced to abandon her car and was given a ride by the wrong person.

While Arla was not a Native woman, we adopted her as one of us. We are very concerned about her safety and whereabouts. Trooper investigators report no leads in their continuing investigation. The Arla Kemper disappearance is the sixth such case reported to Troopers this year. Concern over terrible abuse of women in violent crimes in Alaska prompted Representative Lisa Rudd to establish a \$6,000 fund to provide a reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the responsible criminal or criminals. Women who were murder victims this year include Mary Covington, Shelly Connolly, Edith Kararuk, Shirley Moddemeyer and Doreen Titus.

Some of us, being men, cannot fully understand the fear and apprehension our women must feel knowing they may be targets for abduction, abuse and brutal murder. We do however, understand the sorrow we feel at the loss of someone we care for. This situation is as sick as it is terrifying. Women should enjoy the same freedom of movement and sense of personal safety as men do in Alaska.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. Native women seem particularly vulnerable perhaps because the murderer knows they are part of our highly mobile population, and are not apt to be missed as soon as other women. We are anxious to know what the Governor's response is to a request from the Alaska Federation of Natives. The AFN Board, meeting in September, adopted a resolution asking the Governor to direct an investigation by the Commissioner of Public Safety. Such investigation would seek to know whether Native women are indeed most frequently the subject of such terrorism. If this were to be confirmed, the resolution asks for a top priority effort on the part of the state to apprehend the murderers and return a sense of personal safety to our women. This needs to be addressed as a high priority matter by the Governor.

Too few of us understand the extent of this brand of terrorism, and how to deal with it until it can be removed. In the public interest, and with the cooperation of the Alaska State Troopers and the Alaska Women's Resource Center, the Tundra Times will publish a three-part series on this unfortunate situation beginning next week. The series, authored by contributing writer Lone E. Janson, will address the cases themselves and the disposition of Trooper investigations. It will also discuss when and how to report missing individuals, how the Troopers conduct their investigations, and how we may assist in cooperating with these investigations. Finally, and most importantly, it will discuss how women may avoid the situations which may lead to becoming victims of violent crimes, and how to extract one's-self from such a situation if it ever arises.

We hope a permanent solution is found quickly. In the meantime, we must learn how to take care of each other.