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Export date: Fri Oct 30 7:14:39 2026 / +0000 GMT

Grounding our own air force

by BRIAN LOCKHART

There is an old movie (1983) called Under Fire, that stars Joanna Cassidy, Gene Hackman, Nick Nolte, and Ed Harris, about war correspondents covering some of the hot-spots around the world.

It's a good movie with a stellar cast and a great story.

Early in the movie, journalist Nick Nolte hooks up with mercenary, Ed Harris, in an African county that is experiencing a revolution.

Harris is fighting for either the government or the rebels ? even he doesn't seem to be sure, but as long as he's getting paid, he's in the field.

At one point Nolte's character finds a leaflet that was dropped by the thousands from an air-craft.

The leaflet states that any government pilot that defects, and flies his MIG fighter into hostile territory and surrenders, will be paid $500,000 and given refuge and a large house in the U.S.A.

He shows the leaflet to Harris's character says there's no truth in that reward at all.

Harris, laughs and explains.

Since the African country has no trained pilots, they hire Cuban pilots to fly their planes. When the government sees the leaflets, they will be afraid to let the Cuban pilots fly, fearing that the pilots will defect for the money and they will lose an aircraft.

The government forbids the Cubans to fly ? thereby grounding their own air force and giving the other side air superiority without firing a single shot.

It's a genius move, he says, by the CIA, who knew what would happen.

Over the past few weeks, pretty much everything in the province has been shut down or heavily restricted.

A trip into the local dollar store reveals some aisles open, other roped off, and other partially closed. You can purchase something from one shelf, but six inches away, there is a sign telling you those items aren't for sale.

I don't know how much these type of stores are losing daily by not being able to sell the stock that is on their shelves, but I'm sure it's a lot.

After a disastrous ski season that cost the industry around $80 million in Ontario when the ski hills were closed, the golf industry is going through the same thing.

Golf season is already here and the industry is, or was, gearing up for the summer ? which is of course when they make all their money. Except there are no golfers. The courses are closed.

We all know that the current situation means we all have to be careful, but what is the final cost going to be if commerce is stopped?

With a golf course you can't just close the doors and turn off the lights until you can reopen. That course has to be maintained and that's pretty expensive when no one is paying greens fees.

It has been reported that some golf courses will be forced to close for good if the ban remains through June. That mean some people are going to be out a lot of money and others will be out of a job.

How many of those unemployed people will be shopping in your appliance store this summer? Or eating in your restaurant, or buying a new car?

It's a tricky situation but at the same time, is there a point where it has gone too far?

No doubt you've noticed the prices of many items have gone up and some continue to rise. This situation is now putting a lot of pressure on other areas like the construction industry which has seen the cost of building supplies go through the roof.

Guess who will be paying for that? You think a new home is expensive now, wait for a year and see what happens.

Yes, it is a difficult situation, but it's going to be a lot more difficult if the economy is crippled, especially when it doesn't have to be.

Many activities are safe and yet the full on shut-down is tying the hands of business owners and forcing them to stop operating.

Golfing inherently has physical distancing and the industry points out there is not one case of transmission of the virus at any golf course. That goes for a lot of other activities as well.

By putting the slam dunk on everything and grinding the economy into the ground, we really are grounding our own air force, and we won't be able to fly any time soon because no one will be able to afford the cost of a ticket.