Since Nov. 6

By Mel Lavine

Special to the Times

The round of violence between Israel and the Palestinians or a turn in the economy or the latest on jobs or new information concerning the slaying of the ambassador and three other Americans in Banghazi, or Iran's purported moves toward making the Bomb still give us anxiety, but some of us lost sleep over the reports before November 6.

The Lady Friend worried how each event would shape the outcome of the election, given how the media played nearly every story as a test of Obama's leadership. When Obama stumbled in the first debate the noise from the press was ear-splitting. Into the homestretch, they maintained, the election was too close to call. But a few analysts, notably Nate Silver of the New York Times, consistently said the president will be re-elected. Silver shared his research with readers. Only a few paid attention, like the Lady Friend, but she was still scared.

Since Nov. 6, political news has lost its sting. People are spent, they have heard enough and need a break, leaving citizens like the Lady Friend to wonder how much of what we call news is noise, made noisier by pundits, warning the sky is falling, especially in an election year.

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It remains to be seen if Obama will keep his promise to shut down the detention camp at Guantanamo in Cuba. He made the promise his second day in office in 2009. Guantanamo is an abominable symbol of illegal Bush-era policies of detention and torture.

Sadly, the administration backed away from its plan to hold a trial in federal court in Manhattan for a prisoner who claimed to be the mastermind behind 9/11 in the face of fierce opposition from Congressional Republicans and New York Democrats. Instead, the White House adopted "the Bush team's extravagant claims of state secrets and executive power blocking any accountability for the detention and brutalization of hundreds of men at Guantanamo and secret prisons, and denying torture victims their day in court," said the Times.

The editorial's description of the practice is eerily reminiscent of the testimony we heard at the Nuremberg trials about the way Hitler's Nazis dealt with Jews, Gypsies, gays and other "enemies" of the state in World War Two. Say it isn't so, Mr. President.

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It also remains to be seen who will succeed Hillary Clinton when, as expected, she steps down as secretary of state. Susan Rice, the ambassador to the U.N., was favored but she has run into a buzz saw of criticism from Republicans and, perhaps a few Democrats for an early description of the attack on the consulate in Benghazi.

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