

## **STATEMENT OF PAUL KRUZE TO THE EL CAJON POLICE**

On the evening of June 23, 2018, I left the Best Buy store at Parkway Plaza at what I believe was approximately 8:15 p.m. I walked to the north side of the parking lot near the Office Depot. I observed an unusual-looking vehicle similar to a golf cart parked directly perpendicular to my car, in front of a light standard near Office Depot.

On walking to my car I then noticed that cart had decals on it bearing the internet address, [www.benkalasho.com](http://www.benkalasho.com). It also had a message stating “Hi, I’m Zoltan, take my picture and tag me on Instagram@Zoltan\_GSD. ...Oh and vote for Ben!”

As a journalist, I had previously been researching Councilman Ben Kalasho’s posts and videos on Facebook of himself training Zoltan, his dog, to be an attack dog. I’ve been working on an article about this controversial treatment of the animal and its potential risk to the public, since he brings it out in public events. I was concerned about the safety of the public being encouraged to get close and photograph a vicious dog being carried in an open back of a tiny golf-cart like vehicle, with no warning that this was a trained attack dog. I began to take photos.



As I proceeded to my car, which I had to pass Kalasho’s vehicle to reach, I saw Ben Kalasho and his wife Jessica, along with Zoltan, the dog (which a sign on Kalasho’s backyard, posted on his social media, warns is an “attack dog.”)

Kalasho recognized me (I regularly cover council meetings as a journalist, sitting in the front row) and have spoken with him in the past. We exchanged words, among them, he demanded that I stop taking pictures of the car. I pointed out to him that I was a professional journalist well within my right to take photographs. He is a public official, and shopping mall parking lots are generally considered public places (and there’s a public safety issue here).

The dog was on a very short leash. It was barking, growling and snarling at me. Kalasho kept coming closer and closer to me laughing and smirking obviously seeing the fear on my face as I decided the only safe place was in my car. He advanced from maybe 40 feet away to within 10-12 feet of me during the altercation. As I turned my back to quickly unlocking the door of my car, he continued moving towards my car. I was terrified, particularly since I was bitten by a dog as a child, and feared Kalasho intended to let the dog attack me. Kalasho continued to lean forward into me and the dog ended up some 10-12 feet in front of me barking and snarling. I was terrified beyond belief. Kalasho further made derogatory taunts and threatened "I'm going to take you down and that bitch, Miriam Raftery," referring to my editor, and called me a fake journalist. I didn't believe that this was going on. Kalasho then ordered his wife to call the El Cajon Police Department and then ordered his wife to take a picture of my license plate, apparently trying to intimidate me, and he posted my license plate online.

I then drove away and went to another parking lot across the way and proceeded to call Miriam Raftery to tell her what had happened. By the time I turned my car in the other direction after calling Raftery, I also immediately called the El Cajon Police Department. Kalasho had driven away within the five minutes of the incident.

Attached is a Google map showing the approximate position of my car and Kalasho's during this disturbing incident.

He has since attacked me with false and defamatory claims on social media, such as claiming I'm "obsessed" with him and have a video site devoted to videos about him.

My site in fact has videos on many topics that I have covered for East County Magazine including videos of a brush fire in Rancho San Diego, a town hall meeting by Rep. Hunter in Ramona, candidate forums, JC Playford's confrontation with the Mayor at City Council, and other issues that have nothing to do with Kalasho. There are countless other lies up there, too many to enumerate here but clearly his intent toward me is malice to do me harm.

On June 22nd Kalasho made an extremely incendiary post about me on Facebook. It was taken down by Facebook on June 24th. The post includes 68 pages of posts attacking me including threats of overt violence: posts discussing my home address, listing my license plate, as well as photos of guns and suggestions that I be targeted for harassment and violence. He calls me a psychopath and other posts have weighed in with false accusations including calling me a "Marxist Nazi Coon" and claiming I got in legal trouble over coverage of an Otay rally I didn't even cover or attend.

Several people are suggested I be shot, posting photos of guns with specific calibers, and suggesting our magazine site be shut down, etc. One woman offered to go to my home and harass me.

My roommate is frightened by the gun posts and violent threats on Kalasho's site, and is considering moving out which would cause me financial harm.

