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Other voices: Does the Iraq war protect you?

By Charley Hooper
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12:01 a.m. PT Oct 18, 2007

Cal Thomas recently explained in one of his syndicated columns how the Iraq war protects us: There is a big pool of Islamic terrorists. These terrorists hate us and are just waiting to kill Americans and level America. The only thing preventing the total destruction of everything we love is the U.S. military's presence in Iraq. In Thomas' words, a pullout would be "followed by a huge terrorist base that would surely spawn new and more devastating attacks on the United States."

This is important. If we believe Thomas' assessment, we should support the war and be less critical of the government's other actions, such as spying on American citizens. If we don't believe it, we should withdraw our support for the war and government spying.

Let's take as a given that Thomas is right about the big pool of Islamic terrorists wanting to kill us. How is it possible that the war in Iraq is stopping them? Do they need to drive through the war zone and are just waiting for the fighting to pass? "I don't want to scratch the paint on my car, Mohammed. Let's wait for this thing to settle down." Have the American soldiers blocked all the exits from the country? Are the American soldiers too much fun to shoot at? Are the terrorists lost because all the street signs leading out of Iraq are filled with bullet holes? Or can the terrorists leave at any time but they can't seem to pull themselves away, as if they are sitting in a comfortable chair watching TV after work? "Yeah, yeah, honey, I'll go over to America and detonate some bombs as soon as this war ends." None of this seems plausible to me. I fail to find any reasonable way to explain how the Iraq war is keeping these terrorists away from this country.

Oh, wait. Thomas says that the terrorists are already in this country. "[T]hey are even now building a religious and educational infrastructure inside the United States from which terrorist attacks could be carried out." This makes the argument for the war even more interesting. If the enemy is already here, why should our soldiers still be over there?

Perhaps, just perhaps, Thomas isn't correct about the big pool of terrorists waiting to kill us. I flew to the East Coast for a business trip just a day after the post-9/11 air travel restrictions were lifted in 2001. Everyone was on edge and security was tight. Only poor shmucks like me who really had to fly were in the airport. The flight attendant was close to tears. As I took my seat in the rear of the airplane, I looked around at my fellow passengers, wondering if any were hijackers. Sitting in my seat, I thought that while the passengers couldn't bring any weapons on board, I'd bet that there were makeshift weapons already on the plane. Right then I heard a chipping sound coming from the galley behind me. A single female flight attendant was using an ice pick to break apart ice cubes. There's the weapon!

Or consider another example. On April 29, a gasoline tanker truck crashed on a freeway overpass in Oakland and caught fire. While the driver escaped the inferno, the fire was so hot that it melted the whole overpass and caused massive traffic problems.

What am I getting at? Terrorist acts are pretty easy to perpetrate, especially if you don't care about getting caught or even losing your life. And especially if you want to lose your life as a supposed "martyr." A terrorist could have gotten that ice pick and hijacked my plane. A terrorist could drive a gasoline truck into a target much more valuable than an overpass. I bet that I could come up with a list of hundreds of good terrorist schemes. So could you.

And if I chose to follow through, I could perpetrate these awful acts without nuclear weapons or a base in the Middle East. And I'm not even a professional.

No, I'm not a terrorist. And neither are you. And neither is almost everyone else in the world. If terrorist acts are so easy and yet so rare, the only conclusion we can draw is that very few people are motivated to follow through, which leads to the conclusion that Thomas is wrong. The Iraq war is not the only thing stopping terrorists because it isn't stopping them at all.

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Charley Hooper lives in Peardale and is a visiting fellow with the Hoover Institution. He and David R. Henderson wrote "Making Great Decisions in Business and Life" (Chicago Park Press, 2006).

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Excellent
Well thought out, and I thank you for this.

by Know_One on Thu, 18 Oct 2007 08:05:26 PDT   report this | reply

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You want to fight in my country ? Bring it on bitch!
If your afraid,
raise your hand!
Enough living in FEAR.
Jozilla Guerrilla Vet N/A

by Jozilla on Thu, 18 Oct 2007 08:06:18 PDT   report this | reply

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PS
Your article is 100% correct.
Jozilla Guerrilla Vet N/A

I agree..

by Jozilla on Thu, 18 Oct 2007 08:10:38 PDT   report this | reply

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Cal Thomas seems to be parroting the puppet,
GW Bush, "We are fighting them there so we don't have to fight them here".

by Stan(tm) on Thu, 18 Oct 2007 08:14:06 PDT   report this | reply

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What!!! Me worry???
Yes and Nero fiddled while Rome burned.
Iraq is not stopping terrorists at all, (except local ones), Charlie is right about that. They did attack us several times before Iraq. But what is also clear is that Charlie is clueless about the nature of Jihadi terrorism. We are going to suffer periodic attacks here, and elsewhere no matter we withdraw from Iraq or not. We have already seen the incidents of SJS, 'Sudden Jihad Syndrome', where an individual muslim, not under direction from any group, decides to go off on his own jihad, and kill Americans for Allah. These incidents are always covered up by the MSM, but there have been eight that are known. Then there are the jihadis that have been captured trying to kill Americans in America. The Ft Dix incident and the JFK airport incident should highlight the danger. So it is not a question of if this is real, it's plenty real. It's a question of should we take this seriously or not. Charlie seems to think we do not need to take terrorism seriously. If one is going to take terrorism seriously, then you have to find out why it exits. The reasons run much deeper than frustrated moms and dads fighting for justice. If we don't investigate these 'reasons', we wont know what hit us, or how to prevent being hit. And when the dust settles we