



# FAMILY SECURITY MATTERS

ENGAGING AMERICAN FAMILIES IN OUR NATION'S SECURITY

## **They Always Blame America First**

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On December 17, John Stossel writing in Human Events, ("Pretend Answers on Terror) trots out what I call the "grievance theory of terrorism" to explain the attacks on Americans on September 11, 2001. For support, he cites Ted Galen Carpenter of the CATO Institute who claims that most terrorism directed against the United States is a reaction to American meddling in the Middle East, echoing former Representative Ron Paul's claim in 2012 that Osama bin Laden attacked us on 9-11 because American forces were, as Stossel explains, "too close to Mecca".

In short, Stossel implies that if the United States simply withdrew its military forces from around the world and especially in the Middle East, the "Islamic" terrorism directed at the United States would largely cease. Even then, however, Stossel explains that these angry Muslims are not really that angry with the United States as the deaths attributed to Muslim attacks are only 1% of the gun homicides in America since 9-11.

Does Mr. Stossel have a point? His argument is not dissimilar to that made by the administration that keeping the Gitmo prison open angers Muslims and thus facilitates ISIS and Al Qaeda recruitment. And former White House staffer Richard Clarke made the same argument during the George W. Bush administration that rat-lines of jihadis were flocking to Iraq because we took down Saddam Hussein. In short, is Islamic based terrorism rooted in perfidious American foreign and security policy which if significantly changed would usher in an era of comity and peace in the Middle East.

Let's take a look.

Between the 250 years from 1530 to 1780 over 1.5 million Christians were captured into slavery by the Islamists of North Africa. The Barbary Pirates went after American shipping, deprived of their British Navy protection because of the successful war of independence, and then received tribute to stop the attacks which amounted to some 20% of the federal government's annual expenditures. The pirates also raided villages as far north as Iceland, the main purpose being to capture Christian slaves for the Ottoman slave trade and the associated Arabic market in North Africa and the Middle East says Robert Davis in his "British Slaves on the Barbary Coast".

In early 1785, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams went to visit Tripoli's ambassador to London to ask why the Barbary States were grabbing American shipping and kidnapping American sailors, enslaving crew and passengers. They were told "It was written in the Koran, that all

Nations who should not have acknowledged their authority were sinners, that it was their right and duty to make war upon whomever they could find and to make Slaves of all they could take as prisoners, and that every Muslim who should be slain in battle was sure to go to Paradise".

The pasha of Tripoli declared war on the United States in 1801, demanding even more revenue.

Thomas Jefferson sent American ships to North Africa "on patrol" that year instructing them to enforce existing treaties particularly the 1797 Treaty of Tripoli. He did not inform Congress of this and used, in part, private funding to pay for the costs of the effort. Heroes such as Steven Decatur and Edward Preble mounted a daring raid on Tripoli from the sea that helped secure a new treaty ending the piracy. And from this came the establishment of the US Navy as well as the words of the Marine Hymn-"From the shores of Tripoli". The years following saw a boom in the trade between America and the Mediterranean.

As my colleague Clare Lopez of the Center for Security Policy reminded me, the idea that bad American policy is the cause of Islamic terrorism is really daffy.

For example, did Islam destroy the Southwest Asian Buddhist Empire, the Byzantine Empire, Middle East Christian communities, Middle Eastern Jews, and Hindus by the tens of millions, to say nothing of the Persian Sassanid Empire because of "U.S. foreign policy" too?

Did Islam stop hating Jews or Christians because Caliph Umar succeeded in capturing the entire Levant at one point and Jews were forced into *dhimmitude* along with the Christians? Did American foreign policy cause the writers of the Koran to decide that Jews were monkeys and pigs? Or that "the children of the book", Christians and Jews, were to be ordered to submit to Islam or face persecution or death?

Alternatively, did Islam keep on slaughtering Hindus for 800 years because the Hindus fought back - and would have left them alone had they just submitted in the first place?

And what of the Shia's in Iran's leadership that we know from the 9-11 Commission report was deeply involved in the planning of the 9-11 attacks in New York and Washington. Was this because the Iranian Shi'ite mullahs also thought the U.S. was "too close to Mecca" ?

The Bolsheviks from 1917 blamed everything on imperialists and capitalists and proceeded under the banner of communism and Marxist-Leninism to murder some 120 million of their own people. Hitler blamed the Jews in Europe for everything and proceeded to start World War II that killed over 60 million people along with creating a Holocaust that killed another 12 million people including some 6-7million Jews.

Carpenter is indeed a strange choice by Stossel of "experts" to make the case that terrorism is America's fault. Carpenter has repeatedly called for the immediate withdrawal of American military forces from the Republic of Korea, arguing that our presence there makes the region more dangerous and the tyrants in Pyongyang hostile to us. Does our presence in South Korea really explain why North Korea terrorizes and murders its own citizens by the millions, builds nuclear weapons with which to terrorize its neighbors and produces ballistic missile technology for the world's top state sponsor of terrorism, Iran?

We have seen this kind of analysis before.

Jeanne Kirkpatrick, then the UN Ambassador, warned us 30 years ago that while Americans developed NATO, developed the Marshall Plan, and devised the Alliance for Progress, there were those who were in the face of the Soviet threat, "afraid to be resolute" or "ashamed to speak of America as a great nation" or doubted "that we must be strong enough to protect ourselves and to help others".

She warned of the temptation to shut out the world by hiding our heads in the sand. And she asked her audience to remember that when we saved Grenada from terror and communism, the critics of President Reagan "blamed the United States". When Marines were murdered in Lebanon on a peacekeeping mission, she reminded us "they blamed the United States". When the Soviets walked out of arms control talks, she further noted, the critics blamed the United States.

And what about today?

When Russia invaded Ukraine, the arms control community blamed America.

When Iran killed hundreds of American soldiers in Iraq with IED's, the media blamed America.

And now, 14 years after the two New York Trade Center Towers were destroyed, Stossel blames America. And Carpenter blames America.

As Ambassador Kirkpatrick noted 30 years ago, "They always blame America first".

What's changed?