

# Opinion

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THE BATTALION

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## DIFFICULT TRACKING

### Student database may be necessary to combat terrorism



SHARMIKA RADKAR • THE BATTALION

A note posted on the door of a California public school promised a massacre of Muslims in response to the Sept. 11 World Trade Center attacks and had five students' names listed underneath. Needless to say, the students went home.

This type of backlash has prompted an exodus of Arab students from the nation's universities and a renewed government effort to track the nearly 600,000 international college students in the United States. For the students' safety and the safety of the country, an international database should swiftly be compiled. To ensure the future safety of everyone, this is not a bad idea.

Efforts to track foreign-born students began after the first World Trade Center attack in 1993. But political opposition left the database as only a pilot project in the American southeast. Currently, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) does not know the whereabouts of most of the 570,000 international students in the United States.

The question remains whether such a database will help prevent terrorism and

be worth the costs involved. According to the FBI, many of the suspects and material witnesses from the World Trade Center attack entered the country on student visas — a fact that has those who oppose student tracking clamping up.

Had the database been in place after the first World Trade Center attack, authorities might have been alerted to Hani Hanjour, a hijacker on the airplane that hit the Pentagon. Hanjour was allowed to enter the country to study

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English at the Oakland-based Holy Names College. He never enrolled.

But certain considerations still must be made. Though this database is the right move, it cannot be done for the wrong reasons. This must be a calculated decision done out of concern for safety and human life, regardless of whether that life was born in America or elsewhere. Americans must not let their patriotism and emotions lead to discrimination and racial profiling.

In the wake of the terrorist attack, harassment and hate crimes have skyrocketed. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee has reported more than 200 incidents of discrimination and the Council of American-Islamic Relations has seen more than 400 cases, all in the weeks following the attack.

And perhaps most disturbing is a recent Gallup Poll that states 71 percent of African-Americans and 57 percent of white Americans favor profiling people of Arabic descent. With such widespread contempt running rampant, the government has no choice but to keep an eye on the country's international students, for the safety of everyone involved.

As an enlightened nation, the United States cannot sit by and allow racial hatred to be reciprocated by Americans. America must take whatever steps are necessary to ensure a disaster of this magnitude does not happen again. If creating this database means possible infringement on the civil liberties of a few, so be it. After all, to cure cancer, you have to kill a few mice.

*George Deutsch is a senior journalism major.*

## Student Senate missed an opportunity to help

At its Sept. 19 meeting, the Student Senate passed two resolutions regarding the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks: one was a letter to the American people and the other was a statement called the "Spirit of AggieLand resolution."

Both resolutions are nothing more than attempts by the Student Senate to take advantage of a headline-grabbing situation.

The first resolution was a letter to the American people pledging the Senate's support of President George W. Bush, as well as expressing their condolences to the victims of the terrorist attacks. The letter was to be presented to New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

The second resolution, under the pompous title of "spirit of AggieLand resolution," expressed the Senate's admiration for Aggies who donated their blood, money and time to help those affected by the tragedy. The resolution also encouraged Aggies to come together regardless of their religion, creed or national origin.

Neither of these resolutions accomplishes anything. The letter to the American people is a mediocre idea at best. Rather than giving the citizens of New York their verbal support, they should be taking active leadership of the student body and providing the victims with whatever support they need.

As individuals who have stepped forward as leaders of the student body, the responsibility of the Student Senate is to lead Aggies in actions that will result in the greatest benefit to those around us. Instead, the Senate took actions that will not accomplish anything worthwhile, only expending time and resources that could have been better used.

The Senate could have come up with any number of resolutions that would have directly assisted those in need. There are countless people who have lost loved ones in this



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tragedy and are in desperate need of assistance. Donations of all sorts are needed to help these individuals get through the most trying time in their lives, yet the Student Senate is content to provide them with a letter of condolences. With its resources, the Student Senate could have easily set up a way for all Aggies to assist the victims of our nation's most devastating tragedy.

Courtney Eschbach, an off-campus student senator who will hand-deliver the letter to Mayor Giuliani, said in the Sept. 21 *Battalion* that "as the representative body, they felt compelled to speak." The problem, however, is that the Student Senate did not feel compelled to act.

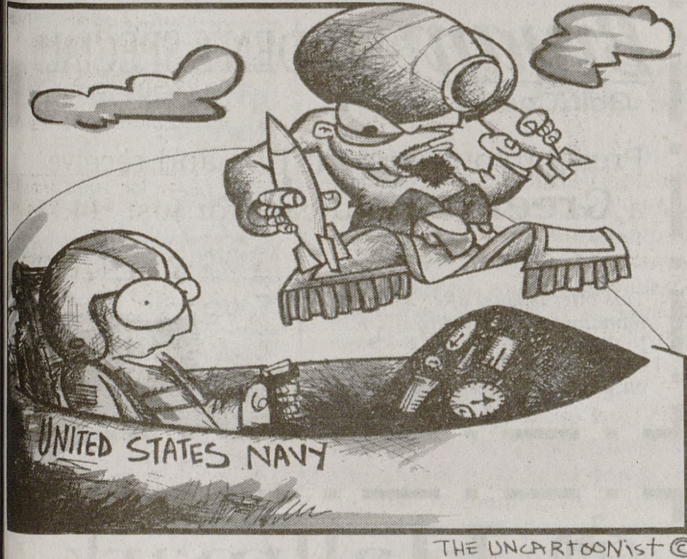
The Spirit of AggieLand resolution has a similarly hollow nature. The document expresses the Student Senate's admiration for those who assisted our fellow Americans in crisis, yet the Senate did not provide help. Rather than admiring the work of others, the Senate should accept the leadership role it has obtained and perform a service to the community by helping those in need.

By writing a letter to the American people and passing the Spirit of AggieLand resolution, the Student Senate has found an easy way to draw attention to itself without doing any work.

By composing a letter of condolences and passing a resolution in opposition to terrorism, the Senate has let down each student attending Texas A&M and every victim of the terrorist attacks. At a time when Aggies need leadership and organization, the Student Senate offers empty words and little action.

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## CARTOON OF THE DAY



The *Battalion* encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to:

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Submissions made to old hotmail.com accounts will not be published. Attachments are not accepted.

## Choosing baby gender before conception is wrong, should be left to Mother Nature

For years, the issues surrounding medical professionals "playing God" have been debated in courtrooms and hospitals around the world. From cloning humans to cutting off life support, no one knows if and when the world of medicine has gone too far. The Center of Human Reproduction, one of the largest fertility clinics in the United States, is offering a new feature that takes things a little

too far. Last week, an announcement was made that the center's nine facilities in New York and Chicago areas will begin offering gender selection as an option for parents-to-be. Parents will be able to choose whether they have a boy or a girl prior to conception. Something that seems like such a harmless option is, in reality, extremely detrimental to this unborn child.

The process is called a preimplantation genetic diagnosis, or (PGD), and allows doctors to screen embryos for genetic disorders. In the process of gender selection, the parents undergo invitro fertilization, producing multiple embryos and then, using PGD, doctors will determine the sex and implant only female or male embryos into the mother.

The fertility doctors involved here have had the technology to do this for a while, but have refrained due to ethical concerns.

Unfortunately, these doctors have let go of their ethics and have made a decision that can be disastrous.

One should say up front that this is obviously not how God intended it. He places certain gendered babies with families for a reason, and by making that decision on their own, parents are taking away from what should be planned by a higher

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power. With that said, it is time to also realize that a great deal more than just ethics of "playing God" is involved with this issue.

When parents have the opportunity to decide for themselves whether they should have a boy or girl, there are expectations that come into play. The parents choose the sex based on what they expect that child to be, when the only thing guaranteed by this procedure is the specific sex. Parents may decide to have a boy with dreams of him being a star baseball player

or decide to have a girl that will dedicate her life to being a champion figure skater. But what happens when their little boy is interested in taking ballet or their little girl decides that she wants to play softball instead? There are expectations underlying the decision of a child's sex and when there are great expectations, there is bound to be times when the people involved are sorely disappointed as their dreams do not come true. Whether or not the child is ever informed of the procedure that was performed prior to their birth, there are great pressures being put on the child.

There is another procedure that allows gender selection called Sperm Sorting, which allows the size of a male's sperm to be evaluated. A larger size indicates a "female" sperm. However, this procedure has not shown to be as successful as the PGD procedure and will most likely be surpassed by (PGD's) popularity.

Just because science allows for the world of medicine to grow does not mean that everything natural should be forgotten. Morally, this procedure is not right and ethically it is not fair to the child. Many things in this world are natural for a reason and the gender selection of a child should remain in nature's hands.

*Melissa Bedsole is a senior psychology major.*