

OPINION

THE BATTALION

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Polygraph test proves flawed

The U.S. Defense and Intelligence communities have taken a beating during the past few months due to their inconstant state of efficiency — sometimes they know what they are doing, sometimes they do not. Regardless of the criticism, the American public still trusts these agencies to protect and guard this nation from outside threats. Until recently, many assumed that Defense and Intelligence had impenetrable borders, meaning that it would be impossible for someone to breach their rock solid security and gain access to The United States' secrets from the inside.



MELISSA FRIED

The primary security-screening tool for many agencies within U.S. Defense and Intelligence is nothing more than a worthless piece of metal, and if there was ever an appropriate time to be paranoid about national security, it is now.

“The primary security-screening tool for many agencies within U.S. Defense and Intelligence is nothing more than a worthless piece of metal.”

In a 245-page report released by the National Research Council, the polygraph, commonly referred to as the lie detector, was determined ineffective in recognizing spies and other national security risks during screening processes. This conclusion is not based on assumption, but on fact, and it is time the people of this nation pay attention.

Lie detectors function by measuring physiological changes such as heart rates and breathing rates. The machine cannot pick out a liar, but detects signs of anxiety and tension, which are often associated with lying. When this theoretical model is applied to the real world, it is astonishing that it never occurred to Intelligence agencies that spies may well be the most motivated and, possibly, the best trained to avoid detection by the device. If the United States can plant agents in other spy organizations, it should not be assumed that others do not have the same goal in mind.

The CIA has learned its lesson about depending on the lie detector. Relying heavily on the results of the test, Russian spy Aldrich H. Ames whizzed through two of the CIA's tests and was admitted into the agency. They were none the wiser until 10 U.S. agents were killed in Moscow, and all because this nation let its guard down based on a machine that showed Ames was telling the truth and overlooked what could have been a serious warning signal of a mole in

the agency. On the other hand, where the polygraph is unable to root out spies, it does an effective job in falsely naming the innocent as liars.

These unpleasant trade-offs were illustrated in a chart accompanying the National Research Council's report. Supposing a hypothetical population of 10,000 government employees, including 10 spies, were given the test, if the tests were sensitive enough to detect 80 percent of the traitors, 1,606 employees would fail the test—eight of them spies and 1,598 of them loyal. The same physiological changes — anxiety and tension — can cause the most truthful person to fail the test because these emotions are quickly attributed to traitors.

The Council admitted that accurate lie detection is achievable, but polygraph science has tended to avoid innovation and still relies on antiquated physiological signs. With all the money that has been pumped into U.S. Defense and Intelligence, it should be asking itself why neither division has taken the time to update technology on the home front before proceeding to immerse itself in other projects. In the past few months alone, the United States has been so caught up in peacekeeping and making war that it has forgotten, for just a moment, to take care of itself. The United States can not be expected to work at its full potential if it continues to live behind a curtain of false-belief of the machine's value and accidentally allow spies to hinder the successful carrying out of U.S. policies.

Movies love to portray the polygraph as effective. It is the power of an image of a needle going up and down really fast that evokes a response of overconfidence in this as a tool, said Stephen Fienberg, a professor of statistics and computer science at Carnegie Mellon University. Perhaps this is a prime example of when art does not imitate life.

Melissa Fried is a sophomore international studies major.



RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION

MAIL CALL

Anti-DWI campaign needed to dissuade drunk drivers

In response to George Deutsch's Oct. 24 column:

I would like to start off by commending George Deutsch for a tactful argument. However, I disagree.

Jacqueline Saburido made a choice to appear in those commercials, and in my opinion, does nothing at all to announce herself as a "side show act" in any way.

I also do not believe that the TxDOT or DPS is misusing her image for any publicity stunt.

What I do believe is that through her misfortune, she can tell others of the tragedies of drinking and driving. The more vivid images that a commercial uses, the more impact it has.

Whether or not it sends adults to the restroom to vomit, or children crying into their parent's arms may or may

not be a bad thing, at least they would learn something from it. Fear is a common tactic that is used to evoke negative emotions, thus eliminating unwanted behavior. As for this commercial, it goes without saying that it is somewhat disturbing, and alarming, and whether or not it will deter drunk driving is not my place to say.

But, I do believe that this commercial will give others a second chance to think whether or not they are sober enough to drive home. Maybe we need more offensive commercials to get the message out there, or someone to step up and show us the real life consequences of our actions.

As for Jacqueline Saburido, her story is one of a kind, but who is to say that it cannot happen to a friend, or even you. The commercial may not change everyone's behavior, but I know for a fact that it will change some, such as my father's.

Jennifer Huffcut
Class of 2003

Joe Price
Class of 1999

Deutsch's article is what's in poor taste. His treatment of Ms. Saburido is appalling.

In his article he describes her as "disgusting," "a side-show act," and says that she will "be sending adults to the restroom to vomit and children into their parents' arms to cry."

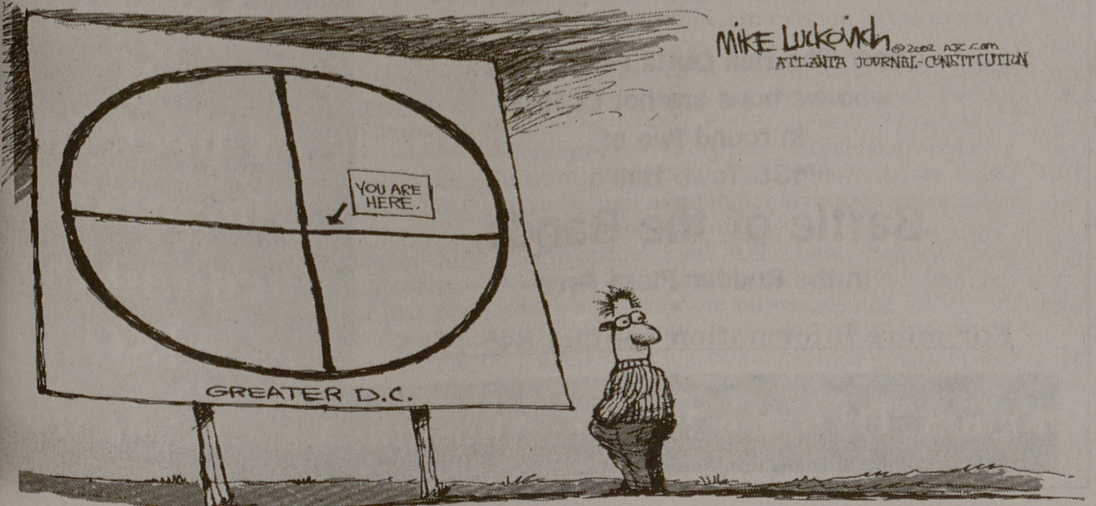
This woman has been through a tragedy that almost no one, and certainly not Deutsch, can even begin to imagine. The fact that she has the courage to face the television public should be commended, not ridiculed.

But according to Deutsch she should be in hiding for the rest of her life so that the public will not have to be confronted with the horrors that drunk driving causes.

What would Deutsch do if he saw Ms. Saburido in a restaurant? Would he run to the restroom to vomit? Would he ask that she leave a public place the way he has asked her to leave our televisions?

My hope is that Ms. Saburido doesn't read *The Battalion*.

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Traditions still thrive Many Aggies still enjoy A&M customs

When I took a tour of



SARA FOLEY

the Texas A&M campus my senior year in high school, I remember noticing with some bewilderment the sea of maroon shirts I was faced with. It seemed to me that every student, if not actually wearing an A&M shirt, had the logo monogrammed on a backpack, hat, or dangling from a key chain.

As I walked through the campus, my tour guide told stories of Aggie traditions that I was told many times later at my new student conference and Fish Camp. Although I may have gotten a bit annoyed at the repetition, I found myself telling my friends from other schools the same stories when they came to visit.

They would shake their heads and lose track of the Aggie terminology that I use as part of my everyday jargon.

Even Aggies who are not particularly fond of A&M can probably recount some stories, recite some yells.

They might even have a maroon T-shirt or two tucked away in their drawer or a sticker on their car. Although it may go unnoticed by some, the Aggie Spirit is alive and well.

Apparently, this is not the case at every university. In the Southern Methodist University school newspaper, *The Daily Campus*, a recent editorial criticized the students for their lack of school spirit and even quoted the words to "The Spirit of Aggieland," as it reprimanded SMU students for supporting alternative universities.

Aggies are fortunate not to have to deal with this. Even A&M's biggest on-campus

dissenters are better than the average student at some universities, as this SMU column indicates. In fact, the occasional person wearing a T-shirt from another university is often met with a number of glares on campus, and they are clearly part of the minority.

Not everyone can recount every tradition or the significance behind it, but luckily some people can, such as members of the Traditions Council, who make sure that A&M's history is not forgotten.

Even when upset in the close game against Texas Tech, one could still hear "Whoop" and "Howdy" amidst the crowds. This spirit does not exist at most universities, and at times we are quick to forget how fortunate we are to be part of a school with such a rigorous environment.

Sure, Aggies may get frustrated with the team at times. The student body may question some of the University's policies. Students may also complain about parking, along with a list of other grievances the administration imposes upon us.

However, underneath any reservations we might have, we know we have chosen to be here. We are Aggies and proud of our school. Although not every student appreciates and contributes to the A&M community, there are enough that do.

Aggies stand up at football games, whoop, take off their hats in the MSC and honor those who have lost their lives at Silver Taps. Without our spirit, Texas A&M would be just another state school, but with it Aggies distinguish themselves as people to be proud of.

Sara Foley is a sophomore journalism major.

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