

EDITORIAL MAROON OUT

A need to investigate

Since its inception in 1998, Aggies have associated purchasing Maroon Out T-shirts with showing the 12th Man spirit and funding a good cause at the same time. However, much of the hard-earned money and effort students expend on these T-shirts has inexplicably disappeared. The Memorial Student Center does not know the whereabouts of the \$48,000 to \$61,000 worth of Maroon Out T-shirts.

The Texas A&M community deserves to know where its money or T-shirts are and what kind of deficiencies existed that made such an embarrassing accounting discrepancy possible. An independent investigation into the location of the missing T-shirt funds should be launched.

To its credit, the Class Councils requested an audit and has implemented changes that should prevent this type of mistake in the future. To some, it might seem counterproductive to investigate an accounting discrepancy that occurred a year ago. But this incident is a virtual paradigm for what happens when organizations do not assume the proper responsibilities or take the necessary precautions when dealing with fund money. As Matt Fuxan, the 2002-2003 Maroon Out director and a senior international studies major put it: "It's like Bonfire, you don't really fix (a broken system) until something goes wrong."

MSC student organizations need to take proactive measures when dealing with Aggies' money and inventory expected to benefit all Aggies.

Aggies should be further concerned that the misplacing of this money — discovered in November — has only now been revealed. Students deserve answers as to why this error in accounting was not revealed for 10 months.

An independent investigation might prove useful in finding more mistakes that allowed such a large sum of money to disappear. The cooperation of the MSC in such an endeavor would also send a message that it responds to students' concerns and tries to rectify glaring errors.

THE BATTALION

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MAIL CALL

Cartoon spreads false ADD stigma

In response the Sept. 15 Crazy Jake cartoon:

considered seriously by many people, and it isn't something to joke about.

Stacy Mooring
Class of 2006

Evolution not a scientific theory

In response to Midhat Farooqi's Sept. 15 column:

"There's a definite design! And a design suggests a designer!" So said renowned evolutionist Paul Amos Moody when he realized his vain attempts couldn't prove Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Sadly, most disillusioned Darwinian followers won't ever share this revelation—the oxymoron of evolutionary science: completely unscientific science.

Evolution assembles no proof substantiating its claims for God's nonexistence. Neither can it disprove the weighty evidences for his existence. Further, it cannot explain mysteries like entropy or the case of the missing link.

Clint Rainey
Class of 2007

Protecting the skies

New airline screening systems need improvement

It has become apparent that when in doubt, the American government color codes. There's the infamous "terror alert" hue gradation and the traffic system. However, this time, the elementary school strategy is necessary to protect people on airplanes. The government is using color codes to classify the security risk of airline travelers, according to The Washington Post. The new screening system will analyze a dossier of materials to determine a passenger's color-coded risk level.

Critics of the new and more comprehensive security screening system hail it as a monumental invasion of privacy, but as is so often the case, personal privacy must be sacrificed for the sake of America's collective safety. The crux of whether the new system will succeed or fail lies in which screening criteria are chosen.

The Transportation Security Administration is in the final stages of developing its new system, Computer Assisted Passenger Pre-screening System II, or simply CAPPS II. According to The Post, CAPPS II screens passengers in two stages. First, information supplied by both airlines and private companies will be used to determine the probability that the name on the ticket is in fact the true identity of the person boarding the plane. The information garnered will vary in scope of invasiveness, from standard, driver license type data to information provided by private companies that catalogue things such as one's shopping habits for commercial reasons and in turn, pass this information along to the TSA. The second step incorporates what The Post vaguely terms "government intelligence" into the existing passenger profile and identifies any outstanding warrants one may have for violent felonies.

Finally, a numerical score is generated based on this smorgasbord of information which ultimately determines one's color code: green, yellow or red. Unlike the terror alert color system, which in no way coincides with common sense, this color code is consumer friendly and easy to read because it works just like the traffic system lights. If a person is green, he or she sails through security without a hitch. If the color is red, the person may end up getting arrested.

Literally. Groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union have problems with CAPPS II. The Post cites Barry Steinhardt, director of the ACLU's technology and liberty program, as saying: "This system is going to be replete with errors. You could be falsely arrested. You could be delayed. You could lose your

ability to travel."

As inconvenient and problem-ridden as the color system may be, the fact remains that the current system is glaringly ineffective. Something must be done.

The current screening system employs certain criteria which 9-11 has proven to be both antiquated and easily manipulated, and must be ousted. The existing air security screening system will flag a traveler as a potential risk if his ticket is either one-way or purchased with cash. The terrorist hijackers of 9-11, however, bought round-trip tickets with credit cards. These screening measures pose no obstacles to groups such as al-Qaida.

Noticeably absent from the profile formulated about each traveler is race. As a type of information that could easily be obtained from one's driver license, race as a criterion is not particularly invasive, but its use is stigmatized as "racial profiling" and is forbidden as such by the federal government.

Fedwa Malti-Douglas, an Arab-American academic, argues the case that race should be used in airport screening procedures in an op-ed piece which appeared in The New York Times, entitled, "Let Them Profile Me." Malti-

Douglas attests to the inconvenience but necessity of such security hassles, saying, "Arab-Americans like me want to be safe when we fly. Cooperating with security procedures, even when we suspect that we are getting more attention than our fellow citizens, makes sense. Does anyone really want a security official to hesitate before stopping a suspicious passenger out of a fear of an accusation of bias?"

The TSA is justified in invading America's collective privacy for the sake of safety, but the system must be updated and made more efficient and unimpeded by the dictates of political correctness. Because of the way the new screening system works, no one criterion (save for perhaps an outstanding arrest warrant) will cause a passenger to be coded as red or even yellow and thus be detained or forbidden to fly, which is as it should be. Race should be taken into consideration. It is simply illogical for CAPPS II to create a profile of someone based on information ranging from his home address to something as invasive as one's personal shopping habits and exclude a criterion as basic as race

in the name of being inoffensive.

The United States' national security is too important to compromise by walking on eggshells.

Lindsye Forson is a senior journalism major.



GRACIE ARENAS • THE BATTALION



A tedious and dangerous fight

Last week, the president erred in comparing the rebuilding of post-war Iraq to rebuilding post-war Japan and Germany. "America has done this kind of work before," President George W. Bush said. "Following World War II, we lifted up the defeated nations of Japan and Germany and stood with them as they built representative governments." But Iraq is not another Japan or Germany.

To use a new Marshall Plan in Iraq is to forget the most important and obvious variable that will continuously haunt the rebuilding process — terrorism. The duality therein, the existence of and necessity to fight terrorism, will make the rebuilding process just as tedious as it is dangerous.

Japan and Germany were not terrorist states before the United States aided in their redevelopment and thus the Marshall Plan did not have to factor it in. As disgusting as it is, the extermination of Jews in Europe was not meant to strike terror in the hearts of gentiles but to relieve them.

Such a seemingly small difference between the philosophy behind 1940s Germany and the present-day terrorism in the Middle East is precisely why Iraq is such a different venture for the United States. Never before has the United States had to rebuild a nation while fighting terrorism; this poses a problem.

"Our strategy in Iraq," Bush said, "has three objectives: destroying the terrorists, enlisting the support of other nations for a free Iraq and helping Iraqis assume responsibility for their own defense and

their own future."

Two out of three ain't bad.

Destroying the terrorists will be nearly impossible, because Iraq is poised to become the newest target of terrorist aggression in the Middle East. If, as terrorism experts have suggested, the cause of Islamic terrorism is the hatred of the influence of Western culture and government, then it would seem the new Iraq presents itself as the perfect target. And what can the United States do?

Israel is one of the most, if not the most, specialized countries to combat terrorism. It has won numerous wars against nations whose citizens now must slip silently into the country and resort to murdering civilians in a vain attempt to achieve victory. Yet Israel cannot defend against all the terrorists acts occurring inside its borders.

If Israel, a strongly democratic and largely free state, cannot secure its domestic front, it doesn't say much as Iraq — currently under martial law — has suffered largescale terrorist attacks already. It would seem that the freer Iraq becomes, the easier it will be for terrorists to organize and act. It is, after all, free societies that are the most vulnerable to acts of terrorism.

The war is a paradox. While simultaneously fueling terrorist resentment to the war, of which the rebuilding of Iraq is a vital part, it also reduces the numbers of terrorists as well as their resources.

This increased resentment is not to be desired, but motive without opportunity is nothing. With dwindling numbers and the elimination of vast resources, terrorist

opportunity is fading but will never be completely eliminated.

The war on terror is like the war on drugs with the same hyperbolic result. Both wars are fought not with victory being the absence of drug users or terrorists, but with victory being defined simply by a reduction in drug users or terrorists. In other words, no matter how many D.A.R.E. programs children see, there

will always be one willing to try marijuana or some other drug. Similarly, no matter how forceful the United States is against terror, there will always be someone willing to take his own life while murdering others in the name of terror.

If successful, the two campaigns will continuously reduce the number of drug users and terrorists, but because of the human factor, the numbers will never reach zero.

Does this notion diminish the integrity of the cause? No. But it is something that all Americans need to be aware of. The violence in Iraq, and in the Middle East in general, will not end anytime soon.

"The war on terror," Bush said, "would be a lengthy war, a different kind of war, fought on many fronts in many places." What he didn't say or couldn't say was that the war on terror would be perpetual, not just lengthy.

The reality of this battle needs to be brought home. The war of terror will not end; it will not be easy; but it's still worth fighting.

Michael Ward is a senior history major.