

Necessary evil

'No-Fly' list vital in protecting airline passengers from possible terrorist threats

Recently, the Transportation Security Administration's controversial "No-Fly" list has been causing problems for many innocent people suspected of being terrorists. This list is distributed to airlines with instructions to carefully search and screen anyone deemed a threat. This includes extra searches, interrogations and long delays at the airport for people unlucky enough to be on the list.

In response, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a class action lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration. It argues that the list violates the passengers' constitutional rights and that profiling at the airports should be stopped. In reality, this list and its implementation are just and necessary steps needed to maintain national security.

Opponents of this list make comparisons to George Orwell's "1984," but the simple truth is, the government is doing nothing wrong. The ACLU argues that the "No-Fly" list violates airline passengers' constitutional rights to freedom from unreasonable search and seizure and to due process of law. True, every U.S. citizen has these rights.

However, the justice system has realized that there are limitations to these rights when a person enters a high-security area. Citizens also have the right to bear arms, but they can't carry a gun into an airport. So, if a citizen is suspected of being a danger to others, precau-

tions must be taken.

Searches of passengers and their luggage are also justified and accepted security measures at an airport. Outside of the airport, such a search would be considered unreasonable and rightly so, but that doesn't apply here.

Furthermore, people on this list should actually be searched more extensively due to the fact that government agencies have determined that they are a higher threat to security than the average airline passenger.

Due process of law is also upheld. The passengers are never wrongfully arrested, nor are they ever accused of any crime. The worst that happens is an interrogation by security personnel to determine if they are a threat, and then they are released if they are not. Police officers can legally hold someone for 24 hours without accusing them of a crime. The longest any passenger on the list has been delayed is four hours. While airport security personnel are not police, the principle is the same, and no one's rights

are being violated.

The ACLU also argues that many people are on the list because of their ethnicity or religion. This type of profiling should be allowed in the interests of security. If it is a known fact that the vast majority of airline hijackings come from a certain group, it makes sense to focus security efforts more toward that group.

The implementation of the "No-Fly" list has been a problem that needs to be remedied. The Transportation Security Administration needs to outline a clear-cut procedure for identifying potential threats to security. More importantly, once a person has been cleared and is no longer considered a risk, the person needs to be taken off the list. Many people have been repeatedly harassed at numerous airports, even after they received a letter saying that they weren't a security threat.

The ACLU also complains that the means by which security threats are assessed is kept secret from the public. What critics fail to understand is that the American public does not need to know everything the U.S. government does.

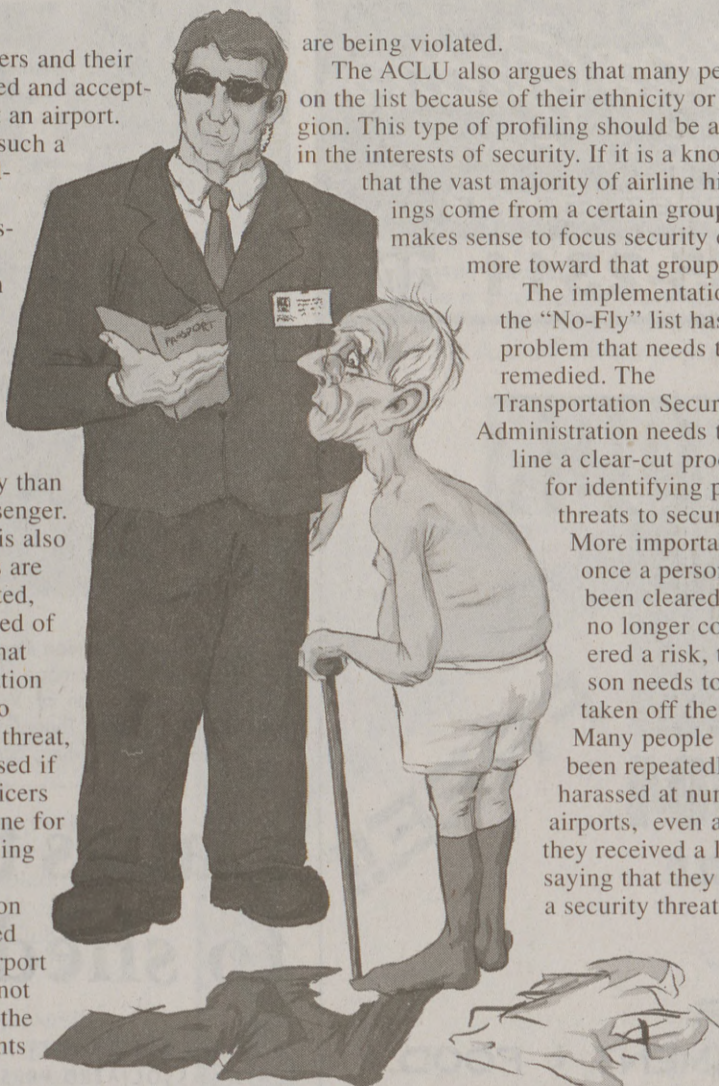
It is impractical and dangerous to reveal intelligence information and procedures to the people. While secrecy may be a scary thought to some, it is nonetheless necessary.

The system may not be perfect, but that is hardly an argument for not using it. If nothing else, the use of the "No-Fly" list deters potential terrorists and gives peace of mind to airline passengers.

The "No-Fly" list implemented by the Department of Homeland Security is a just and valuable security asset. It does not deny any basic rights guaranteed to citizens by the Constitution. The list can be a hassle to many people who are wrongfully placed on it, and something must be done to rectify that. However, the list should still be utilized as a valuable tool in the war on terror.



DAN ROSSELL



Dan Roszell is a junior nuclear engineering and political science major. Graphic by Tony Peidra

Money poorly spent

The president's tax cuts have hurt Americans in need while catering to wealthy interests

Since President Bush's tax cuts were first proposed, Democrats have been warning Americans about the two inevitable consequences: further accumulation of wealth for the already privileged and drastic cuts in domestic programs around the country. For some reason, many Americans have failed to heed the Democrats' warning. Perhaps their logic was too simple.

For example, 60 percent of the total benefit of the cuts has gone to the wealthiest 10 percent, with 45 percent of the total benefit going to the top 1 percent, about \$54,480 a year versus an average of \$47 for a family in the bottom 20 percent of earners. This clearly benefits the upper class, broadening the already vast gap in wealth throughout the United States. And what about the warning about funding for domestic programs? To explain this, Democrats have offered a mind-boggling formula. When there is less money coming in than before, something is going to have to go.

According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the domestic discretionary programs suffering cuts include environmental programs, education and job training, veterans programs and transportation. The administration is looking to these reductions in response to the increasing deficit. However, according to the OMB, because these programs make up only one-sixth of the overall federal budget, Bush's tax cuts will cost more than can be saved by eliminating these programs. Consequently, it would seem that the country is losing valuable programs to pay for tax cuts that benefit the wealthiest Americans.



JOHN DAVID BLAKLEY

So how much are we talking in cuts? A couple of dollars here, a few dozen more children without health care there? Hardly. According to the AFL-CIO, the Bush tax cuts will reduce domestic discretionary spending to its lowest level in 46 years.

Just a few of the programs include Title I education funding, which includes improving education for low-income and other disadvantaged children, providing housing vouchers for low-income families, the Clean Water Act State Revolving Fund to help states pay for sewage treatment plants, the Supplemental Nutritional Program for Women, Infants and Children, and Head Start.

Perhaps people have not acknowledged the resulting costs of the tax cuts because the losses do not seem immediate or close to home. However, a new report from the House Appropriations Committee shows that every county in Texas is feeling economic tension when it comes to funding for entitlements such as Medicare, Children's Healthcare Insurance Program (CHIP) and veterans' pensions.

According to the report, which covers the estimated caseload and total dollar losses due to Medicaid cuts for 2004-05, Brazos County will lose more than \$14 million in Medicaid and CHIP funds. While a dollar amount may not show the injury these cuts induce, the caseload reduction numbers for Brazos County paint a more sympathetic picture. Nine hundred thirty parents in poverty will lose prescription drug benefits, 221 elderly and disabled persons will lose community care, 170 children, 99 pregnant women and 51 medically needy persons will be cut from Medicaid, as well as 960 children who will be cut from CHIP enrollment in Brazos County alone.

It is not likely that anyone in the Bush administration, nor the

citizens who put the president in office, have ever had to fear being without prescription drugs or health care for themselves or their children. It is a situation beset with an incredible sense of helplessness, fear and guilt. It is a situation in which rhetoric about "pulling yourself up by the bootstraps" does not help.

Twenty-seven percent of Brazos County lives below the poverty line. This includes 2,000 mothers with children below 18. If the poor are expected to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, the government must first give them the boots — housing, education and of course health care. The lack of compassion seen throughout the Republican party from Bush down to the voter is inexcusable. Spouting rhetoric about the personal responsibility of the poor may help them relieve their conscience about their exceedingly comfortable lifestyle while children go without medicine, but it does not solve the problem.

Domestic discretionary spending and entitlement programs have been implemented because of the common belief that America can do better. The U.S. government can do better for children, parents, veterans, the elderly and the ill. However, when an administration puts in place an agenda that values the desires of the wealthy over the distress of the truly needy, it is apparent the administration does not share this belief.

John David Blakley is a sophomore political science major.

MAIL CALL

Crossword puzzle clue demeans nerds

I am an avid fan of the daily crossword printed in The Battalion, and it has been my friend and companion through many a long and dull lecture. Therefore, you can imagine my indignation during STAT 211 on Wednesday, when I discovered that the answer to clue 5-Down, "Geek," was intended to be "Nerd." As a computer science major, it's bad enough that I must confront ignorance about these two terms on a daily basis; to see such an egregious misconception printed in our cherished and respected school newspaper is an outrage.

To set the record straight, the word "geek," which originally referred to sideshow carnival performers whose bizarre acts would typically include biting the head off of a live chicken, has now come to be defined as "a person regarded as foolish, inept, or clumsy;" "nerd," on the other hand, has come to be "a term of praise; a person who identifies what is truly interesting and important and doesn't care to be distracted by trivial chatter and silly status games."

To assert that the crossword was not created by The Battalion staff is

inconsequential; were such a travesty to be committed against other minority groups, the student body and administration would be in an uproar. Sadly, until public awareness is raised about the nerd lifestyle and people take the time to educate themselves about our status, we will remain an overlooked and invisible segment of the population.

Caleb Bell
Class of 2005

Tutoring professors out-teach A&M's

Everyone knows that Texas A&M is a great school. On the other hand, does the meaning of good school have to include classes in which the professors are no better teachers than the other students in the class? I'm definitely not saying all professors for every subject are like this, but from what I've gathered, there are quite a few.

I attended my first MATH 141 tutoring and review session last night, the night before the third exam, because I could not let myself fail yet another exam. Of course it's partially my own

fault, but I noticed a problem: The instructor in the review session taught me more in three hours than my professor has taught me all semester.

Why must I pay extra to receive the teaching I deserve as a student at A&M, paying tuition as high as it is already? Fifteen dollars well-spent, I'd say, but what about the other \$13,000 I've paid to be here? Don't get me wrong; I love A&M and I would never want to choose another school over being here, but I just don't see why I must go elsewhere to learn the material I pay so much to learn here.

Robert D. Arndt
Class of 2007

The Batt's revealing photos need to go

I was quite offended with the content of The Batt yesterday. On the front page, there was a picture featuring a woman with a skin-tight shirt. For some reason, I still picked up a copy. I opened it up only to see more pictures of scantily clad women. These weren't even cartoons; they were actual real-life people wearing next to nothing. They were wearing swimsuits to be

exact, how offensive!

I can't believe you allow this type of content in a University publication! Swimsuits do not have a place on this fine, upstanding campus. Having those extremely offensive drawings were bad enough, but I can't understand why you might publish pictures of something I might see in real life on any given spring day. What are you thinking?

This garbage has to go; I prefer to see women in business suits and drawings who have no physical features. I expect you to clean up your act.

Chris Wilson
Class of 2006

Senior class council shouldn't get tickets

Recently I've heard many complaints about the cost of Ring Dance tickets: \$70 a couple if I'm not mistaken. It has been brought to my attention by a 2005 Class Council member that members of the 2004 Class Council are getting their tickets for free. I'm sure their defense will be that they have worked hard to set up Ring Dance and to represent the senior

class and that they have "earned" a free ride to Ring Dance. But isn't leadership putting the people you lead or represent before yourself?

I didn't see anything on the Association Web page about Class Council members needing more hours or a better GPA to earn their rings. So what makes them so privileged to deserve free tickets? From a group of people who preach about all Aggies being equal, this move seems rather hypocritical. It's good to know that Class Council can set the ticket prices with no worries about emptying their own pockets. Maybe for their final effort this year they can work to raise tuition for all students not involved in Class Council.

Tim Ball
Class of 2004

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 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: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mailcall@thebattalion.net