

Unwittingly Aiding Al-Qaeda

These days, America's law enforcement and homeland security officials must appreciate the wisdom of Walt Kelly's cartoon character Pogo -- "We have met the enemy, and he is us." For as these dedicated Americans are fighting for our future, they are increasingly forced to defend against domestic activists determined to wrap anti-terrorism efforts in a legal and regulatory straightjacket.

It should have been obvious to everyone after 9-11 that we need a new, more proactive approach to protect America. But, instead of putting their ideological biases aside, professional activists have worked to obstruct common-sense anti-terror tactics with a torrent of lawsuits and media demagoguery. With some troubling success, their radical lawyers have demanded that unelected judges shut down interrogations of terrorism suspects; block prosecutions of terrorists' accomplices; stop federal agency sharing of terror intelligence; and grant full constitutional rights to enemy combatants captured and held overseas.



Daniel J. Popeo
Chairman
Washington
Legal Foundation

Lately, the hysteria and paranoia over our government's efforts to preempt terrorism have reached a fever pitch. Unwitting politicians have begun an alarmist assault against the USA Patriot Act, and groups like the ACLU have filed lawsuits against its enforcement. Even the *Washington Post* has remarked that "much of the criticism of the law has been shrill and ill-informed." The provisions subjected to the most intense scrutiny, such as "delayed notice" searches, simply codify techniques that have been approved by judges and used by law enforcement for decades. In fact, that provision and others go beyond what is constitutionally mandated to protect terror suspects' rights. Despite this, one ACLU suit and several bills pending in Congress would shut off critical sources of information and imperil ongoing terrorism investigations.

Even our military isn't immune from this brand of frivolous activism. Anti-military activists, hiding behind the cloak of environmental laws, convinced one federal judge to restrain the use of new Navy radar technology, while another is entertaining a request that military training exercises be halted. Other radicals are busy trying to haul U.S. soldiers into foreign courts for allegedly committing "war crimes" while defending our national security.

How amused our enemies must be to find some Americans, blinded by ideology, pushing to extend absolute rights and other legal courtesies to deadly al-Qaeda foot soldiers. Don't they understand that playing by Marquess of Queensbury rules is entirely inappropriate, even fatal, in the dirty game of international terrorism?

American activists and armchair pundits can't have it both ways. They can't hinder steps to make our nation more secure and then, in the aftermath of another tragedy, fiercely criticize the government for failing to protect us. When that next terrorist attack comes, and more innocent Americans are robbed of the most cherished civil liberty of all -- life itself -- the ideologues and their political allies should expect some hard questions aimed in *their* direction.



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