

## The State of Our Union

America's celebration of the new year was shadowed by stark reminders of the perilous world we now live in — unprecedented security measures, grounded flights, and specific threats of impending catastrophic attacks. While most Americans firmly support the war against terrorism, some professional activists and opportunistic politicians began 2004 with a resolution to keep homeland security efforts tied up in a legal straitjacket. And sadly, they are manipulating one of America's most respected institutions — the judiciary — to do it.

These ideologues remain convinced that their absolutist view of "civil liberties" must always prevail over Americans' right to live free from terrorism. No aspect of our government's security operation is immune from activists' carefully planned and executed campaign. Relentless attacks on public officials dedicated to protecting our lives have fueled activists' profitable fund-raising drives. Special interest groups and lawyers then invest their overflowing war chest in lawsuits and mean-spirited public relations advertising opposing everything from major military actions overseas to the review of airplane passenger manifests. Even moves to modernize outdated intelligence gathering techniques have met with paranoid claims that government is running roughshod over everyone's rights.



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Worst of all, however, is the activists' use of litigation to impose the rules of our overprotective criminal justice system on the president's military decision making. Terrorists are enemy soldiers without a government, not ordinary criminals. Yet, ideological lawyers have convinced some federal courts that unelected judges, and not our Commander-in-Chief, should have the last word on how our military can detain captured terrorists. One appeals court in New York City made the incredible declaration last month that since America has not been formally declared a "zone of combat," federal officials must charge a captured terrorist with a crime or release him.

While judges and activists quibble over legal niceties, our despicable enemies are pondering how to take advantage of their newly created constitutional rights in the next attack. One can only hope the U.S. Supreme Court, which will review these matters soon, reminds judges that our Constitution doesn't

### ***Creating national*** authorize them to run military operations.

### ***insecurity***

It would seem that for some professional activists, 9/11 is a distant memory. Why else would they want to constrict America's ability to protect its citizens? But the terrorists' war is far from over. Their fanatical ambition to kill innocent Americans and cripple our economy has in no way subsided. Preempting the next terrorist attacks on our soil remains a daunting task. And there is no margin for error.

So it's time we got our priorities straight. Do we defer to the ideologues' rigid agenda of absolute "civil liberties" for all, including our enemies, or do we trust government officials and our military to use their powers wisely and protect us from the horror terrorists can unleash?



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