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Subject: **S*x, lies and politics: Part 4. Terrorists and the politicians who love them**

I am induced to go off topic by this morning's developments. Life is risky and is made a bit more so by terrorist attacks, but that increase is modest compared with, say, the carnage from motor vehicle use that we accept as part of the cost of our modern life style. Families and loved ones who are victimized by terrorist acts deserve our sympathy and help but no more so than the many others whose lives are disrupted by chance events.

It is unfortunate that there are so many whackos who believe that it is an accomplishment to kill a bunch of people while taking their own lives but the reality is that advancing technology and increasing population densities make it progressively easier to do that. One result of today's incidents will likely be improved procedures for preventing and responding to hijackings but that will not end the threat. Sooner or later someone will import a nuclear device and set it off in some large city.

While it is important that we be alert to such threats and take appropriate actions to prevent them, it is also important that we not destroy our personal freedoms in the process. Inappropriate actions are being undertaken now all over the country in response to people's natural desire to "do something about it" but most of that will fade away in a few days. The greater risk is long term and not from the terrorists but from the demagogues and politicians who will attempt to capitalize on this disaster.

In a public statement this morning, President Bush said that "Freedom was attacked." That is incorrect. The attack was on four aircraft and their passengers and on four buildings and their occupants. The attack on freedom is just beginning, as politicians attempt to use these incidents as an excuse for imposing restrictions on speech and assembly.

These incidents will be used as an excuse to put us all under closer surveillance and to curtail our freedom of speech. For example, California Senator Feinstein, who evidently believes that the Bill of Rights was a big mistake, will likely renew her attempt to prohibit discussions of bomb construction on the internet in spite of the First Amendment. Proponents of the insane "War on Drugs" will try to find ways to justify increased spending and military action in support of

their misguided goals.

The FBI will again push for a requirement that they be allowed to intercept and decode all private communications, whether on the telephone or internet. Other governmental agencies will press to criminalize all public disclosures of classified documents so as to prevent future exposure of governmental corruption such as appeared in the Pentagon Papers.

While it will be necessary to make some adjustments in our lives, it is important to recognize that it is better to take some risks than to lose all freedoms. In examining possible security measures we should consider not just the prospective benefit but also the cost in resources and freedoms. If we let the government leadership turn this into a police state in order to reduce terrorism, the terrorists will have won.

Les Earnest