

Two years after 9/11 attacks, America is less secure than ever

Over the past two years President Bush and his team have banned nail clippers from airplanes, created a nifty color-coded alert system and made duct tape the number one housewarming gift in America.



DAVID CROW

Given all that the President has done to make us feel safe, we should all sleep tight knowing that we're much better off now than we were prior to Sept. 11, right?

Unfortunately, not only are we not safer today than we were two years ago, we're actually much less prepared for another terrorist strike. As the nation's attention has focused on troubles abroad, we have severely neglected our last line of defense here at home.

In New York, instead of increasing funding for firefighters, police and other first responders, the city is actually laying off these people and closing firehouses. As tragic as the terrorist attacks were, think of how many thousands of lives were saved due to the heroic efforts of these first responders.

Today, not only are fire and police squads understaffed, they are not properly equipped. One of the reasons so many firefighters lost their lives on Sept. 11 was because of inadequate communication equipment so that firefighters and police officers could talk to one another. First responders are still without that equipment more than two years later.

Would we ever send our troops into battle without the very best equipment? Of course not, yet today police and firefighters lack even the most basic necessities.

WMDs or no, war on terror is no joke

On Sept. 14., several Davidson College students participated in a debate on U.S. foreign policy. During the segment concerning Iraq, Mbye Njie '04, speaking against U.S. policy, clearly won the audience over. All he had to do was ask one question and the crowd erupted in uproarious laughter:

"Where are the weapons of mass destruction?"

To the anti-war left, the United States's inability to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is the ultimate revenge. The primary justification for the war is nowhere to be found, leaving only dubious reasons such as oil and imperialism.

They couldn't be more wrong.

Three scenarios arise concerning the question of the location of the WMD.

The first scenario is that there is still biological, chemical, and even nuclear material in Iraq yet to be found. Unless Mbye Njie and his fans enjoy the taste of feet, they should get down on their knees and pray this scenario doesn't occur. Unfortunately for them, there is still indication that some weapons will be found.

Last month, chief weapons inspector David Kay reported that progress is being made in the hunt for the weapons. Key Iraqi scientists are slowly telling the inspectors information as they realize that the feared Saddam won't be coming back. Kay said that "documents that relate to WMD activities" as well as "physical evidence" have been found.

Too much interaction between the sexes?

Davidson class sizes have grown too large and it's about time the administration does something about it. Too often, 300-level courses overflow with grumpy Davidsonians, intolerant of discussion that might interrupt their sleep.

My suggestion: separate each class by sex. Men at 12:30, Women at 1:20. Who needs feminist babble anyway?

If you fill out a Grill order at 6:30, you can expect your Chicken Baby Blue by 9 at the Union Cafe. You better eat it while you're in line though, or else it'll get cold by the time you swipe your Cat Card.



NICHOLAS CARLSON

But this is a problem easily fixed. Males: eat in the Union, enjoy your mozzarella sticks. Females: Beat it, there's plenty to eat in the Wild Cat Den, and we won't come looking for you there.

Vail Commons gets crowded too. The line to swipe your card often extends all the way to the top of the stairs. Come at the wrong time, and the lamp might just get switched off right in your face. Ever have to wait 20 minutes for a second helping of Macaroni?

We don't have to deal with this. Guys: Eat at Commons from 5:45-8:30. Girls: Hit the salad bar from 8:45-10.

How on earth was this total neglect of homeland security allowed to happen? Two words: tax cuts.

You knew those wonderful tax cuts that Republicans get so excited about had to have a catch, right? Well this is it. You cut taxes and you have to cut services.

Consider that every time the Department of Homeland Security raises the threat level from yellow to orange, every city in the country must pay overtime and other expenses to cover extra police details. Because of the tax cuts almost all of this money comes out of state and local pockets with very little help from the federal government.

"The administration is making us less secure, not more secure."

In a city like Los Angeles this heightened security costs an extra \$2.5 million a week. No wonder California is experiencing such a severe budget crisis.

What federal money is given out is distributed in such a way that Wyoming, with virtually no real terrorist targets, receives more than seven times as much money per person than a high threat state like California does.

This unacceptable policy of cutting funds for homeland security in favor of tax cuts was too much for White House counterterrorism advisor, Rand Beers, who resigned in protest this summer and crossed the aisle to become Senator John Kerry's national security advisor.

Beers commented that, "The administration wasn't matching its deeds to its words in the war on terrorism. They're making us less secure, not more secure."

Funny how Republicans consistently score higher in polls on national security than Democrats. I guess people just don't realize that tax cuts actually cut more than just taxes.

The second scenario is that Saddam had the weapons but destroyed them when he realized that war was inevitable, in an effort to make the United States appear deceitful. This possibility, if true, would be even more embarrassing to the anti-war side. It would seem that they played right into Saddam's hands through their attacks on the Bush administration for "lying."

The final scenario is that Saddam had given up his WMDs long before the war. I'll admit that this situation is very possible. But if it's the case, the war was still justified.

Every single major intelligence agency in the world, even those of the countries that opposed the war, believed that Saddam had retained WMDs. Bill Clinton recently said it was "incontestable that on the day I left office, there were unaccounted for stocks of biological and chemical weapons in Iraq."

Inspections weren't working. Saddam never produced the evidence that he had destroyed all the weapons he claimed to. Colin Powell produced recorded evidence of Iraqis deceiving inspectors during his speech at the United Nations. Saddam never granted unfettered interviews with Iraqi weapons scientists—clear evidence that he had something to hide.

With all these indications, President Bush rightly decided that a power-hungry dictator with an indisputable record of chemical weapon use and invasion could not be given the benefit of the doubt.

Yes, Bush took a risk on the WMD, but it was a risk worth taking. If a terrorist had snuck an Iraqi dirty bomb into a major metropolitan area, which was completely possible given what we knew about Iraq, no one would be laughing in the 900 Room.

It doesn't happen much, but waiting at a water fountain between classes can be a real pain. Why worry about this potentiality? New Rule: Everyone on campus belongs to one water fountain in Chambers. Chicks can select which one they want, but Dudes, we've got to be chosen to use ours. And then spanked.

There could be one water fountain that both sexes can use, call it Co-Flow, but let's make fun of those people. Its disgusting, who'd want to share a water fountain with a girl?

Here's the real problem though: There is way too much social interaction on this campus between the sexes. Far, far, far too much discourse between people, sexes, who we all know to be very, very, different.

So what we gotta do is take that vacant plot of land between Vail and the Sophomore Apartments and build houses. Houses for people to eat in. Large sterile eating halls. Sterile eating houses like 9th century Clan Halls. But instead of having the wenches pouring our Mead, we don't even want to see 'em.

Keep them women away while we eat our grub. Let the other sex eat by themselves, off in some other place that's not here.

If they really need to see us, let 'em come when we turn on the blacklights. Let's call it Talibananza and make 'em wear bikinis to show how liberated our gals can be.

Attention seniors: A bit of advice from one of of your own

BY ELIZABETH REDPATH
Guest Columnist

Oh Davidson.

It feels like just yesterday that I was a freshman. Unadulterated. Ebullient. Sanguine. Freshman.

God it's been a long day.

My friends and I recently decided that we want to be freshmen again. We want to lose the stiff posture, the jaded gait, the numb approach to everyday life. In short, we want to play again.

I can't say we are hot on the trail yet, but at least we have consulted a compass. Reality is our only stumbling block, but if we've learned one thing at Davidson, it is this: nothing, no even reality, can stop an over-achiever.

Our mission is clear. We are going to chase and reclaim the innocence that quietly stole away sometime over the past 3 years.

Our pursuit takes place on Tuesdays from 4:00-5:30. One of us has class until 4:00, and then several others have various commitments at 5:30. We tried other days of the week, but it was impossible to find a collective opening in our daily planners (some of us have multiple planners, which made it really confusing, but I digress...).

We realize that every hour is an hour lost, but what could we do? Skip class? Most certainly not. Give up library time? Hardly. Drop out of a resume-boosting campus organization? Yeah right. That's okay though: an hour and a half should be enough time to find ourselves. Two weeks have gone by, so allow me to catch you up on our progress.

Week One. Gathering the troops was a bit of a challenge, but once we dragged Paul from his carrel in the library, we were officially on the road to regression.

Almost immediately, something good happened: we rediscovered the Lake Campus. We rented a pontoon (who knew we had a boathouse at this school?), drove to the middle of the lake, dove in the water, splashed, laughed... and discussed the LSAT. Oh, and job searches. Who went to the career services resume workshop? Who is going directly to grad school? Who thinks the economy will actually leave us a choice in the matter? Who feels inclined to stop treading water? We paused.

We averted our eyes in shame. We had just violated rule number one of the campaign: NEVER discuss the future (or lack thereof). Innocence had been in sight, but we had tripped over our own feet. Fortunately, we didn't have long to dwell on the failure—our daily planners beckoned.

Week Two. One of our members didn't show up. She fell asleep, face down, in her medieval poetry book. As a result, we've adopted a demerit system: first missed meeting is just a warning, but the second time is more serious—you buy the beer on Friday night.

We took our group off campus again in an attempt to encourage entire devotion to our noble cause. If we move our bodies, hopefully our minds will follow. Megan's parents just moved to Davidson, so we go to her house. We sit on the porch.

Beth has the ingenious idea of multi-tasking our hour and a half, so we eat dinner. Jeff wants to go one step further and play Taboo, but he can't convince us. Let's just sit, someone says. Let's do nothing, another person concurs. I look around, wondering which smart-ass will comment on the impropriety of using the verb "to do" as an antecedent to "nothing." But alas, there is silence. Glorious silence.

The silence is broken, but gently. We talk about freshmen year. We talk about the long hours we spent in Commons, complaining about the food and running back to get more (perhaps just as an excuse to stay longer). We talk about the time before we owned daily planners. We talk about the meat grinder that is Davidson College.

Some of us are still standing on the edge, keeping a wary eye on the turning blade. Some of us fell in a long time ago. Regardless, we are all aware that it is there, lurking, threatening, stealing our days. We talk about priorities. Our lists are similar. We are similar. And connected.

Perhaps it wasn't meant to be this way. Perhaps we overran college, not stopping long enough to pay our proper respects. Perhaps we can't help ourselves. After all, Davidson self-selects for our type. But is it worth it? How much did we lose along the way? Can we ever turn around and catch up with innocence? Do we even want to?

The questions linger. The answers hang in the air, intangible and inaccessible. I think it's probably better that way. But the important thing is that, on this day, we spent an hour and a half doing nothing. We argued. We teased. And we laughed. Unadulterated laughter, ebullient laughter, sanguine laughter. The laughter of a freshman. No, better than the laughter of a freshman—the laughter of a senior.

To the Class of 2004—this is our last year. If you must, schedule time for fun. Schedule time to laugh. Schedule time to love, live, and be a kid again. Those are all more important than any thesis you'll ever write, any test you'll ever take, and any diploma you'll ever receive.

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