

**PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS
DUE WENESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2008**

I. “Provide for the Common Defense”

In the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States, the purposes of our government are listed – “establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.” Among these, defending the nation against foreign enemies has always been one of the government’s major responsibilities. The article below was published last year, the fifth anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center.

Five years later: Are we safer?

Say this for President Bush, said *The New York Times* in an editorial. He sure believes in the power of positive thinking. After British authorities foiled a plot by radical Muslims to blow up passenger jets bound for the U.S., the president seized on the Brits’ success to announce that “we” are winning the war on terror. “America is safer than it has been,” he declared last week. “We’re doing everything in our power to protect you.” Would that it were true. On the eve of the fifth anniversary of 9/11, “gaping holes” remain in the U.S.’s defense against terrorist attacks. Due to lack of funding and White House interest, commercial airplanes, in particular, remain potential terrorist weapons. Much baggage and almost all cargo is still often loaded onto planes without passing through explosive-detecting machines. No single watch list has been created to warn against potentially dangerous passengers. Port security is even more primitive: A mere 2 percent of cargo containers reaching these shores are inspected for biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons. You can only wonder how different things would be if the disastrous Iraq war hadn’t “sapped energy, resources, and top-level attention” from the far more urgent need to protect our shores.

Americans aren’t quite sure what to believe, said Evan Thomas in *Newsweek*. Although 63 percent polled say that invading Iraq has not made us safer from terrorism, half of us believe that we’re indeed safer than before Sept. 11. There’s good reason to be of two minds. As the thwarted bomb plot demonstrates, Western intelligence authorities are coordinating their efforts better than they used to. With so many top al Qaida leaders captured or killed, it appears that many of their new recruits lack discipline, and aren’t as well trained. Unfortunately, the latest crop of Islamist fanatics is successfully using Iraq as a worldwide recruiting tool for jihad, and they’re



In search of security

both persistent and maddeningly patient. “To them, a 12th-century crusade was only yesterday.”

If we really want to be safer, said Jonah Goldberg in *National Review Online*, we can’t rely wholly on X-ray machines and other gizmos. We should be free to use our common sense. It’s clear our enemies “are overwhelmingly young male Muslims from places such as Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.” So why don’t we target them for special scrutiny? Because civil libertarians would scream about racial discrimination, said *The Wall Street Journal* in an editorial. But the courts have repeatedly upheld federal programs “that treat groups differently when a ‘compelling’ public interest can be identified,” such as affirmative action, and racial composition of congressional districts. Surely saving thousands of lives qualifies as a compelling public interest.

True security will require a different approach altogether, said James Peters in the *Orlando Sentinel*. Up to now, we’ve put most of our resources into reacting to threats and attacks that have already occurred, rather than anticipating what terrorists might do next. The threat to blow up planes using liquid explosives smuggled aboard in innocuous bottles, for example, existed all along. Only *after* it was discovered did the authorities ban carry-on liquids. Why aren’t our intelligence services and terrorism experts “capable of thinking ahead, maybe even one step ahead, of the prospective terrorists?” Easier said than done, said Ellis Henican in *Newsday*. For a ruthless enemy willing to sacrifice its own lives to take ours, there is almost no end of deadly options. “We have to be smarter than the terrorists are,” said airline security consultant Charles Slepian, “over and over again.” That’s why, at best, we can be safer “for now,” but never safe.

THE WEEK September 1, 2006, p. 6

Answer these questions in complete sentences or paragraphs on a separate sheet of loose-leaf paper.

1. Describe three ways in which President Bush has neglected the defense of the U.S., according to *The New York Times*.
2. What percentage of the American public believes that invading Iraq has not made us safer from terrorism?
3. Do you agree with Jonah Goldberg about singling out young male Muslims from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia? Why or why not?
4. Do you think that we are safer now than in September 2001? Why or why not? Use examples from this reading, your class notes, and other news sources (extra credit for *documented** research).

**That means you need to tell me where you got your information.*