

# Flying the Politically-Correct Skies

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(December 17, 2006)

Six men are sitting together and talking in the boarding area, waiting to enter the plane you will be taking to celebrate Thanksgiving with your family. You notice the men, because ever since 9/11 you take note of other passengers. Three of the men start to pray loudly in Arabic. They intersperse English with Arabic when talking. You shudder instinctively, but you calm yourself by thinking that these guys must be different.

You hear the men discuss the war in Iraq and terrorism. You don't want to seem racially insensitive, so you ignore the feeling that something is wrong. Then the men start to chant "Allah" when passengers are called to board the plane. You believe that people have a right to pray the way they want to, and you don't want to discriminate against them simply because they're Arabic. But three of the six men have one-way tickets and no checked bags (like the 9/11 hijackers). Now you get nervous and don't want to board the aircraft.

Though the men were acting like friends before they entered the plane, they now all sit in different areas of the aircraft. One of the men sits in a first-class seat and one in the rear of the aircraft.

Two of the men request special extensions to their seatbelts (even though they're not overweight enough to need them) and then put the straps and buckles on the cabin floor. You get very nervous. These men are all positioned in a manner that would make it easy to use the straps as a noose or to block the aisles. You are praying for an armed pilot and armed air marshal to protect you if these guys try to hijack the plane.

According to news reports, a similar incident really happened on U.S. Airways Flight 300 from Minneapolis to Phoenix on Nov. 21. The men, Muslim religious leaders, were removed from the aircraft, and the Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation called the incident "Islamophobia." Most aviation security experts say that the behavior, not the race, of these individuals would lead officials to remove these men before the aircraft departed. Yet the left has already started to call for Congress to ban "passenger profiling." The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) immediately called for Congressional hearings on "religious and ethnic profiling" at airports.

Aviation security requires a layered approach to securing a commercial aircraft against terrorism. And behavioral profiling, by both aviation personnel and passengers, is an important layer. The fact that the men were Arabic shouldn't, by itself, subject them to being removed from a plane. Yet the fact they acted in an extremely suspicious manner, as if they were a team of terrorists, leads one to conclude that they shouldn't have been allowed to fly.

Political correctness has harmed our nation's aviation security, as common-sense measures have been attacked by the left. For example, the American Civil Liberties Union was very critical of the Computer Assisted Passenger Profiling System (CAPPs II), because it was "secretive, lacking due process protections for people who are unfairly tagged."

Any attempt to screen Arab-Americans and foreign nationals has led to charges of profiling and racism. The left seems to have no problem with grandmothers and babies being searched, but insists we leave young Arabic men alone. Their race, the thinking goes, exempts them from screening. Sadly, screeners fear retribution through frivolous lawsuits and press conferences denouncing the government as racially insensitive.

Yet it would be the height of legislative malpractice for Congress to ban behavioral profiling. Let's recall that political correctness also blocked our nation's pilots from being armed for a year after 9/11. The first head of the TSA, John McGaw, stopped an armed-pilot program from taking effect in 2002 even after Congress had passed a law allowing the program. Senators from across the ideological spectrum, from Conrad Burns of Montana to Barbara Boxer of California and Jim Bunning of Kentucky, fought to get this common-sense program added to aviation security law.

And it's such common sense that should govern aviation security.

Being an Arabic man shouldn't exempt a passenger from aviation-security measures. And being a pilot shouldn't force one to be disarmed against a 9/11 style terrorist attack. In honor of our nation's pilots, flight attendants, police officers, firefighters and civilians killed on that fateful day, our nation should resist political correctness.

We must never forget that 2,948 people were killed on Sept. 11, 2001. Politically correct laws only make it easier for another attack to succeed.