

## Lieberman's Terrorist Bill Suspiciously Un-American

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Times are scary for Muslims in America, and Connecticut Sen. Joseph Lieberman has introduced a bill that will make them worse.

For years I've forbidden my Muslim Sunday school students from playing paintball despite desperate pleadings for a field trip that does not involve bowling. Even the appearance of impropriety could set off a chain reaction of suspicion.

How many things in my life could look suspicious? I am a Muslim born in Pakistan — enough said. I own a book called "American Jihad." It's just a collection of stories of people who have converted to Islam, but imagine that sound bite. I once volunteered with the Connecticut chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Muslim civil rights organization that was blacklisted by the FBI as an "unindicted co-conspirator" in the Holy Land Foundation money laundering case. My brief volunteering could bode badly for me one day. I was publicly critical of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, prime fodder for attacking my patriotism.

Now there is the added stress of Lieberman's proposal. Last month, he introduced the Terrorist Expatriation Act, which is before the Senate Judiciary Committee. This act expands on existing law that strips citizenship from individuals for a number of reasons, one of which is serving in the armed forces of a foreign state engaged in hostilities toward the U.S. Lieberman would include anyone who affiliates with a foreign terrorist organization or "fights against our country." He wants to deny them Miranda rights and to hand them over to military tribunals, instead of allowing them the right to federal trials.

Lieberman's bill should be titled "The Suspected Terrorist Expatriation Act" because it would strip citizenship from anyone accused — not convicted — of having terrorist ties.

Legally, this proposal is problematic. First, for the Department of State to determine that citizenship has been lost, existing law requires that the person's actions were voluntary and that they were done with the intention of relinquishing citizenship. But if a person such as the man accused of trying to bomb Times Square, Faisal Shahzad, a naturalized citizen, enters the U.S. with an American passport, he clearly has no intention of relinquishing his citizenship.

Would fighting against our country include someone like Joseph Stack, had he survived his fiery airplane attack on the IRS in Austin? Would it include members of extremist white militias, such as the Hutaree? Would it include the nut jobs who bomb abortion clinics? If the test will be "serving foreign powers," will Lieberman strip citizenship from U.S. citizens serving in the Israeli Defense Forces?

My informed intuition tells me that vague parameters such as "fighting against our country" and "serving foreign powers" would apply only to Muslims, as the proposed law was created in response to Muslim suspects. This is contrary to the Constitution and commonly held notions of justice in the civilized world.

Lieberman said in a press statement that his bill would deny suspects the "rights and privileges of American citizenship in the legal proceedings against them." He may not be aware that rights and privileges, such as Miranda, apply to non-citizens as well. They apply to anyone on U.S. soil. Constitutionally, stripping citizenship would have no effect on the rights of anyone charged with criminal activity, including terrorism, within the U.S.

What would happen if suspects were acquitted of terrorism charges after having their citizenship revoked? Would they then be re-naturalized? Or if suspects are natural-born Americans who

serve their sentences, where would they be sent to live out their lives?

This act does little or nothing to protect us any more than existing laws. Lieberman says this law would prevent citizens training to be terrorists overseas from re-entering the country to carry out attacks. Arrest warrants and no-fly lists should be sufficient to not only prevent attacks by such people, but to get them back to the U.S. for prosecution. This act would probably cause the expatriation of innocent citizens overseas who, due to our proven poor intelligence, become suspects for being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I was naturalized as a child in the '70s. I have no intention to join a foreign armed service or to fight against our country. But it seems that being a Muslim in America is becoming increasingly precarious. I have not seen my elderly grandmother in Pakistan in a decade and I was hoping to visit her this year. Sadly, proposals such as Lieberman's make trips to Pakistan or just owning a book activities that a Muslim in America has to think about long and hard.

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