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Op-Ed Contributor

Response to "Con Air:Convicted Drug Kingpin, Arms Smugglers Keep Licenses to Fly

By Michael Cutler

My last commentary focused on how two citizens of our nation were prosecuted and sentenced to serve nearly two years in prison for what appeared to be relatively minor law violations.

In one instance the person who was prosecuted was charged with what the news report essentially described as a paperwork deficiency associated with his home-based enterprise that was based on his importation, cultivation and sale of orchids. According to the article, his business did not engage in the importation of banned products nor was he accused of importing narcotics or creating a risk to national security. In addition, he was in his late 60's when he was imprisoned.

Today's commentary focuses on an ABC News report on how our government has failed to revoke the pilot's licenses of a convicted drug kingpin and arms smugglers!

I have attached the news report below and I urge you to read it.

As you may know, I frequently travel around the United States to attend public speaking engagements and to, on occasion, testify before legislative hearings conducted by state and local legislatures on issues pertaining to the enforcement of the immigration laws. I can tell you from firsthand experience that passengers seeking to board airliners are thoroughly screened in the name of national security. I am certain that if you have flown on airliners that you too have witnessed the stringent measures that the TSA has implemented to keep potential hijackers off of airliners.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 not only are people whose names appear on so-called "No-Fly" lists kept off of airliners, not only are those who are permitted to board airliners thoroughly searched to make certain that they don't bring weapons of any sort on board the airliners, but the cockpit of those airliners now have reinforced doors to make certain that even if terrorists managed to board airliners that they would not be able to easily enter the cockpit. Furthermore, undercover Air Marshals frequently fly on board airliners to deter and stop hijackings should all else fail.

Now here is something for you to consider as you read the extremely disturbing news report I have attached below: With all of the efforts to keep terrorists and criminals from taking a seat in the cabin of airliners to prevent them from commandeering an airliner or using airliners in furtherance of their

criminal objectives, why is the system that would keep the bad guys out of the cockpit so screwed up?

When we read about terrorists or criminals who are arrested we are hearing about the success stories. We are finding out about those who had attempted to do harm but were stopped by our valiant law enforcement officers. What we still don't know about are those who remain "out there" plying their respective 'trades.'

The news article details several individuals whose pilots licenses should have been revoked but weren't. That these individuals are still lawfully entitled to enter an airplane, make their way to the cockpit and go roaring down the runway into the blue sky is extremely disturbing, but hopefully now that the bright light of truth wielded by the journalists who have reported on this insane situation will finally be remedied. My question is how many others are still lawfully entitled to pilot airliners in this country whose backgrounds are still not known to the FAA?

Might any of these licensed "pilots" be terrorists?

Imagine the nightmare that would be created if a terrorist was able to pilot an airplane or an airliner? The terrorist would not need to hijack the airplane in order to carry out an attack- he would simply have to overpower his colleague in the cockpit to carry out his nefarious objective! Imagine if both of the pilots on the airplane were working cooperatively!

The terrorists in such a nightmare scenario would be protected from those who would want to prevent the airliner from being used as a sort of "cruise missile" by the reinforced cockpit door designed to keep hijackers out of the cockpit!

Even if the individuals who have pilots licenses aren't terrorists but are intent on using the airplanes they pilot to move drugs, weapons or other contraband around the United States and even to other countries, enabling them to continue to fly enables them to continue to commit crimes. This undermines the efforts of law enforcement agencies around the United States and even, potentially, in foreign countries.

I have noted in many of my commentaries that with all of the attention being paid to our nation's borders that are supposed to separate the United State from Canada and Mexico- especially Mexico, given the extreme levels of violence by the violent and pernicious drug cartels, virtually no attention is being paid to ports of entry to be found at seaports and airports. I have made the point that any state that has a seaport or an international airport should be thought of as being a "border state."

While it is important to secure our land borders, our other ports of entry are no less important! It is now estimated that some 40% of all illegal aliens did not run our nation's borders but rather entered the United States through ports of entry and then, in one way or another, violated the terms of their

admission into the United States. This was, in fact, the way that the 19 terrorists who attacked our nation on September 11, 2001 entered our country.

For the bad guys, a pilot license can be a license to smuggle a wide variety of contraband.

For terrorists, a pilot license can be a license to kill!

Often when I have been called to testify before various Congressional hearings, I have been asked if I feel safer now as compared with how things were on September 10, 2001. Clearly with what passes for "business as usual" I do not feel safer!

It is interesting that the TSA (Transportation Security Administration) is one of several agencies that are to be found under the aegis of the Department of Homeland Security. Once again I have a reason to suggest that the name of DHS be changed to the "Department of Homeland Surrender!"

If you find yourself to be in agreement with this commentary, I ask that you forward to as many of your friends and family members as possible and encourage them to do the same.

In less than two years each and every member of the House of Representatives is up for reelection. In less than two years more than one third of the members of the United States Senate will have to face their constituents. They need to be reminded that they work for us, We the People!

However, the practice of good citizenship does not end in the voting booth, it only begins there. The large scale apathy demonstrated by citizens of this nation has emboldened elected representatives to all but ignore the needs of the average American citizen in a quest for massive campaign funds and the promises of votes to be ostensibly delivered by special interest groups. There is much that we cannot do but there is one thing that We the People absolutely must do- we must stop sitting on the sidelines!

The collective failure of We the People to get involved in make our concerns known to our politicians have nearly made the concerns of the great majority of the citizens of this nation all but irrelevant to the politicians. I implore you to get involved! If this situation concerns you or especially if it angers you, I ask you to call your Senators and Congressional "Representative. This is not only your right- it is your obligation! You need to politely but pointedly, demand to know what they are doing to protect our nation. You need to ask them how they are protecting you and your families.

You can also forward this commentary to them. All I ask is that you make it clear to our politicians that we are not as dumb as they hope we are! We live in a perilous world and in a perilous era. The survival of our nation and the lives of our citizens hang in the balance This is neither a Conservative issue, nor is it a Liberal issue- simply stated, this is most certainly an AMERICAN issue! You are either part of the solution or you are a part of the problem! Democracy is not a spectator sport! Lead, follow or get out of the way!

Con Air: Convicted Drug Kingpin, Arms Smugglers Keep Licenses to Fly in the U.S. By ERIC LONGABARDI and JOSEPH RHEE EXCLUSIVE

http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/convicted-drug-kingpin-arms-smugglers-licenses-fly-us/story?id=8790260&nwltr=blotter_subfeatureMore

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