

JC Watts column
Stephens Media Group
04/06 – Terrorism

Eleven years ago this past week, one Timothy McVeigh parked a rented moving van in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City. He chose as his parking place a spot closest to the always-busy Social Security office on the first floor, and a daycare center in which the most innocent among us were happily playing just one floor above.

At 9:02 am, McVeigh lit a fuse in the truck in which he and fellow anti-government zealot Terry Nichols had constructed a ___-ton fertilizer bomb, and ran like a coward. Seconds later, 167 people whose only crime was working for the U.S. Government or having business with the government lost their lives. Within hours, one nurse who bravely volunteered at the bomb site to help in triage efforts for those rescued, was struck in the head by a piece of falling debris, and killed. One hundred sixty-eight souls, not including ___ unborn children, lost in a senseless home-grown terrorist vendetta.

We Americans don't think much of McVeigh. I'm sure we can all agree on that. But he is revered by others who would like to see the USA destroyed.

Zacarias Moussaoui thinks McVeigh was pretty special. The *Daily Oklahoman* reported this past week that Moussaoui considers McVeigh to be "the greatest American." Indeed, when asked by a federal prosecutor in the sentencing phase of his trial if he was familiar with McVeigh, the 9-11 co-conspirator, without remorse described McVeigh as "the one who wanted to strike the federal government."

McVeigh coldly conspires to kill 168 innocent Americans. I'm guessing he had wished it had been more. Moussaoui's buddies took out three airplanes and two of the tallest buildings in the world. They only wish to do more of the same.

Moussaoui said he's glad to have caused pain. He smiled as Rudy Giuliani and others testified as to how brutal 9-11 was. He says if he testifies truthfully, god will help him avoid execution.

After Moussaoui's confession, I am perplexed as to why are people softening on their resolve against terrorism. It seems that some of our friends and neighbors still don't understand that evil people want to do evil things to US.

Many are now making political hay out of the mistakes that have been made in war...politicizing loss of life and using surveys to create an agenda about real security. To paraphrase a famous movie line, I hope the detractors will "show me the plan" before they pull the rug out from under our troops, and from under an emerging democracy.

I see that re-enlistment figures for US Army are up – 15% ahead of its goal for the year. This should tell even the most jaded observer that the men and women on the ground – those in the trenches – understand the seriousness of the job, and recognize the success we're having. They want to finish the job. But the politicians and the press who want to take every chance available to make President Bush look bad, also hurt America with their posturing.

Is being critical of Bush anti-American? Of course not. But subverting the effort here and abroad in the middle of a war emboldens the enemy and disheartens those fighting for us. Many took delight in hounding Bush when he dubbed Iran, Iraq and North Korea the Axis of Evil. Now, no one can doubt that Iran is pursuing evil.

We are in a war with evil people, and those on the ground know we're going the right direction.

Movie goers in New York were disturbed recently to see a trailer for the upcoming movie about United Flight 93. Some shouted "too soon!" when confronted with the images of that dreadful day. With all due respect to those touched by the terror of 9-11, it's not too soon. To the contrary, it's not soon enough. Our memories seem to have been clouded from the past horrors.

Some smart person once said "Those who ignore the past are condemned to repeat it." A quick Google search couldn't confirm the author, but it's good, so I'm going with it. I wish I had said it first.

As an Oklahoman serving in Congress on that April day eleven years ago, I saw first-hand the gruesome results of terrorism. It matters not if the terrorist is home-grown, as was McVeigh, or driven by religious fervor, as were the 9-11 terrorists.

America must not forget our past, or we will surely repeat it.