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What Is an American?

By Peter J. Ferrara

Summary

As terrorists plot to destroy America, they should understand that their task cannot be accomplished by killing individuals, but rather involves the elimination of the human spirit that causes people all over the world to yearn for freedom.

Main text word count: 629

An American is Christian, or Jewish, or Buddhist, or Muslim. In fact, there are more Muslims in America than in Afghanistan. The only difference is that in America they are free to worship as they choose.

You probably missed it in the rush of news recently, but there was a report that a Pakistani newspaper had published someone's offer of a reward to anyone who killed an American, any American.

So I just thought I would write to let them know what an American is, so they will know when they find one.

An American is English...or French, or Italian, Irish, German, Spanish, Polish, Russian or Greek. An American may also be African, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Australian, Iranian, Asian, or Arab, or Pakistani, or Afghan.

An American is Christian, or Jewish, or Buddhist, or Muslim. In fact, there are more Muslims in America than in Afghanistan. The only difference is that in America they are free to worship as they choose.

An American is also free to believe in no religion. For that he will answer only to God, not to the government, or to armed thugs claiming to speak for God or the government.

An American is from the most prosperous land in the history of the world. The root of that prosperity can be found in the Declaration of Independence, which recognizes the God-given right of each man and woman to the pursuit of happiness.

An American is generous. Americans have helped friend and foe in their time of need. When Afghanistan was overrun by the Soviet army 20 years ago, Americans came with arms and supplies to enable the people to win back their country. As of the morning of September 11, Americans were giving more than any other nation to the poor in Afghanistan.

An American does not have to obey the mad ravings of ignorant, ungodly, cruel, old men. American men will not be fooled into giving their lives to kill innocent people, so that foolish old men may stay in power. American women are free to show their beautiful faces to the world or not, as they choose.

An American is free to criticize his government's officials when they are wrong. Then he is free to replace them, by majority vote.

Americans welcome people from all lands, all cultures, all religions, because they are not afraid. They are not afraid that their history, their religion, their beliefs, will be overrun, or forgotten. That is because they know that in this country they will always be free to embrace their religion, their beliefs, their history, as they choose.

And just as Americans welcome all, they enjoy the best that everyone has to bring from all over the world. The best science, the best technology, the best products, the best books, the best music, the best food, the best athletes.

Americans welcome the best, but they also welcome the least. The national symbol of America welcomes your tired and your poor, the wretched refuse of your teeming shores, the homeless, the tempest tossed.

These in fact are the people who built America. Many of them were working in the twin towers in New York on the morning of September 11, trying to provide a better life for their families.

So you can try to kill an American if you must. Hitler did. So did General Tojo and Stalin and Mao Tse-Tung.

But in doing so you will just be killing yourself. Because Americans are not a particular people from a particular place. They are the embodiment of the human spirit of freedom. Everyone who holds to that spirit, everywhere, is an American.

So look around you. You will find more Americans in your land than you thought were there. And you can expect that one day they will rise up and overthrow the old, ignorant, tired tyrants that have troubled too many lands. Then those lands too will join the community of free and prosperous nations.

And America will welcome them.

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