

Weekly Review

Sunday

September 3, 2006

EDITORIAL 2E

LETTERS 2E

JIM WRIGHT 3E

KATHLEEN PARKER 5E

DAVID BRODER 6E

www.star-telegram.com

LEONARD PITTS: You can't keep a good city drowned. 3E



NATIONAL SECURITY

Taking off the cuffs in sharing of data

■ European privacy concerns have limited the ability of counterterrorism officials to gain broad access to potentially helpful travel information.

By **MICHAEL CHERTOFF**
SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON POST

Imagine that our troops in Afghanistan raided an al Qaeda safe house and captured a computer containing the cellphone numbers of operatives in Europe.

Wouldn't it be important to know whether one of those cellphone numbers was used to book a trans-Atlantic flight? Unfortunately, today our ability to make that connection remains limited:

Information that terrorists readily share with travel agents cannot easily be shared throughout the U.S. government. That needs to change.

Information sharing and intelligence gathering are some of our most important tools in the global war on terrorism. British authorities, in partnership with the United States and our allies, were able to disrupt the recent terrorist plot against passenger aircraft precisely because of timely, actionable intelligence, properly shared and acted upon before the terrorists could carry out their plans.

But despite the strong links we've forged with our European partners to protect our nations, we remain handcuffed in our ability to use all available resources to identify threats and stop terrorists.

To defeat terrorists, we must limit their movement between countries and disable their worldwide networks by targeting our investigative resources. One technique practiced by the Department of Homeland Security and a number of foreign governments is the use of name-based information, such as passenger manifests and crew lists, to screen travelers coming to the United States before they get here. These manifests allow us to identify known persons of interest on watch lists and to act upon threats before they can reach our shores — even, where possible, before they depart on their trip.

But how do we thwart a terrorist who has not yet been identified?

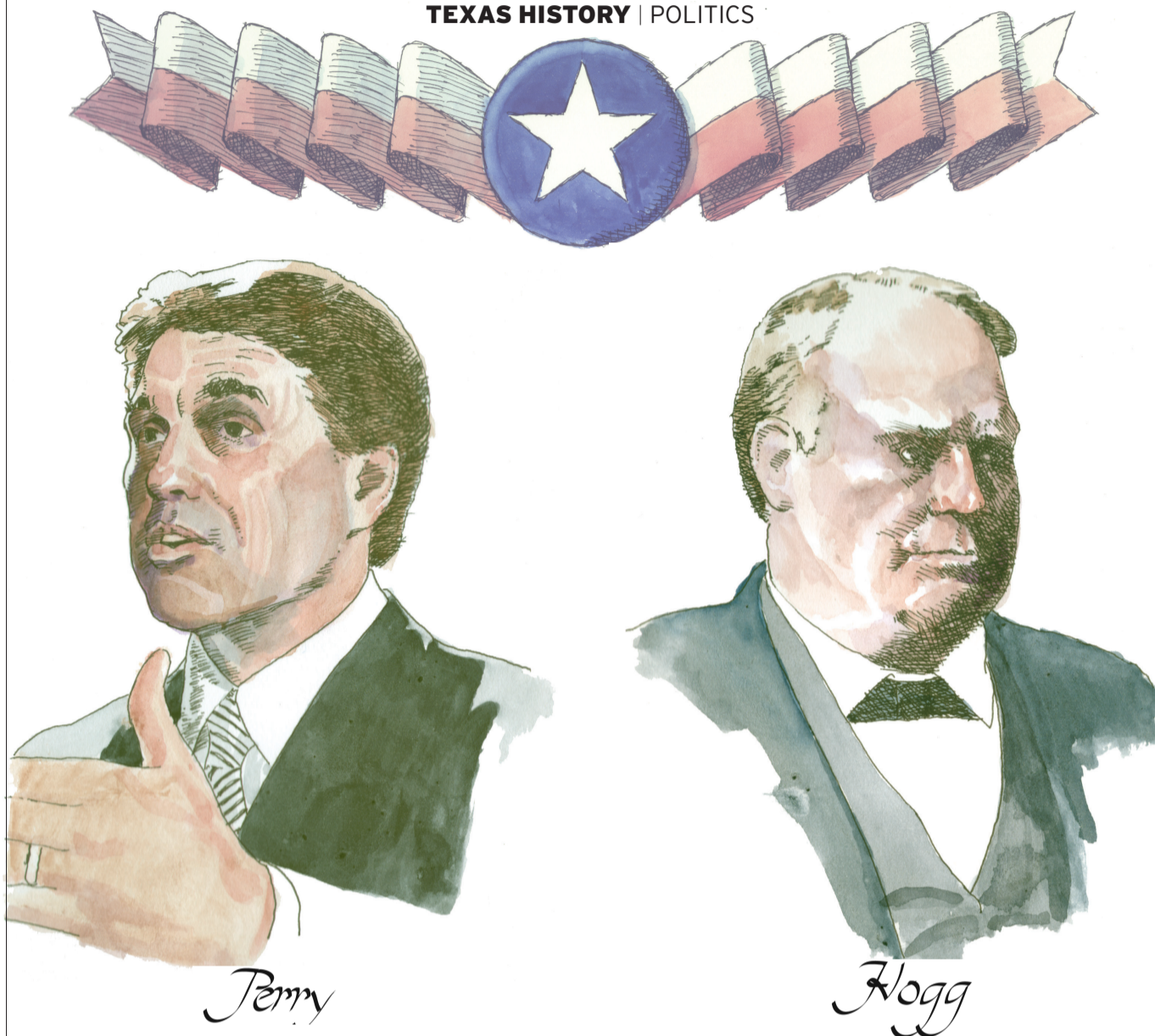
One way is by using more of the detailed information collected by airlines and travel agencies when an individual books a flight. These passenger name records contain information, such as travel itineraries and payment details, that can be analyzed in conjunction with current intelligence to identify high-risk travelers before they board planes.

If we learned anything from Sept. 11, 2001, it is that we need to be better at connecting the dots of terrorist-related information. After Sept. 11, we used credit card and telephone records to identify those linked with the hijackers. But wouldn't it be better to identify such connections before a hijacker boards a plane?

By comparing passenger name record (PNR) data and intelligence gathered on known terrorists (such as cellphone numbers collected in Afghanistan), we can identify unknown

More on DATA on 5E

TEXAS HISTORY | POLITICS



DEJA VU ALL OVER AGAIN

By **GREGG CANTRELL**
SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM

OK, class — for your weekly Texas political quiz, identify the election I'm about to describe:

One major party, the party of "conservatism," has elected every governor, every statewide elected official, majorities in both chambers of the Legislature and the bulk of the state's congressional delegation for the past decade. The much-maligned incumbent governor finds himself opposed by two renegade independent candidates — one an establishment figure with deep pockets who has recently broken ranks with the governor's own party, the other a political outsider with some unconventional views who rallies a faithful corps of true believers to his cause despite being widely dismissed as a fringe candidate.

The other major party, unpopular with the mass of Texas voters because it is viewed as the party of minorities and "big government," faces the real possibility of running fourth in a four-way race. The multi-candidate election shapes up to be a donnybrook.

If you guessed the 2006 governor's race, with incumbent Gov. Rick Perry

More on TEXAS on 6E



STAR-TELEGRAM ILLUSTRATIONS/JIM ATHERTON

RHETORIC

'Islamofascism': a good word?

■ Terms have meanings, and some are less useful in the anti-terrorism struggle than others.

Are we "at war with Islamic fascists"? That's what President Bush said right after British police broke up a plot to blow up aircraft crossing the Atlantic.

The term *Islamofascism* is being used with increasing frequency in the blogosphere and in conservative journals as an all-purpose label for extremist Muslims. It's certainly a convenience for politicians — a great sound bite to rally voters by giving the enemy a concrete image.

The label provides a rallying cry for those who want to cast themselves in the mantle of Winston Churchill fighting World War II. But does raising the specter of "Islamic fascists" aid the anti-terrorist struggle?

First, let's examine the accuracy of the phrase.

Fascism originated in Italy as a mass movement that Benito Mussolini rode to power in 1922. But the term *fascist* is widely thrown around to cover almost any authoritarian movement or bully.

Webster defines *fascism* as "a system of government characterized by rigid one-party dictatorship, forcible suppression of opposition, private economic enterprise under centralized government control, belligerent nationalism, racism and militarism."

In other words, *fascism* is a political doctrine. Muslim critics say the president's term defames their religion. Indeed, it would be more accurate to use the term *Islamist fascism* or *fascist Islamism*. The distinction is more than a semantic quibble.

Why so? Because it's important to stress the difference between religious Muslims and those who use the religion for political purposes. *Islamism* is the term for a political ideology that misuses religious precepts as a tool to take power. Islamism is similar to the many "ism"s of the 20th century, and Islamists are its followers.

Islamism is gaining ground in the Middle East after the failure of Arab socialism and nationalism, and growing Arab cynicism about liberal democracy. In its most radical forms, Islamism espouses a rigid Islam as the basis for an authoritarian system. Radical Islamism is hostile to the West (not just to Western policies) and to non-Muslims. In some virulent Sunni forms, Islamism calls for the death of Muslims who don't toe a particular religious line.

The Taliban are radical Islamists. Those who join al Qaeda are radical Islamists. The label also applies to the present Iranian government, which suppresses political opposition, squeezes Iran's economy and stirs up a poisonous brew of populist nationalism and virulent hostility toward Israel and Jews. During the last Iranian election campaign, some re-

More on ISLAMO-FASCISM on 5E



Trudy Rubin