

“ASPIRATIONAL TERRORISM” WON’T SEND YOU TO JAIL, BUT IT’LL LEAD THE NEWS

The St. Petersburg Times has a good review not just of the mistrial for the Liberty City Seven, but of the larger context of failed terrorist prosecutions.

Another highly touted federal terrorism case ended in a mistrial Thursday.

After listening to more than two months of testimony and deliberating for nine days, a Miami jury deadlocked on charges against six men accused of pledging allegiance to al-Qaida in a plot to blow up the Sears Tower in Chicago. A seventh man was acquitted.

[snip]

With no guilty verdicts, the Liberty City Seven join about a dozen other terrorism defendants around the country who have been prosecuted since the Sept. 11 attacks in costly cases that resulted in acquittals and mistrials.

Joshua Dratel asks what I consider the money question: is this really the way we should be spending our time?

New York criminal defense attorney Joshua Dratel ... said repeated mistrials in terrorism cases raise questions about how FBI agents and prosecutors are spending their time: "Shouldn't they be finding terrorists instead of creating them?" he asked.

Dratel said that jurors in the Liberty City Seven case were "obviously conflicted over whether the defendants

were created and cultivated by an informant."

Though the question presumes the intent behind terrorism prosecutions is to combat terrorism. If, however, the intent of terrorism prosecutions—particularly of such pathetic wannabes—is to distract attention from larger issues, then it seems to be doing just the trick. As RawStory pointed out just after the indictments, the indictment of the Liberty City Seven served as a pre-packaged media event, tailor made to distract from other news.

Rameau says that the Liberty City Seven coverage has upstaged other important news. In a conversation with RAW STORY earlier this week, he said that on the day of the Liberty City arrests, "a former director of the right-wing Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) admitted to planning terrorist acts against Cuba."

Yet this "failed either to draw national attention or merit 'above the fold' coverage on the front page of the *Miami Herald*," said Rameau.

The CANF conspirators were charged and acquitted by a Puerto Rican jury in 1997, after a federal judge threw out one of the defendants' self-incriminating statements. No charges have ever been brought against the individuals on the U.S. mainland.

Rameau notes that while the government has taken action against "men with little to no demonstrable capacity to advance their plans beyond the discussion stage," it has refused to extradite – or prosecute – Luis Posada, suspected mastermind of the bombing of a Cuban airliner "full of human beings" in 1976.

The arrests also came at a time when

reports of a covert U.S. program to search bank records of citizens have created blowback for the Administration.

The government's actions, Rameau claims, exhibit "a double standard in the war on terror, characterized by the selective prosecution of groups with minimal social and political value."

Rameau further notes that the raid "was timed to happen at the exact same time that FBI Director Robert Mueller was on the Larry King Show. It was a made-for-TV event."

Somehow, these made-for-TV indictments only seem to end up in prosecutions if the government has destroyed evidence, as they did with Padilla.