

Intimidating the “*Infidel*”

By Howard Linett, Esq.

Actually it is the “*Infidel*” that should be intimidating. *Infidel* is the name given to an automatic knife manufactured by my good friends at the Benchmade Knife Company of Oregon City, Oregon. Benchmade has been around since 1988. Many, myself included, consider the company America’s premier maker of automatic knives, which are folding knives that open mechanically - by pushing a button, rather than manually - by using one’s thumb. Because all but one or two States prohibit the possession and carrying of automatic knives, sometimes referred to as “Switchblades,” such knives are produced almost exclusively for use by police, military and sworn security personnel.

Earlier this year Benchmade introduced the *Infidel*. A new, modern version of an older design concept, it is an “out-the-front, duel-action automatic.” Push the *Infidel*’s “button” (pun intended) forward and a double-edged blade springs out the front of the knife. Push the button rearward and the blade springs back inside the knife. I have tested the *Infidel*. You really need to push the button, hard, deliberately, because the knife has no “safety.” Clearly that is a precaution Benchmade built-in to prevent the knife accidentally activating while in one’s pocket...Ouch!

Benchmade hit-the-ground-running when America was attacked on 9/11, working tirelessly ever since to supply the women and men protecting us, our country and our freedom with knives upon which they can rely. Well a couple of months ago Benchmade became even more involved in the War on Terrorism, but this time as an “attacked.” It is something that could be visited upon any of us.

In his column from the last week of this September, Daniel Pipes astutely concluded that we are being subjected to a “prolonged campaign of intimidation,” backed by aggression and violence, sending a basic message to us. Mr. Pipes went on to accurately identify the message - “You Westerners no longer have the privilege to say what you want about Islam, the Prophet and the Koran...” That column was instructionally titled, ‘Islamic law rules you, too.’

I believe the war with terrorism is actually a clash of civilizations. It is a war being waged aggressively against Western Democracies by those whose goal is to replace our freedom with Islamic law and rule. In this war our enemies try to kill us using whatever weapons they can acquire. We are familiar with our enemy’s successes and attempts against our

person. But the terrorists' efforts to defeat us go far beyond simply using edged weapons, firearms, explosives, poison and weapons of mass destruction to kill us. Our enemies also seek to defeat us by killing our way of life, by preventing us from exercising our freedoms.

Killing our exercise of our Right to Free Speech is both a tactical objective and a strategic goal of the terrorists. Our enemy's position is clear. Only a Moslem may voice an opinion about anything Islamic, anything from an idea to even a single word contained in any Islamic text or oral tradition. No one else may say anything. There can be no other side to any discussion, since there is no discussion. We can not even use words in common parlance, given a word's universally accepted meaning, if suddenly someone somehow decides that the word or the context in which it is used is now unacceptable. Using misinformation and malice to form that "Opinion of Objectability to Islam" or simply reaching the same conclusion out of ignorance is perfectly acceptable.

Thus we return to the Benchmade Knife Company. Have you figured-out the puzzle I now pose? What sin did my friends commit? What Commandment did they transgress, that they deserved to have been singled-out for castigation (which often precedes worse acts of retribution) by a Moslem writing an item on a Blog? They named their knife *Infidel*. Hell's Bells, what a wonderful example that makes my point so easy to prove.

Look-up the word *Infidel* in any dictionary, in any language. Ask someone who speaks Arabic or an Arabic linguist (I did) or a scholar of Islamic history what the word means. The answer will be universal - "Non-Believer." There is no negative connotation, except of course when the term is applied to me. I do not see the Inciter's problem. Those individuals I consulted, schooled in the Arabic language and the history of Islam, failed as well to see the insult, the bigotry in using the word as a name for a knife.

I could be wrong. Somehow, in some way I, a liberal Jew from Connecticut can not grasp, using *Infidel* for the name of a knife might be a form of bigotry aimed at Moslems. Perhaps the man offended by the naming is not in error in his understanding of the word, its meaning, usage and historical context. Let us imagine he has not turned the word on its head. The use of the word nevertheless constitutes Benchmade's legitimate exercise of Free Speech. But we are to sweep Free Speech aside because that speech, in one man's opinion, is insulting to his religious beliefs. Are religion, religious beliefs and religious subjects

now to be “off-limits,” subjects that are taboo never to be mentioned, forbidden to discuss? Free Speech is easily chilled.

Intimidation is an especially nasty, often effective tool. Incitement is Intimidation’s enforcer. It is vital that everyone understand and identify Intimidation and Incitement. You can not effectively combat and defeat what you do not understand and can not identify.