

Who Do You Believe: Kerry or Clapper?

☒ Good news, everybody! We're safer today than ever before. And by "ever before" I mean anytime since the beginning of time. So relax. Breathe easy. Terrorism isn't as big a deal as you foolishly thought.

We can thank Secretary of State John Kerry for putting us at ease. The other day he told a House subcommittee that, "It is counterintuitive, but the truth is that notwithstanding the threat of ISIL, notwithstanding people being beheaded publicly and burned publicly and the atrocities that they are perpetrating, and it is a serious, serious challenge to us. Notwithstanding that, there is actually less threat and less probability of people dying in some sort of violent conflict today than at any time in human history."

In human history!

An aide to Kerry *clarified* his boss' rosy observation saying he was talking about violent deaths in general, over a very long period of time, not just terrorism in the here and now.

I guess this means there are fewer people being killed today than, say in World War I or World War II or during the Korean War or the Vietnam War – or during the daily savagery of the Dark Ages.

Gee, I feel much better now.

So if things are so much better today, why have so many of us been so anxious about terrorism hitting us right here at home? Maybe, it's because President Obama recently told us that the media are hyping terrorism because it's a sexy subject.

In an interview with Vox, Mr. Obama was asked if he thinks the

media “sometimes overstates the level of alarm people should have about terrorism” – as opposed to other, longer-term issues, like climate change and epidemic disease.

“Absolutely,” the president responded, saying, “If it bleeds, it leads,” adding that it’s a lot harder to make climate change or cutting infant mortality a “sexy story.”

Besides President Obama had already called ISIS a “JV team” – so how worried should we be about the junior varsity? He also said the Islamic State is not Islamic. Why’s that? Because, the president said, “No religion condones the killing of innocents.”

The only problem with Mr. Obama’s thinking is that when people kill in the name of their religion – whether it was Christians doing the killing hundreds of years ago or Muslims today – they don’t believe their victims are “innocents.”

But now we can better understand why Secretary Kerry believes there is “less threat and less probability of people dying in some sort of violent conflict today than at any time in human history.”

Mr. Kerry is nothing if not loyal. If his boss says terrorism is being hyped, then why shouldn’t his acolyte – who serves at the president’s pleasure – say the same thing?

But every now and then reality intrudes and smacks wishful thinking right in the mouth. Which is what happened just one day after Kerry spoke to the House subcommittee.

That’s when Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told the Senate Armed Services Committee that, “when the final accounting is done, 2014 will have been the most lethal year for global terrorism in the 45 years such data has been compiled.”

So which is it? Are we safer than ever or not?

I'm opting for "not." Not because I have access to secret intelligence, but because I have access to newspapers and the evening news where I can read and hear about ISIS killing non-believers over there and encouraging so-called lone wolf sympathizers to do the same here in the United States.

Maybe John Kerry is simply painting by the numbers – and the numbers indicate that despite the decapitations, and the crucifixions, and the bullets to the back of the head, and the burials of living human beings at the hands of Islamic State monsters, we're still *statistically* safer today than ever before. But that's like saying at the height of the lynchings and beatings of black people in the Old South that they were better off than ever before – because, at least, they weren't slaves. That kind of thinking is not only misguided – it's disgraceful.

And Kerry can't actually think that terrorists are just blowing off steam when they make threats against targets in Europe and the Mall of America in Minnesota. He can't really think the FBI is exaggerating when they say they're investigating domestic radicals in all 50 states. It sounds like Kerry is reaching a premature conclusion when he tells us things aren't as bad as we think. How many deaths here in America would it take before his aides offer another *clarification* of what the secretary really meant when he said there's less chance any of us will die in a violent conflict than at any time in human history?

Maybe John Kerry knows more than James Clapper. Maybe. But I suspect he knows less. A lot less.