COWARDICE DOESN'T APPEASE TERRORISTS

Appeasement doesn't work. It doesn't work with dictators, and it doesn't work with terrorists. The attempted Times Square bombing on May 1st was yet more proof.

We've allowed Islamist extremists to dictate what we can say, print or portray. We don't want to offend them. The First Amendment bows before Islam.

The Obama administration has ducked all unwelcome evidence that such appeasement doesn't work. Instead, it goes to absurd lengths to convince Moslem radicals that we respect their views.

Our counterfactual assumption is that, if we're really, really nice, the fanatics will stop being grumpy and blowing us up. But Islamist extremists haven't read our actions (or inactions) as an admirable exercise in tolerance. They read our bowing and scraping and apologizing as weakness.

The mean-dog law applies: Let that pit bull sense that you're afraid, and you're going to feel its teeth.

Instead of applauding our ecumenical decency, terrorists just smell fear.

So we've had yet another attempt to ignite an inferno in the heart of Manhattan, to slaughter the innocent and teach America a lesson.

Since the Obama administration deepened our submissive attitude toward Islam -- banning all references to "Islamist terror" or "Moslem radicalism" from government documents and statements -- the number of terror attacks on our soil has gone up. Do any of you believe this is just a coincidence?

The dogs of terror smell fear. Terror's response to our president's Cairo valentine to fanaticism last year was the Fort Hood massacre, the attempted Christmas Day bombing, now the botched bombing of Times Square -- and a swelling number of foiled plots.

The Times Square near-miss was particularly revealing. When it looked like the bomber might be a forty-something white male, the media's delight and the relief of our politicians was palpable: *At last, another Timothy McVeigh! It isn't only Moslems!*

Boo-hoo. The perp turned out to be another Moslem terrorist we can't call a "Moslem terrorist."

Now the question of most interest about the terrorists' latest Manhattan Project is whether Faisal Shahzad, a newly naturalized citizen (great vetting job!), chose Times Square just because it's a powerful symbol and always crowded -- or if he also hoped to hit Viacom's headquarters as

punishment for South Park's (promptly self-censored) lampoon of Mohammed.

This matters. South Park may not embody all that I admire about America, but its irreverence is an important manifestation of our freedom of expression. What politically correct and cowardly madness have we come to, when we allow murderous Moslem fanatics to censor our laugh lines?

I don't like gratuitous provocations directed at any religion. But freedom of speech applies: We can't have an anything-goes rule for every other faith, and a don't-touch rule for Islam. The moment Islamist bullies reached into *our* civilization to threaten the cartoonists and publishers with death, we should have dug in our heels.

If the Saudis, or the Pakistanis, or the Iranians in their respective spiritual tenements don't want to watch South Park or look at cartoons of Mohammed, fine. They're entitled to their own house rules.

But they are *not* entitled to dictate to us what we can depict, describe or, yeah, laugh at. In our house, you have to play by *our* rules.

We should have taken a stand years ago. Now our appeasement-addicted administration won't. Comics will go on ripping up other faiths for their stand-up routines, but the religion that's spawned such ungodly terror will get a pass.

All of our self-censorship, bowing, kowtowing and apologizing has had no positive effect, whatsoever, on our enemies. Not one Moslem terrorist organization has disbanded, nor has one Moslem terrorist converted to the Malibu lifestyle.

The only thing we've done by caving in to every cultural demand from Islamist fanatics has been to encourage them to make more demands.

Our enemies believe we're cowards. We're also fools.

U.S. Army LtCol (ret) Ralph Peters' new book is Endless War: Middle-Eastern Islam vs. Western Civilization*.*