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A decade later 9-11's effects mostly transparent in Lubbock's life

It's not so much that life changed for Lubbock after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as it is that life changed in Lubbock.

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By [Walt Nett](#)

AVALANCHE-JOURNAL

It's not so much that life changed for Lubbock after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as it is that life changed in Lubbock.

Some changes, such as heightened airport security, are apparent.

But many are transparent to the public, felt primarily by people whose jobs involve dealing the legal process, security issues, cultural aspects, or international issues.

Some suggest a better kind of life, some trade a degree of civil liberty for a stronger national security system, and some of them have meant more work for a variety of people.

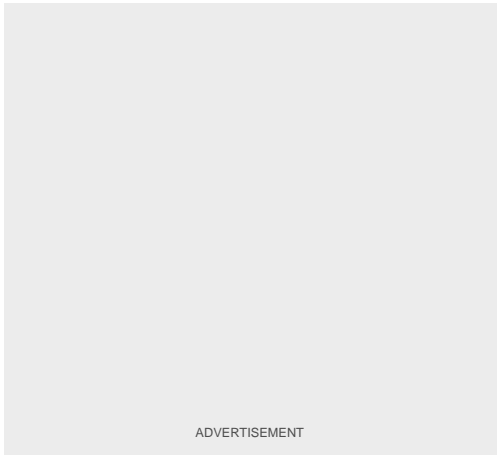
Here's how things have changed:

Stronger faith connections

Some time has passed since anyone has defaced the Muslim Student Center at Texas Tech, and in Cherif Amor's mind, it may be because the volunteers who last cleaned up after the vandals showed the community something very special.

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They were Christians from Lubbock's growing interfaith community, said

Amor, an 11-year Lubbock resident.

He's chairman of the design department at Tech's College of Human Sciences and former president of the Islamic Center of the South Plains.

"When they offered, we told them we wanted to do it ourselves, to make ourselves feel fine. But they insisted," said Amor, who added he believes the offered help also was meant to show the community damaging anyone's holy space is "to touch all of us."

Since then, he added, there have been no problems.

"I believe that 9/11 has set up a process for us to become closer to the other faith groups, a rapprochement between the different faiths in town," said Amor.

"We face a few problems, and will still face them, but I would not make a big thing of it," he said, adding every religion has a radical element.

"We are in a world that is very fragile, and we need to be patient and compassionate," Amor said.

Foreign students' hurdles

When the 9/11 attack occurred, Tibor Nagy said, it meant strange times ahead for recruiting students from other countries to attend U.S. colleges and universities.

Security considerations would mean more scrutiny and paperwork, and those factors would impede America's ability to compete with Canada, Britain, Australia and other countries for those students, said Nagy, vice provost for the office of international affairs at Texas Tech.

And that's a loss, both in terms of intellectual development and helping build support for the United States in other countries, Nagy said, adding he fears for the future.

"If you find someone in another country who really loves the United States, you find one of two things: either they had an American Peace Corps teacher, or they came to this country on an international student visa."

Prior to 9/11, Nagy said, international student programs were often win-win situations for the U.S. because the students would graduate, go home and rise through their home nation's society into positions of prestige and power.

Some of the brightest students, he said, would stay in the U.S., with American employers

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taking advantage of their skills.

Work in international student offices before 9/11 was usually about recruiting bright minds from other countries, helping with paperwork and providing support through the rough patches of cultural and personal connection with a university in the United States, he said.

Today, there's a lot more paperwork and supervision of students, checking on class progress to make sure the student's visa isn't at risk.

And that doesn't include the role international students play in local economies, he said.

"We believe the 1,700 international students at Texas Tech put about \$4 million into the local economy," Nagy said.

A report by NAFSA, formerly known as the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers, estimated in the 2008-09 academic year, the net contribution of foreign students to the Texas economy was more than \$1.22 billion, plus another \$30 million in spending by foreign students' dependents in the state.

Another thing for police to do

Before 9/11, terrorism wasn't a front-of-mind concern for the police officer on the beat, said Lubbock police Sgt. Jonathan Stewart.

"Since then, every officer on the street and throughout the department thinks about it. It's one of the things that comes to mind with a suspicious package or a suspicious person," Stewart said.

"If it's a package that's suspicious, you take a couple of extra steps," the police public information officer said. "If you're dealing with people in a situation, you take a little more time to check them out more thoroughly."

Counterterror thoughts at Tech

Ask Ron Kendall, founding director of The Institute of Environmental and Human Health at Texas Tech, why his program at Reese Technology Center has been involved in chemical and biological counterterrorism studies since 1998. The answer's one simple sentence:

"There are a lot of people out there who do not like America and would harm us."

The institute, founded to work with environmental toxicology studies, "flipped its thinking."

While the program still addresses issues arising from random incidents that release toxins into the environment, Kendall said, they've had to adjust their thinking to address an enemy that would deliberately use biological or chemical weapons.

A decade after 9/11, he said, the institute remains even more heavily involved in research about biotoxin and chemical weapons, their detection, traits, and how to decontaminate scenes when they've been used.

One of its great recent successes, a cotton-carbon fiber composite cloth called FiberTect, is in production.

Originally developed as a chemical decontamination wipe for military uses, the product is being marketed to civilian first responders and was successfully tested last year in the beach cleanup process after the British Petroleum oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Someone may be watching

Contrary to popular belief, says Walter Huffman, the Patriot Act isn't just one law.

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Instead, he explained, it's really about 370 pages of federal legislation that changed more than 50 existing laws.

While the act is meant to give federal law enforcement more tools to track down terrorists, says Huffman, "The additional security does come at a price. The price is measured by inroads into those freedoms that Americans hold most dear, that are for the most part contained in the Bill of Rights."

Huffman, dean emeritus of the Texas Tech Law School and former Army judge advocate general, teaches national security law.

The average person walking along a Lubbock street likely has nothing to fear from the Patriot Act, but the question for the future is keeping rules that give law enforcement greater authority to avoid Fourth Amendment issues on reasonable searches in the battle against terrorism.

Behind the Patriot Act, Huffman said, was the realization that had national intelligence and law enforcement agencies been able to connect the dots, the 9/11 attacks might have been averted.

By "connecting the dots," Huffman explained, investigators were looking for ways to track a series of indications through financial, travel, communications and other data that would help identify likely suspects.

One portion of the act expanded the Federal Bureau of Investigation's ability to use National Security Letters to examine otherwise-protected aspects of someone's life — such as bank and telephone records or credit report — without getting a search warrant.

The organization receiving such a letter about someone can't tell the person an inquiry has been made, but can challenge the letter's validity in court if it believes there's no valid reason for the FBI to see the requested information.

"In the year 2000, about 8,500 National Security Letters were issued. In 2005, there were 47,000 letters," Huffman said.

The Patriot Act also changed the nation's foreign intelligence surveillance laws by allowing "roving wiretaps."

Previously, a warrant had to be obtained for one phone at a time, Huffman said, but under the roving tap rule, surveillance can include monitoring any telephone the person under surveillance uses.

"Agents end up hearing a lot of things that don't affect their investigation," Huffman said.

However, the increased authority also allows them to share any information about other criminal activity with law enforcement, which can act on the information.

"How most of these end up in court is that some guy's laptop is searched, they're concerned he's a security risk, and it turns out he has child pornography," he said.

"Is that a significant derogation to the rights of most of us? Probably not. But it is a significant derogation of Fourth Amendment rights."

But at the library...

One of the initial lightning rod aspects of the Patriot Act when it first passed was the idea that libraries would be expected to hand over lists of books a specific person had checked out.

That, Huffman said, was part of connecting the dots — law enforcement finds a large sum of money in someone's bank account, discovers from a travel agent the person had made several trips to a country thought to have active training connections, and finds out the person had checked out several books on bomb making.

In Lubbock, that's far easier said than done, said city Library Director Jane Clausen.

The city's library policy is weighted heavily to protect patron confidentiality, she said, and the library would only release such information if presented with a valid subpoena or a warrant.

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