

## **A Debatable Threat by Dan Jacoby**

During the early evening news today, Michael Bloomberg announced that there was a specific threat made against the New York City subways, buses and ferries. He even held a press conference, along with his police commissioner and an F.B.I. agent.

The problem is, there are some unanswered questions.

First, why, if this “threat” was known for several days, did Michael Bloomberg choose this evening to break the news? Why didn’t he announce it when he first heard about the threat, so people could be alert?

Second, why announce a claim of a vague threat if it is completely uncorroborated? Apparently, the entire “threat” is based on one person captured in Iraq who claims that there are would-be bombers either in New York City or on their way. But nobody else seems to know anything about it.

Third, if there is a serious threat, why is Michael Bloomberg telling us not to worry about it? He says he’ll still be riding the subway to and from work, and we should too. If the subway system is being targeted, shouldn’t we be avoiding it as much as possible? Shouldn’t we learn the lesson of Katrina – when disaster is coming, get out of the way?

Fourth, if the threat is against the buses and ferries as well as the subways, why isn’t anything being done to protect those modes of transportation? Why aren’t bus riders subject to the same random bag searches that subway riders are forced to endure?

Finally, if the threat was actually “specific to time, place and method,” as has been reported, why go public? Why not catch the terrorists before they set off their bombs?

When in doubt, go with the obvious answer. In this case, the obvious answer is that Michael Bloomberg wants to control the news cycle. Tonight, in order to control the news cycle he needs a major story. Otherwise, the story will be that he is skipping the first mayoral debate in Harlem.

There are plenty of stories available about Michael Bloomberg’s decision to skip tonight’s debate. Yesterday’s mayoral press conference was loaded with questions about the debate, and Michael Bloomberg was clearly getting exasperated about the issue. But now that we have this “threat”, those stories won’t make the front page of the tabloids, they won’t be the lead stories on television – even the NY1 website has put the “terror threat” above the debate, and NY1 is broadcasting the debate. Tomorrow, hardly anyone will be talking about the debate; they’ll be discussing the “threat” instead.

Last year, almost every time George W. Bush seemed to be in trouble with his reelection campaign, he trotted out another “terrorist threat”. It seems that Michael Bloomberg is taking a page from the book of Karl Rove.