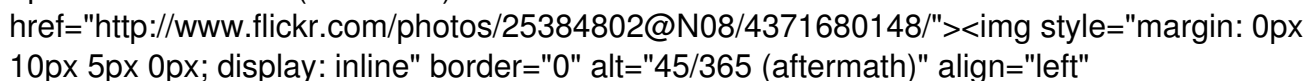


[45/365 \(aftermath\)](http://www.flickr.com/photos/25384802@N08/4371680148/)

A small, square image with a white border, showing a scene from the aftermath of a plane crash. The image is mostly obscured by the text overlay.

[http://static.flickr.com/2700/4371680148\\_efbd719a4c.jpg](http://static.flickr.com/2700/4371680148_efbd719a4c.jpg) width="240" height="180"/>

Thursday February 18 was a strange day in Austin. I had a client who was 30 minutes late for an appointment, telling me he thought there had been some kind of big wreck on one of the city's major thoroughfares which had shut down traffic. That certainly isn't something out of the ordinary in Austin. But as it turns out, it was a more than just a big wreck. Someone by the name of [Joe Stack](http://mashable.com/2010/02/18/austin-plane-crash/) had crashed his plane into the side of a building. It was a sad, crazy day in Austin. An act of terror? Here? Really? Please, wake me up. Really? But is it terrorism? It seems like there are a lot of people debating the semantics of this. Why, I am not quite sure. Terrorism is, by [definition](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/terrorism), *The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by a person or an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or governments, often for ideological or political reasons*. Terrorism knows very few bounds. It is a pretty broad definition. You know that the issue of semantics (and fear) has grown to epic proportions when you have an Austin American-Statesman [title="Statesman headline"](http://www.statesman.com/news/local/was-attack-an-act-of-terrorism-rage-or-257971.html)

[href="http://www.statesman.com/news/local/was-attack-an-act-of-terrorism-rage-or-257971.html"](http://www.statesman.com/news/local/was-attack-an-act-of-terrorism-rage-or-257971.html) headline that reads *Was attack an act of terrorism, rage or spectacle murder*. We really need to categorize this? Really? Any act of violence like this will *intimidate or coerce societies or governments*, especially in their response to the tragedy. Can we not just leave it at that? This goes far beyond an issue of semantics. It goes deep into our psyche, our beliefs, our values. It all starts with the attempt to [title="Terrorism, rage or murder?"](http://www.statesman.com/news/local/was-attack-an-act-of-terrorism-rage-or-257971.html)

[href="http://www.statesman.com/news/local/was-attack-an-act-of-terrorism-rage-or-257971.html"](http://www.statesman.com/news/local/was-attack-an-act-of-terrorism-rage-or-257971.html) categorize such a tragedy in the first place. Ami Pedahzur (from the *Terrorists, Insurgents and Guerrillas in Education and Research* lab at the University of Texas) noted that "in a way it was terrorism, and in a way it wasn't". In his official press conference, Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo stayed away from using the word. In the next few moments of the same press conference, U.S. Rep. Mike McCaul (who serves on the Homeland Security Committee) straddled the fence nicely when saying that "this was an isolated event with no ties to international terrorism, following that up with "but any time you fly an airplane into a federal building to kill people, that's an act of terror." Forget the sub-categories, people *terror is terror. Violence is violence*. But what is perhaps more notable (and, to this author, scary) are the varying perspectives taken by many, flavored with a decidedly religious slant. The words *terrorism* and *religion* seem to be inextricably linked. Sadly, I might add. Religion was certainly a talking point for many after the [class="zem\\_slink" title="September 11 attacks"](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks)

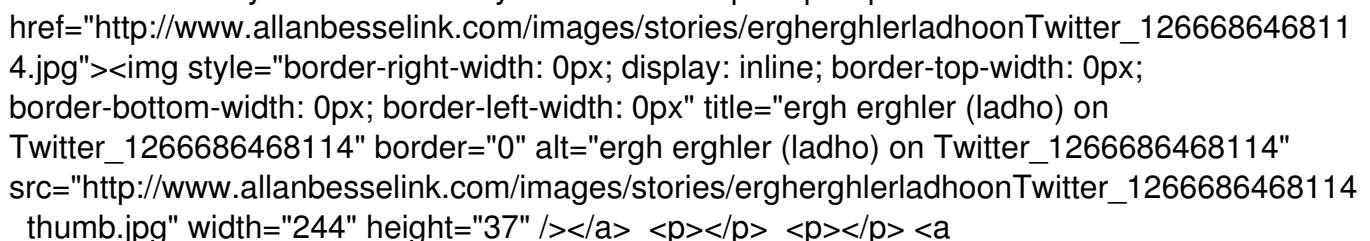
[href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September\\_11\\_attacks" rel="wikipedia">September 11 attacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks), and it was front and center in the recent attack at Fort Hood. And it has been used by many to generate fear that supports their hidden (and perhaps not-so-hidden agendas). But in the same breath, those same people weren't terribly concerned about [class="zem\\_slink" title="Timothy McVeigh" href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timothy\\_McVeigh" rel="wikipedia">Timothy McVeigh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timothy_McVeigh)'s religious convictions when he blew up the Alfred P.

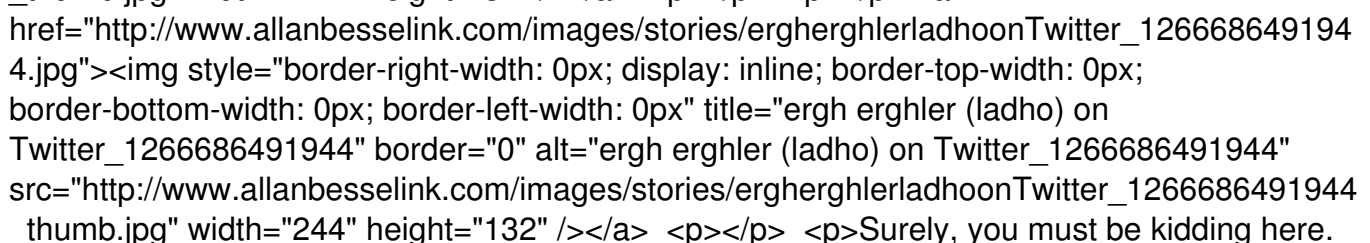
Murrah building in 1995. They also weren't concerned about [Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Harris_and_Dylan_Klebold) religious affiliation when the Columbine shooting took place in 1999. And, imagine this, there weren't any breaking news reports about religious affiliation when Joe Stack flew his plane into the IRS office building in Austin, Texas. Sounds a little like a religious double-standard, no?

As [this week by Council on American-Islamic Relations](http://www.cair.com/ArticleDetails.aspx?ArticleID=26251&&name=n&&currPage=1)

[CAIR](http://www.cair.com/), the Council on American-Islamic Relations,

"Terrorism is terrorism, regardless of the faith, race or ethnicity of the perpetrator or the victims. Those hidden agendas extend to politics as well. After the Austin plane crash, some people have gone so far as to say that Stack is the first brave martyr of the Tea Party movement:

ergh erghler (ladho) on Twitter\_1266686468114

ergh erghler (ladho) on Twitter\_1266686491944

Surely, you must be kidding here. Our communities be they social, local, national, or global - are under threat on a daily basis. These acts of violence challenge our beliefs, challenge our world view, challenge us to the core. Each and every act of violence from the downtown shooting to flying a plane into a federal building - has the potential to coerce each and every one of us to change our view on our freedoms and our neighbors. They all have the potential to provoke fear in each of us.

Frankly, I am not so concerned about the violence and terror attacks that have occurred (even in my own backyard) as much as I am about those within our own borders using fear-based religion and politics to promote their agendas. Perhaps this is really what we need to be concerned about now not those outside our borders, but those within. The solutions don't involve limiting our freedom, nor do they involve espousing more hatred towards any groups within our borders that make this country more diverse, be that in faith, race, ethnicity, social or political conviction. Terror is terror. And it knows not what religion is. Nor does it care about the politics of the right or the left or any point in between.

Photo credit:

[jasleen\\_kaur](http://www.flickr.com/photos/jasleen_kaur/4371680148/) Related articles by Zemanta

[Austin Plane Crash: Suicide or Terrorism?](http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2010/02/19/austin-plane-crash-suicide-or-terrorism/) (blogs.wsj.com)

href="http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703787304575075610490995030.html"> Best of the Web Today: Pot Calls Kettle Stack</a> (online.wsj.com) </li> <li class="zemanta-article-ul-li"><a href="http://jilliancyork.com/2010/02/18/terrorism-in-that-capital-t-way/">"Terrorism in that capital T way"</a> (jilliancyork.com) </li> <li class="zemanta-article-ul-li"><a href="http://r.zemanta.com/?u=http%3A//www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2010/feb/19/austin-texas-paranoid-politics&a=13363564&rid=164c3a20-96f5-4e4d-a24e-770495565bfe&e=39c86a85d70626ea0f58c43f8edc4187">Austin, Texas: capital of paranoid politics | Amanda Marcotte</a> (guardian.co.uk) </li> <li class="zemanta-article-ul-li"><a href="http://trueslant.com/christopherthomas/2010/02/19/we-have-met-the-enemy-and-he-is-us/?utm\_source=allactivity&utm\_medium=rss&utm\_campaign=20100219">We Have Met The Enemy and He Is Us</a> (trueslant.com)</li> <li class="zemanta-article-ul-li"><a href="http://crooksandliars.com/david-neiwert/huh-when-attempting-blow-federal-bui">Huh? Since when is attempting to blow up a federal building NOT an act of domestic terrorism?</a> (crooksandliars.com)</li> </ul> </div> <div class="zemanta-pixie"><img alt="zemanta-pixie" data-bbox="67 358 383 375" /></div> <div class="zemanta-pixie"><img alt="zemanta-pixie" data-bbox="67 376 918 393" /></div>