

Letters

Don't stifle pastime of thousands

In response to USA TODAY's editorial calling for increased security measures on general aviation (GA) aircraft, let's examine a few simple truths ("NYC tragedy echoes 9/11, raises small-plane questions," Our view, Air safety debate, Thursday):

► GA aircraft do not post a terrorist threat. Why? Because a car, van, or truck can carry far more explosives than a small, four-seat Cessna. No terrorist in his right mind would ever use a GA aircraft as a weapon because it would be laughably ineffective. It does not destroy buildings; it bounces off buildings.

► In the two unfortunate recent instances when GA aircraft hit a building, only the occupants of the aircraft died. Relatively minor damage was done to the buildings. No bystanders were killed. GA aircraft are not commercial airliners, nor are they pickups filled with explosives. They arguably pose far less of a threat than the cars and trucks people drive into our cities every day. I note, however, that the editorial does not propose banning cars and trucks from major population centers.

► Since 9/11, the Transportation Security Administration, Federal Aviation Administration and the GA pilot community have worked together to significantly increase GA security regulations.

Additional regulations would not improve safety. They would simply stifle a recreational pastime that is utterly beloved by the 600,000 Americans who

proudly hold pilot's licenses and who safely exercise their freedom to fly around our beautiful country.

Inger Kareem Fahmi
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In favor of the rich

As a result of the tragic accident that killed New York Yankees pitcher Cory Lidle and flight instructor Tyler Stanger on Wednesday, many news shows were exploring the reasons why small, private planes are still allowed to fly over major cities at low altitudes.

The reason, of course, relates to money and politics. Lower- and middle-class Americans do not own private planes; these are toys for the rich, and the rich do not wish to relinquish their "rights" to fly when and where they desire. As usual, they get what they want.

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Pick on ships and trucks

Did USA TODAY call for a ban of commercial flights over populated areas after American Airlines Flight 587 crashed in the Queens section of New York City in November 2001, killing all aboard plus five people on the ground and causing millions of dollars in damage? No, because it was an accident — as was Cory Lidle's tragic mistake.

With key cards needed to access ramp



By Dax Gardner, AP

After plane crash: The Federal Aviation Administration has imposed new flying limits over New York City's East River.

areas and requirements that airplanes be double locked, the security at general aviation airports has become much higher since 9/11. But all of this is window dressing. The real deterrent to using small aircraft as weapons lies in the fact that general aviation is a relatively small, close-knit community; everyone knows each other. That is why the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association's Airport Watch program has been commended so highly.

Please pick on more obvious security risks, such as containers carried by cargo ships or trucks parked in front of high-rise office buildings. At least regulating and monitoring these threats would not infringe as much on personal freedoms.

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