

I Was a Tool of Satan

An equal-opportunity offender maps the dark turn of intolerance

by Doug Marlette

Last year [2002] I drew a cartoon that showed a man in Middle Eastern apparel at the wheel of a Ryder truck hauling a nuclear warhead. The caption read, "What Would Mohammed Drive?" Besides referring to the vehicle that Timothy McVeigh drove into Oklahoma City, the drawing was a takeoff on the "What Would Jesus Drive?" campaign created by Christian evangelicals to challenge the morality of owning gas-guzzling SUVs. The cartoon's main target, of course, was the faith-based politics of a different denomination. Predictably, the Shiite hit the fan.

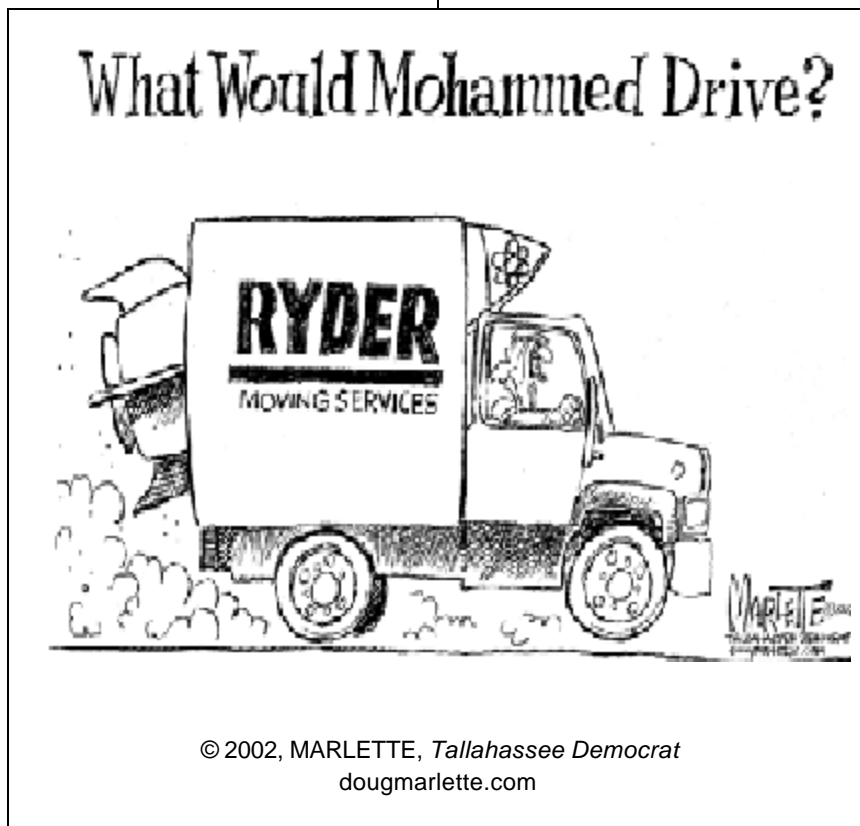
Can you say "fatwa"? My newspaper, the *Tallahassee Democrat*, and I received more than 20,000 e-mails demanding an apology for misrepresenting the peace-loving religion of the Prophet Mohammed – or else. Some spelled out the "else": death, mutilation, Internet spam. "I will cut your fingers and put them in your mother's ass." "What you did,

Doug Marlette is a syndicated cartoonist with the Tallahassee Democrat. This article is taken from the opening paragraphs of an essay in the Columbia Journalism Review, 2003/6.

Mr. Dog, will cost you your life. Soon you will join the dogs ... hahaha in hell." "Just wait ... we will see you in hell with all the Jews..."

The onslaught was orchestrated by an organization called the Council of America-Islamic Relations. CAIR bills itself as an "advocacy group." I was to discover that among the followers of Islam it advocated for were the men convicted of the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center. At any rate, its campaign against me

included flash-floods of e-mail intended to shut down servers at my newspaper and my syndicate, as well as viruses aimed at my home computer. The controversy became the subject of newspaper editorials, columns, web logs, talk radio, and CNN. I was condemned on the front page of the Saudi publication *Arab News* by the secretary general of the Muslim World League. •



© 2002, MARLETTE, *Tallahassee Democrat*
dougmarlette.com