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SPEECH ON PEARL HARBOR ANNIVERSARY

Terror threat hyped, professor says

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Terrorists are either woefully incompetent or their numbers and power in the United States have been greatly exaggerated, an Ohio State University terrorism expert and author said yesterday.

Political-science professor John Mueller addressed more than 200 people at a joint forum of the Columbus Metropolitan Club and the Columbus Council on World Affairs on the 65 th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Like the surprise raid on Pearl Harbor, the Sept. 11 attack stoked public fears about escalating violence on U.S. soil — fears that proved to be overblown in both cases, Mueller said.

After Pearl Harbor, U.S. officials warned of Japanese incursions into California, even reporting sightings of Japanese agents illuminating the coastline with lanterns, he said. Likewise, current administration officials have suggested without much evidence that al-Qaida sleeper cells are operating in the United States, he said.

Mueller said that the government, private industry and media have overstated the threat of terrorism since Sept. 11 to justify military adventurism and to divert public money to unnecessary counterterrorism measures.

"My basic take on terrorism is that it isn't terribly important," Mueller said. "It doesn't do that much damage. It isn't an existential threat to the United States."

His speech was part academic lecture, part political polemic and part book tour.

Mueller, the Woody Hayes chair of National Security Studies at OSU, is promoting his new book: *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats and Why We Believe Them*.

The book and its provocative thesis have garnered media attention. Mueller appeared last month on Bill O'Reilly's show on the Fox News Network to discuss his research, and articles about the book have appeared in *Forbes*, *The New Republic* and *American Spectator* magazines.

On his show, O'Reilly said Mueller appears to be minimizing the potential of terrorist groups to grow and become more dangerous.

Mueller responded that even if terrorists kill 200 Americans a year, the death toll is less than the number of people who die in bathtubs.



OSU professor John Mueller said the government is using the threat of terrorism to justify military adventurism.