Stop the Murdoch (Flt 93) Memorial Blogburst: UK Independent reports the Mecca orientation of the Flight 93 crescent

Description

Blogburst logo, no accident

On Saturday, the conflict over Islamic symbolism in the Flight 93 memorial got its first international news coverage. One highlight is the conversation that Leonard Doyle, U.S editor of the UK Independent, had with Tom Burnett Sr.:

> Tom Burnett, whose son Tom Jnr died in the crash, said of the design that it is â€œaesthetically wonderful,â€• but â€œa lot of it contains Islamic symbolsâ€•. He added: â€œWe ought to just throw the design out and start anew because it really dishonours those who died.â€•

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Towards the end, Doyle moseys around to the bombshell, reporting the Mecca orientation of the giant crescent as a fact. The bad news is that Doyle immediately tries to dismiss this explosive information by making a completely irrelevant and factually preposterous counterclaim:

> Part of the blame must lie with Paul Murdoch, architect of the winning design who initially described it as a â€œCrescent of Embraceâ€•. The title caused the internet to erupt with conspiracy theories. Then someone noticed that the arc actually pointed towards Mecca. The fact that this was also the direction to Washington DC was lost on the conspiracy theorists.

No, the direction to Mecca is NOT the direction to Washington. The shortest-distance direction to Mecca (the way that Muslims calculate the direction to Mecca) heads northeast from the western Pennsylvania crash-site. Some people find that counterintuitive, but Pennsylvania and Mecca are both in the northern hemisphere, with Mecca being about 2/3rds of the way around the hemisphere. Thus the direction to Mecca takes a shortcut towards the north pole. D.C., in contrast, lies southeast from the Shanksville crash site.

The errant claim that D.C. and Mecca lie in the same direction is a red herring anyway. what difference would it make if people facing into the giant crescent were facing Washington? Is there a religion of facing Washington five times a day for prayer? Were the hijackers of Flight 93 followers of such a religion. No. They faced MECCA five times a day for prayer. That is why the Mecca direction matters.

A crescent that Muslims face into to face Mecca is called a â€œmihrab,â€• and is the central feature around which every mosque is built. The memorial now being built in Shanksville will be the worldâ€™s largest mosque by a factor of about fifty (and there are some really big mosques).

Doyle is not the first person to try to dismiss the Mecca orientation of the Flight 93 crescent by claiming that the crescent also points to something else. Of course it DOES point to a host of other places. It points to everything on the line between the crash site and Mecca. Earlier this year the crazy Dr. Daniel Griffith noted that one of those points turns out to be the Vatican. So what? There is no religion of facing the Vatican for prayer.

The *Independent* should issue a correction

Given that Doyleâ€™s attempt to dismiss the Mecca orientation of the crescent was based on an absurdly wrong factual claim (that the direction to Mecca is the same as the direction to Washington), the *Independent* ought to issue a correction, especially given the importance of this error to Doyleâ€™s reporting. Without the factual error, his illogical pretense that the Mecca orientation would not matter if the crescent happened to also point to Washington simply disappears. The Mecca orientation would then stand in naked disgrace before the *Independent*â€˜s international readership. Is that enough of a prize to make a serious push for?

Doyle has already been asked for a correction, without reply. Our petition, however, gives us a new tool for dealing with such recalcitrant parties. We are up to about four hundred signees after one week, and over half say they are willing to engage in activist measures like forwarding emails. Maybe this is a good opportunity to fire a test shot, and unload a minor deluge of correction requests on the *Independent*.

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If you want to pitch in, just copy and paste the following short note into an email

> To the Editors of the Independent:Please correct a glaring factual error in Leonard Doyleâ€™s article on the Flight 93 Memorial (â€œConspiracy or coincidence? Flight 93 memorial attacked over crescent shape,â€• March 29, 2008). Doyleâ€™s reporting of the Mecca orientation of the giant crescent is much appreciated, but he then tries to dismiss the significance of this orientation by making the factually ridiculous assertion that the direction to Mecca from the Shanksville Pennsylvania crash-site is also the direction to Washington:
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> Ã¢â‚¬Â¦ someone noticed that the arc actually pointed towards Mecca. The fact that this was also the direction to Washington DC was lost on the conspiracy theorists.

The shortest distance direction to Mecca is to the northeast from Shanksville. Washington is to the southeast.

It is important to correct Mr. Doyleâ€™s errant excuse for dismissing the Mecca orientation of the crescent because orientation on Mecca is actually very significant. A crescent that Muslims face into to face Mecca is called a â€œmihrabâ€• and is the central feature around which every mosque is built. The planned memorial will be the worldâ€™s largest mosque. Please include this significance of the Mecca orientation in your correction.

Respectfully yours,If you havenâ€™t yet signed our online petition, please give it a look. Also, Tom Burnett Sr. just released a public appeal for people to spread the word about our petition effort. If anyone wants to forward or post Tomâ€™s letter, it is available for copy and paste here (scroll to

bottom for HTML format).

Glaring omissions in Doyleâ€™s report, amounting to cover up

If the *Independent*â€˜s correction policy extends to dishonest reporting by omission, there are two other key facts, fully known to Mr. Doyle, that the *Independent* should publish. While he was driving to Shanksville, Mr. Doyle talked to Alec Rawls by telephone for almost a half an hour, mostly about the Mecca orientation of the giant crescent.

Doyle was fully apprised of the double dealing of Memorial Project spokesmen who in private conversation admit the Mecca orientation of the giant crescent and make excuses for it (basically, they all assume it is coincidental), while in the newspapers they deny that the crescent points to Mecca. For example, when Superintendent Hanley was asked directly about the Mecca orientation by a reporter for the Pittsburgh *Post Gazette* last summer, she claimed that:
â€œThe only thing that orients the memorial is the crash site.â€•

Thus Doyle was fully aware of the controversial nature of the Mecca orientation claim, yet he did not report it as a matter of contention. He reported it as an fact. That means one of two things. When Doyle talked to Hanley (who is quoted in his article), she may have acknowledged the Mecca orientation of the crescent to him. Alternatively, Doyle could have checked the Mecca orientation of the crescent for himself. (Alec Rawls told him how. It takes literally 2 minutes to verify.)

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Which is it Mr. Doyle? Either is explosive and should be reported. If a reporter for a major newspaper verifies for himself that the Flight 93 crescent points to Mecca, he damned well ought to say so! If Memorial Project personnel admitted the Mecca orientation of the crescent, after a long history of denying it in to the press, that is newsworthy!

Why is Doyle holding back? This is cover-up, just like his attempt to dismiss the Mecca orientation with the red herring about the direction to Mecca also being the direction to Washington.

A perverted concept of â€œbalanceâ€•?

Doyleâ€™s behavior is a puzzle. If he wanted to cover up the Mecca orientation of the crescent, why did he report it at all? In two and a half years, only one other reporter bothered to fact-check and report the orientation of the crescent. (Kirk Swauger at the Johnstown *Tribune Democrat* wrote last summer that: â€œ[The Mecca orientation claims] seem to be backed up by coordinates for the direction of qibla from Somerset that can be found on Islam.com. When superimposed over the crescent in the memorial design, the midpoint points over the Arctic Circle, through Europe toward Mecca.â€•)

One possibility is that Doyle may be pursuing a perverted concept of balance, akin to the left wing preference for equality of outcomes over equality of opportunity. The facts tilt in favor of the critics of the crescent, so in order to write a story that presents the two sides as equally valid, Doyle buries the facts, not completely, but enough to write a story that does not advantage either side. Of course if the facts went against critics of the crescent, this concept of balance would go out the window (as it should). But when the facts support conservative voices, this perverted concept of balance seems to be a second mode that the Westâ€™s left wing media falls into.

Thatâ€™s just a theory. Perhaps Mr. Doyle can offer a better explanation. His article is in many ways quite a nice one, telling the story of Flight 93, and of Tom Burnett Jr.â€™s decision to do something to stop the hijackers. Give Doyle credit also for reporting the most explosive fact (the Mecca orientation). Then he dismisses the Mecca orientation with a completely fraudulent dodge, and omits how the Project has been denying the Mecca orientation for years. Very odd.

Doyle also fails to mention that every particle of the original Crescent of Embrace design remains completely intact in the so-called redesign.

In contrast to his fabricated grounds for dismissing the Mecca-orientation of the crescent, Doyle simply repeats without comment the Memorial Projectâ€™s claim that the design was changed to remove â€œany perceptions relating to Islamic symbolismâ€•:

> The crescent became a circle, with two symbolic breaks, one where visitors will walk along the flight path, the other at the crash scene.

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Would it have been too much to note, as was clearly explained to Mr. Doyle, how every particle of the original Crescent of Embrace design remains completely intact in the so-called redesign, which only added a few irrelevant trees to the rear of a person facing into the giant crescent.

The circle is still â€œbrokenâ€• in the exact same spots, creating the exact same crescent. This is even how architect Paul Murdoch explains the crescent design: the terrorists broke the circle, turning it into a giant (Mecca-oriented) crescent. The only change in the â€œredesignâ€• was to include a broken off chunk of the circle, which now floats out behind the mouth of the crescent.

After long conversations with Tom Burnett, Alec Rawls and Bill Steiner (who has been organizing opposition on the ground in Pennsylvania for two years) Doyle actually knows more about the Islamic symbolism in the crescent design than any other reporter who has covered this story. If he would just report the truth, he could do some real good, and advance his own career at the same time, by breaking the story of a lifetime. Instead, he has decided to hide the truth, even using blatant disinformation to do it. Sure looks like ideological bias.

Insist on a correction.

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1. Political

Date Created
April 2, 2008
Author
admin