

NOTHING NEW ABOUT MUSLIM RESPONSE

The violent Muslim uproar over a cartoon is nothing new. In 1977, a small band of Muslim extremists took 149 hostages at three locations in Washington, D.C. because a movie they found offensive, "Mohammad, Messenger of God," was scheduled to be shown in area theaters. Threats of violence led to the film being pulled from its opening day in New York and Los Angeles.

Ironically, the movie was not at all disrespectful of Islam—it was Muslim opposition to pictorial representations of Muhammad that motivated the threats. Even more ironic is the fact that there were no portrayals of Mohammad in the movie. To top it off, the producer-director, Moustapha Akkad, a Syrian-born, Hollywood-trained director, said he would "burn" the movie if anyone could find even one historical inaccuracy in his work.

But none of this mattered to these fanatics. When the movie eventually played in New York City, police were assigned to the four theaters where the movie was playing, and in every instance the first matinee had to be stopped in the middle because of security concerns. In other words, the latest outburst has a long pedigree.