

Will Terrorism Erupt if DC Subway System Agrees to Run Cartoon Ads of Prophet Muhammad?

Washington's transit system is weighing whether to allow a subway ad featuring a cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad that won first prize at an event in Texas this month that was attacked by two gunmen.

The Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority is conducting a standard review of an ad submitted by the American Freedom Defense Initiative, Metro spokesman Mike Tolbert said on Wednesday.

The advertisement calls for Americans to support free speech, and features a cartoon of a bearded, turban-wearing Mohammad waving a sword and shouting: "You can't draw me!"

In reply, a cartoon bubble portrays the artist, his hand grasping a pencil, saying: "That's why I draw you."

Depictions of the prophet of Islam are considered offensive by many Muslims.

On May 3, the cartoon won the top prize at AFDI's "Drawing Mohammad" event at a civic center in Garland, Texas, before two men armed with assault rifles wounded a security guard in the parking lot. Police shot and killed the gunmen, identified as Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi of Phoenix.

"There is nothing about this cartoon that incites violence," AFDI founder Pamela Geller said in a statement on Tuesday.

"It is within the established American tradition of satire," Geller said. "If America surrenders on this point, the freedom

of speech is a relic of history.”

AFDI, which is on the Southern Poverty Law Center’s annual list of U.S. hate groups, has run controversial ads on subways and buses in Chicago, Philadelphia and San Francisco and it ran an ad on D.C.’s Metro in 2012.

New York’s Metropolitan Transit Authority voted to ban all political ads in April after it lost a court battle with the group over an ad that read: “ Hamas Kills Jews.”

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