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To the Editor:

Newsflash -- American, European and Japanese purchases of Middle East petroleum is funding global terrorism.

Going back in my files, I rediscovered a book entitled "In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power, by Daniel Pipes, published in 1983. Mr. Pipes concluded, "Today's resurgence of fundamentalism is an historical aberration allowed largely by unprecedented amounts of disposable income generated by unearned oil revenues." In other words the money that funds terrorism is derived directly from sale of Middle East, mostly Saudi, oil to the West and Japan. Fast forward to 2001 -- commentators on ABC news confirmed last night when the CIA moved to cut off Bin Laden's access to his own money, other wealthy Saudis moved to fund his terrorist organizations. This has been going on for more than 20 years.

Given this "Terrorist Connection", it seems that the major non-military focus of the war on terrorism should be to eliminate excess unearned oil revenues in the Middle East. While perhaps only symbolic in the short-term, the message that oil revenues cannot be used to support terrorism must be sent loud and clear. Floridians can send that message.

After the shock of Pearl Harbor, the United States devised an innovative strategy to win the Pacific war. US Navy submarines brought Japan to its knees by cutting off the flow of petroleum from the Dutch East Indies to Japanese forces and the homeland. The greatest generation did their job well, oil shortages severely inhibited the effectiveness of the Japanese military; shutting off the oil won the war and saved thousands of lives.

After the shock of the World Trade Center bombing, Americans must implement innovative strategies appropriate for this new war against terrorists; we must recognize that unearned oil revenues fund these terrorists.

The way to win the war against terrorism is to hit 'em where it hurts -- in the pocketbook. Follow the money, stop the cash flow -- stop buying Middle East oil -- period.

Florida should lead the national fight to break this "Terrorist Connection".

Pundits will say, "this is impossible; we need that oil, besides consumer protests will not have any impact; the cost will be too great, we have no other choice". Perhaps. But this strategy will work. It must work. Why? Because over the long-term, we have no other choice, the supply of oil soon will not keep up with demand. So why keep spending our hard-earned money on a commodity that will soon be scarce?

More than 65% of all the proven and suspected worldwide reserves of oil are located in the Middle East. Does it really make sense to invest billions to allow Americans to continue buying Middle East oil when those revenues are used to finance our enemies?

While some governments in the region try to be American allies, they fund and harbor groups that have now killed more than 5,000 innocent people.

With friends like these, who needs enemies? There is a better way.

Since American and European investors own most of the production and distribution facilities serving the Middle East oil fields, I doubt that the architects of the war on terrorism will officially recognize the Terrorist Connection. In addition, military planners will argue that it would make no sense to destroy oil terminals or sink tankers.

The only way to send a message to our enemies that we intend to win this war against terrorism is for the American people to vote with their purchasing power. Market pull is the popular buzzword; we must use our power and stop buying petroleum.

I propose that the people of Florida start a consumer revolution; an expedient first-step would be to ramp up the campaign to mandate fuel-efficient cars and trucks. The second-step is to simply stop buying Middle East oil and convert our vehicles to non-petroleum fuels; this action need not be difficult nor expensive. In fact, conversion to non-petroleum fuels would be easy and painless for the consumer if the energy industry would simply make widespread investments in appropriate fuel infrastructure and vehicles, not in the Middle East, but in America, right here in Florida.

Let's make it happen. With proper government leadership and corporate investment, conversion to non-petroleum fuels could be done at every level, from individual consumer to large fleets. The State of Florida could easily implement an aggressive program to help individuals and fleets replace petroleum transportation fuels with non-petroleum fuels. Fuel stations -- large and small -- could be built quickly using existing natural gas pipeline infrastructure; modest investment in a few dozen strategically located stations would support immediate deployment of thousands of natural gas car, trucks, and buses.

Installation of natural gas vehicle infrastructure will also support deployment of super efficient, ultra-clean hydrogen fuel vehicles. Given market pull, large numbers of hydrogen vehicles could be available in three or four years.

Why hydrogen?

Fuel diversity -- hydrogen can be efficiently refined from any primary source of energy -- natural gas, coal, hydropower, wind, photovoltaics, biomass, nuclear, even petroleum. With hydrogen fuel infrastructure in place, never again will the Terrorist Connection hold Americans hostage.

Environment -- Combustion of fossil fuels is the major human source of greenhouse gas emissions, not to mention regional air and water pollution. With mineral and / or geologic carbon sequestration, hydrogen derived from natural gas, biomass, and even coal can be a very clean fuel that creates a clear pathway to renewable hydrogen energy systems.

Safety -- Hydrogen fuels are safer than petroleum fuels.

Cost -- When fully deployed the direct cost of hydrogen fuels will be no more expensive than petroleum. And there will be no hidden costs for military protection, environmental clean-ups, or security of supply.

Petroleum replacement should be the major non-military element in the war against terrorism because it creates a win-win-win-win situation for Americans.

First, conversion to non-petroleum fuels will break our dependence on Middle Eastern sources of oil. Domestic petroleum reserves, even with the addition of contentious offshore and Alaskan North Slope oil, are totally inadequate to meet American needs.

Second, conversion now will strengthen the economy. Investment in non-petroleum fuels and technologies will create sustainable jobs in America – and this will make our economy more stable; and non-petroleum fuels will be more efficient, cleaner, and safer.

Third, conversion will protect and create manufacturing jobs. Investment in upgrades to American energy infrastructure and manufacture of non-petroleum vehicles will ensure employment for millions.

Fourth, widespread conversion from carbon-based petroleum fuels to natural gas and eventually carbon-free hydrogen fuels will significantly reduce the threat of global climate change, regional air pollution, oil spills, and ecosystem disruption.

Florida carries a special burden because of this tragedy. The pilots who destroyed the World Trade Center lived and trained here. More importantly, many of the young men and women who will soon be in harm's way are also based at Florida military installations. I feel that we must do everything we can to prevent more death and suffering. In addition to giving blood, we should start replacing petroleum fuels.

It is appropriate for Florida to lead the movement to break the oil-terrorist connections. The benefits are many and obvious; with courage and conviction forged from a long-term vision and consistent leadership, there is little downside risk.

All we have to do is convince the federal government and the multi-national energy companies to start investing their money in projects that will upgrade America energy systems. This is a simple decision when compared to the alternative -- continuing funding of terrorism through American investment in Middle East oil and gas reserves.

Conversion to non-petroleum fuels is a common sense, long-term strategy that will have a huge short-term benefit. Conversion may not be as exciting as military action, but it will be much more cost-effective. The longest journey begins with the first step; I propose a short-term goal that is easily accomplished, a simple, but very symbolic goal.

Three major college football games were scheduled in the State of Florida today; they have been postponed. When played on December 1, 2001 these games will be dedicated to the victims of 9/11. I propose that the Gator, Seminole, and Hurricane football programs convert their vehicles to non-petroleum fuels and announce these actions at these games. What could be more appropriate than to honor the dead by introducing real solutions to the terrorist connection?

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”The stone age did not end because the world ran out of stones; the oil age will not end because the world runs out of oil.”  
Sheik Yamani, Saudi Oil Minister