

Re: Bush Rx Psychoactive Use??

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From: Rick (*me_at_privacy.net*)

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"Maleki" <maleki_m_@hotmail.com> wrote in message news:m1fkzh0xlxt2\$.iu3jacilq3tp.dlg@40tude.net...

> On 21 Oct 2004 00:17:38 -0700, *Monkey FourSevenZeroOne*

> wrote:

>

>> "Rick" <me@privacy.net> wrote in message news:<2toj9eF220tk6U1@uni-berlin.de>...

>>> "Watson & Parisi" <niche@rcn.com> wrote in message news:c6-dnckysYNhk-rcRVn-2Q@rcn.net...

>>>

>>>> *It's the Bush government that is guilty of simplistic wishful thinking, and*

>>>> *the whole world is paying the price for their arrogance and limited*

>>>> *horizons.*

>>>

>>> *Indeed. But for every clear-headed American like yourself,*

>>> *there are 100 fearful, gullible soccer-moms who believe*

>>> *whatever they're told by Fox News and Tom Brokaw, and*

>>> *are going to let themselves be terrorized into voting for four*

>>> *more years of war and fear mongering from Mr. Bush.*

>>>

>>> << **TERROR ALERT: ELEVATED** >>

>>>

>>> *The worst terrorist attack in U.S. history took place under*

>>> *Mr. Bush's watch. No one had held him responsible for his*

>>> *failure. No one has held him responsible for failing to find*

>>> *any of those who masterminded, planned or financed the*

>>> *attack. And now Bush is pawning himself off as some kind*

>>> *of security expert and war hero, for invading a country and*

>>> *slaughtering 13,000+ civilians who had absolutely nothing to*

>>> *do with the attack. He's on the verge of being re-elected!*

>>>

>>> *Historians are going to look back on this era with amazed*

>>> *wonder.*

>>>

>>> *Rick*

>>

>> *.... The prescription drugs, administered by Col. Richard J.*

>> *Tubb, the White House physician, can impair the President's*

>> *mental faculties and decrease both his physical capabilities*

>> *and his ability to respond to a crisis, administration aides*

- > > *admit privately.*
- >
- > *Bush for a president has unique characteristics, very*
- > *valuable for USA (and elsewhere) at this time. He listens to*
- > *good advice, rather than following myopic, selfish, rigid*
- > *Washington formulas.*

That's a remarkable claim, considering the one consistent criticism of Bush, even from many in his own party is that he does not listen to the best available advice, and instead attempts to form his own realities that bear no resemblance to the truth.

I'm copying the following unformatted transcript for Google's archive, of a speech given last Monday by Al Gore at Georgetown University. Historians will know that at least a few Americans were aware of the truth during the Bush era, and knew the truth about this man -- a man who, for fun as a kid, liked to shove firecrackers down the throats of frogs and watch them explode; who financed both his campaigns for governor of Texas on the backs of medical malpractice victims; who, as governor, watched in glee while 150 Americans, including 62 year-old grandmothers were murdered under the guise of "justice"; and who, while as president, was responsible for misleading America into war under false pretense and therefore is responsible for war crimes and the deaths and injuries of nearly 10,000 Americans and over 30,000 Iraqi civilians.

I've been saying it since day one of Bush's presidency: if he isn't the antichrist, he's doing one hell of an impersonation.

Rick

Al Gore Speaks on Iraq
Monday, October 18 , 2004 at 12:30pm
Gaston Hall, Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.

I have made a series of speeches about the policies of the Bush-Cheney administration – with regard to Iraq, the war on terror, civil liberties, the environment and other issues – beginning more than two years ago with a speech at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco prior to the administration's decision to invade Iraq. During this series of speeches, I have tried to understand what it is that gives so many Americans the uneasy feeling that something very basic has gone wrong with our democracy.

There are many people in both parties who have the uneasy feeling that there is something deeply troubling about President Bush's relationship to reason, his disdain for facts, an incuriosity about new information that might produce a deeper

understanding of the problems and policies that he wrestles with on behalf of the country. One group maligns the President as not being intelligent, or at least, not being smart enough to have a normal curiosity about separating fact from myth. A second group is convinced that his religious conversion experience was so profound that he relies on religious faith in place of logical analysis. But I disagree with both of those groups. I think he is plenty smart. And while I have no doubt that his religious belief is genuine, and that it is an important motivation for many things that he does in life, as it is for me and for many of you, most of the President's frequent departures from fact-based analysis have much more to do with right-wing political and economic ideology than with the Bible. But it is crucially important to be precise in describing what it is he believes in so strongly and insulates from any logical challenge or even debate. It is ideology – and not his religious faith – that is the source of his inflexibility. Most of the problems he has caused for this country stem not from his belief in God, but from his belief in the infallibility of the right-wing Republican ideology that exalts the interests of the wealthy and of large corporations over the interests of the American people. Love of power for its own sake is the original sin of this presidency.

The surprising dominance of American politics by right-wing politicians whose core beliefs are often wildly at odds with the opinions of the majority of Americans has resulted from the careful building of a coalition of interests that have little in common with each other besides a desire for power devoted to the achievement of a narrow agenda. The two most important blocks of this coalition are the economic royalists, those corporate leaders and high net worth families with vast fortunes at their disposal who are primarily interested in an economic agenda that eliminates as much of their own taxation as possible, and an agenda that removes regulatory obstacles and competition in the marketplace. They provide the bulk of the resources that have financed the now extensive network of foundations, think tanks, political action committees, media companies and front groups capable of simulating grassroots activism. The second of the two pillars of this coalition are social conservatives who want to roll back most of the progressive social changes of the 20th century, including women's rights, social integration, the social safety net, the government social programs of the progressive era, the New Deal, the Great Society and others. Their coalition includes a number of powerful special interest groups such as the National Rifle Association, the anti-abortion coalition, and other groups that have agreed to support each other's agendas in order to obtain their own. You could call it the three hundred musketeers – one for all and all for one. Those who raise more than one hundred thousand dollars are called not musketeers but pioneers.

His seeming immunity to doubt is often interpreted by people who see and hear him on television as evidence of the strength of his

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conviction – when in fact it is this very inflexibility, based on a willful refusal to even consider alternative opinions or conflicting evidence, that poses the most serious danger to the country. And by the same token, the simplicity of his pronouncements, which are often misinterpreted as evidence that he has penetrated to the core of a complex issue, are in fact exactly the opposite — they mark his refusal to even consider complexity. That is a particularly difficult problem in a world where the challenges we face are often quite complex and require rigorous analysis.

The essential cruelty of Bush's game is that he takes an astonishingly selfish and greedy collection of economic and political proposals then cloaks it with a phony moral authority, thus misleading many Americans who have a deep and genuine desire to do good in the world. And in the process he convinces them to lend unquestioning support for proposals that actually hurt their families and their communities. Bush has stolen the symbolism and body language of religion and used it to disguise the most radical effort in American history to take what rightfully belongs to the citizenry of America and give as much as possible to the already wealthy and privileged, who look at his agenda and say, as Dick Cheney said to Paul O'Neill, "this is our due."

The central elements of Bush's political – as opposed to religious — belief system are plain to see: The "public interest" is a dangerous myth according to Bush's ideology – a fiction created by the hated "liberals" who use the notion of "public interest" as an excuse to take away from the wealthy and powerful what they believe is their due. Therefore, government of by and for the people, is bad – except when government can help members of his coalition. Laws and regulations are therefore bad – again, except when they can be used to help members of his coalition. Therefore, whenever laws must be enforced and regulations administered, it is important to assign those responsibilities to individuals who can be depended upon not to fall prey to this dangerous illusion that there is a public interest, and will instead reliably serve the narrow and specific interests of industries or interest groups. This is the reason, for example, that President Bush put the chairman of Enron, Ken Lay, in charge of vetting any appointees to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Enron had already helped the Bush team with such favors as ferrying their rent-a-mob to Florida in 2000 to permanently halt the counting of legally cast ballots. And then Enron went on to bilk the electric rate-payers of California, without the inconvenience of federal regulators protecting citizens against their criminal behavior. Or to take another example, this is why all of the important EPA positions have been filled by lawyers and lobbyists representing the worst polluters in their respective industries in order to make sure that they're not inconvenienced by the actual enforcement of the laws against excessive pollution. In Bush's ideology, there is an interweaving of the agendas of large corporations that support him and his own ostensibly public agenda for the government he leads. Their preferences become his policies, and his politics

become their business.

Any new taxes are of course bad – especially if they add anything to the already unbearable burden placed on the wealthy and powerful. There are exceptions to this rule, however, for new taxes that are paid by lower income Americans, which have the redeeming virtue of simultaneously lifting the burden of paying for government from the wealthy and potentially recruiting those presently considered too poor to pay taxes into the anti-tax bandwagon.

In the international arena, treaties and international agreements are bad, because they can interfere with the exercise of power, just as domestic laws can. The Geneva Convention, for example, and the U.S. law prohibiting torture were both described by Bush's White House Counsel as "quaint." And even though new information has confirmed that Donald Rumsfeld was personally involved in reviewing the specific extreme measures authorized to be used by military interrogators, he has still not been held accountable for the most shameful and humiliating violation of American principles in recent memory.

Most dangerous of all, this ideology promotes the making of policy in secret, based on information that is not available to the public and insulated from any meaningful participation by Congress. And when Congress's approval is required under our current constitution, it is given without meaningful debate. As Bush said to one Republican Senator in a meeting described in Time magazine, "Look, I want your vote. I'm not going to debate it with you." At the urging of the Bush White House, Republican leaders in Congress have taken the unprecedented step of routinely barring Democrats from serving on important conference committees and allowing lobbyists for special interests to actually draft new legislative language for conference committees that has not been considered or voted upon in either the House or Senate.

It appears to be an important element in Bush's ideology to never admit a mistake or even a doubt. It also has become common for Bush to rely on special interests for information about the policies important to them and he trusts what they tell him over any contrary view that emerges from public debate. He has, in effect, outsourced the truth. Most disturbing of all, his contempt for the rule of reason and his early successes in persuading the nation that his ideologically based views accurately described the world have tempted him to the hubristic and genuinely dangerous illusion that reality is itself a commodity that can be created with clever public relations and propaganda skills, and where specific controversies are concerned, simply purchased as a turnkey operation from the industries most affected.

George Orwell said, "The point is that we are all capable of believing things which we know to be untrue, and then, when we are finally proved wrong, impudently twisting the facts so as to show that we were right. Intellectually, it is

possible to carry on this process for an indefinite time: the only check on it is that sooner or later a false belief bumps up against solid reality, usually on a battlefield."

And in one of the speeches a year ago last August, I proposed that one reason why the normal processes of our democracy have seemed dysfunctional is that the nation had a large number of false impressions about the choices before us, including that Saddam Hussein was the person primarily responsible for attacking us on September 11th, 2001 (according to Time magazine, 70 percent thought that in November of 2002); an impression that there was a tight linkage and close partnership and cooperation between Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, between the terrorist group al Qaeda, which attacked us, and Iraq, which did not; the impression that Saddam had a massive supply of weapons of mass destruction; that he was on the verge of obtaining nuclear weapons, and that he was about to give nuclear weapons to the al Qaeda terrorist group, which would then use them against American cities; that the people of Iraq would welcome our invading army with garlands of flowers; that even though the rest of the world opposed the war, they would quickly fall in line after we won and contribute money and soldiers so that there wasn't a risk to our taxpayers of footing the whole bill, that there would be more than enough money from the Iraqi oil supplies, which would flow in abundance after the invasion and that we would use that money to offset expenses and we wouldn't have to pay anything at all; that the size of the force required for this would be relatively small and wouldn't put a strain on our military or jeopardize other commitment around the world. Of course, every single one of these impressions was wrong. And, unfortunately, the consequences have been catastrophic for our country.

And the plague of false impressions seemed to settle on other policy debates as well. For example in considering President Bush's gigantic tax cut, the country somehow got the impression that, one, the majority of it wouldn't go disproportionately to the wealthy but to the middle class; two, that it would not lead to large deficits because it would stimulate the economy so much that it would pay for itself; not only there would be no job losses but we would have big increases in employment. But here too, every one of these impressions was wrong.

I did not accuse the president of intentionally deceiving the American people, but rather, noted the remarkable coincidence that all of his arguments turned out to be based on falsehoods. But since that time, we have learned that, in virtually every case, the president chose to ignore and indeed often to suppress, studies, reports and facts that were contrary to the false impressions he was giving to the American people. In most every case he chose to reject information that was prepared by objective analysts and rely instead on information that was prepared by sources of questionable reliability who had a private interest

in the policy choice
he was recommending that conflicted with the public interest.

For example, when the President and his team were asserting that Saddam Hussein had aluminum tubes that had been acquired in order to enrich Uranium for atomic bombs, numerous experts at the Department of Energy and elsewhere in the intelligence community were certain that the information being presented by the President was completely wrong. The true experts on Uranium enrichment are at Oak Ridge, in my home state of Tennessee. And they told me early on that in their opinion there was virtually zero possibility whatsoever that the tubes in question were for the purpose of enrichment – and yet they received a directive forbidding them from making any public statement that disagreed with the President's assertions.

In another example, we now know that two months before the war began, Bush received two detailed and comprehensive secret reports warning him that the likely result of an American–led invasion of Iraq would be increased support for Islamic fundamentalism, deep division of Iraqi society with high levels of violent internal conflict and guerilla warfare aimed against U.S. forces. Yes, in spite of these analyses, Bush chose to suppress the warnings and instead convey to the American people the absurdly Polyanna–ish view of highly questionable and obviously biased sources like Ahmad Chalabi, the convicted felon and known swindler, who the Bush administration put on its payroll and gave a seat adjacent to Laura Bush at the State of the Union address. They flew him into Baghdad on a military jet with a private security force, but then decided the following year he was actually a spy for Iran, who had been hoodwinking President Bush all along with phony facts and false predictions.

There is a growing tension between President Bush's portrait of the situation in which we find ourselves and the real facts on the ground. In fact, his entire agenda is collapsing around his ankles: Iraq is in flames, with a growing U.S. casualty rate and a growing prospect of a civil war with the attendant chaos and risk of an Islamic fundamentalist state. America's moral authority in the world has been severely damaged, and our ability to persuade others to follow our lead has virtually disappeared. Our troops are stretched thin, are undersupplied and are placed in intolerable situations without adequate training or equipment. In the latest U.S.–sponsored public opinion survey of Iraqis only 2% say they view our troops as liberators; more than 90% of Arab Iraqis have a hostile view of what they see as an occupation. Our friends in the Middle East – including, most prominently, Israel – have been placed in greater danger because of the policy blunders and the sheer incompetence with which the civilian Pentagon officials have conducted the war. The war in Iraq has become a recruiting bonanza for terrorists who use it as their damning indictment of U.S. policy. The massive casualties suffered by civilians in Iraq and the horrible TV footage of women and children being pulled dead or

injured from the rubble of their homes has been a propaganda victory for Osama bin Laden beyond his wildest dreams. America's honor and reputation has been severely damaged by the President's decision to authorize policies and legal hair splitting that resulted in widespread torture by U.S. soldiers and contractors of Iraqi citizens and others in facilities stretching from Guantanamo to Afghanistan to Iraq to secret locations in other countries. Astonishingly, and shamefully, investigators also found that more than 90% of those tortured and abused were innocent of any crime or wrongdoing whatsoever. The prestigious Jaffe think tank in Israel released a devastating indictment just last week of how the misadventure in Iraq has been a deadly distraction from the crucial war on terror.

We now know from Paul Bremer, the person chosen to be in charge of U.S. policy in Iraq immediately following the invasion, that he repeatedly told the White House there were insufficient troops on the ground to make the policy a success. Yet at that time, President Bush was repeatedly asserting to the American people that he was relying on those Americans in Iraq for his confident opinion that we had more than enough troops and no more were needed.

We now know from the Central Intelligence Agency that a detailed, comprehensive and authoritative analysis of the likely consequences of an invasion accurately predicted the chaos, popular resentment, and growing likelihood of civil war that would follow a U.S. invasion and that this analysis was presented to the President even as he confidently assured the nation that the aftermath of our invasion would be the speedy establishment of representative democracy and market capitalism by grateful Iraqis.

Most Americans have tended to give the Bush–Cheney administration the benefit of the doubt when it comes to his failure to take any action in advance of 9/11 to prepare the nation for attack. After all, hindsight always casts a harsh light on mistakes that were not nearly as visible at the time they were made. And we all know that. But with the benefit of all the new studies that have been made public it is no longer clear that the administration deserves this act of political grace by the American people. For example, we now know, from the 9/11 Commission that the chief law enforcement officer appointed by President Bush to be in charge of counter–terrorism, John Ashcroft, was repeatedly asked to pay attention to the many warning signs being picked up by the FBI. Former FBI acting director Thomas J. Pickard, the man in charge of presenting Ashcroft with the warnings, testified under oath that Ashcroft angrily told him "he did not want to hear this information anymore." That is an affirmative action by the administration that is very different than simple negligence. That is an extremely serious error in judgment that constitutes a reckless disregard for the safety of the American people. It is worth remembering that among the reports the FBI was receiving, that Ashcroft ordered

them not to show him, was an expression of alarm in one field office that the nation should immediately check on the possibility that Osama bin Laden was having people trained in commercial flight schools around the U.S. And another, from a separate field office, that a potential terrorist was learning to fly commercial airliners and made it clear he had no interest in learning how to land. It was in this period of recklessly willful ignorance on the part of the Attorney General that the CIA was also picking up unprecedented warnings that an attack on the United States by al Qaeda was imminent. In his famous phrase, George Tenet wrote, the system was blinking red. It was in this context that the President himself was presented with a CIA report with the headline, more alarming and more pointed than any I saw in eight years I saw of daily CIA briefings: "bin Laden determined to strike in the U.S."

The only warnings of this nature that remotely resembled the one given to George Bush was about the so-called Millennium threats predicted for the end of the year 1999 and less-specific warnings about the Olympics in Atlanta in 1996. In both cases these warnings in the President's Daily Briefing were followed, immediately, the same day – by the beginning of urgent daily meetings in the White House of all of the agencies and offices involved in preparing our nation to prevent the threatened attack.

By contrast, when President Bush received his fateful and historic warning of 9/11, he did not convene the National Security Council, did not bring together the FBI and CIA and other agencies with responsibility to protect the nation, and apparently did not even ask followup questions about the warning. The bi-partisan 9/11 commission summarized what happened in its unanimous report: "We have found no indication of any further discussion before September 11 th between the President and his advisors about the possibility of a threat of al Qaeda attack in the United States." The commissioners went on to report that in spite of all the warnings to different parts of the administration, the nation's "domestic agencies never mobilized in response to the threat. They did not have direction and did not have a plan to institute. The borders were not hardened. Transportation systems were not fortified. Electronic surveillance was not targeted against a domestic threat. State and local law authorities were not marshaled to augment the FBI's efforts. The public was not warned."

We know from the 9/11 commission that within hours of the attack, Secretary Rumsfeld was attempting to find a way to link Saddam Hussein with 9/11. We know the sworn testimony of the President's White House head of counter-terrorism Richard Clarke that on September 12 th – the day after the attack: "The president dragged me into a room with a couple of other people, shut the door, and said, 'I want you to find whether Iraq did this. I said, 'Mr. President. There's no connection. He came back at me and said, "Iraq! Saddam! Find out if there's a connection. We got together all the FBI experts, all the CIA experts. They all

cleared the report. And we sent it up to the president and it got bounced by the National Security Advisor or Deputy. It got bounced and sent back saying, 'Wrong answer. ... Do it again.' I don't think he sees memos that he doesn't— wouldn't like the answer."

He did not ask about Osama bin Laden. He did not ask about al Qaeda. He did not ask about Saudi Arabia or any country other than Iraq. When Clarke responded to his question by saying that Iraq was not responsible for the attack and that al Qaeda was, the President persisted in focusing on Iraq, and again, asked Clarke to spend his time looking for information linking Saddam Hussein to the attack.

Again, this is not hindsight. This is how the President was thinking at the time he was planning America's response to the attack. This was not an unfortunate misreading of the available evidence, causing a mistaken linkage between Iraq and al Qaeda, this was something else; a willful choice to make the linkage, whether evidence existed or not.

Earlier this month, Secretary Rumsfeld, who saw all of the intelligence available to President Bush on the alleged connection between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, finally admitted, under repeated questioning from reporters, "To my knowledge, I have not seen any strong, hard evidence that links the two."

This is not negligence, this is deception.

It is clear that President Bush has absolute faith in a rigid, right-wing ideology. He ignores the warnings of his experts. He forbids any dissent and never tests his assumptions against the best available evidence. He is arrogantly out of touch with reality. He refuses to ever admit mistakes. Which means that as long as he is our President, we are doomed to repeat them. It is beyond incompetence. It is recklessness that risks the safety and security of the American people.

We were told that our allies would join in a massive coalition so that we would not bear the burden alone. But as is by now well known, more than 90 percent of the non-Iraqi troops are American, and the second and third largest contingents in the non American group have announced just within this last week their decisions to begin withdrawing their troops soon after the U.S. election.

We were told by the President that war was his last choice. It is now clear from the newly available evidence that it was always his first preference. His former Secretary of the Treasury, Paul O'Neill, confirmed that Iraq was Topic A at the very first meeting of the Bush National Security Council, just ten days after the inauguration. "It was about finding a way to do it, that was the tone of the President, saying, 'Go find me a way to do this.'"

We were told that he would give the international system every opportunity to function, but we now know that he allowed that system to operate only briefly, as a sop to his Secretary of State and for cosmetic reasons. Bush promised that if he took us to war it would be on the basis of the most carefully worked out plans. Instead, we now know he went to war without thought or preparation for the aftermath – an aftermath that has now claimed more than one thousand American lives and many multiples of that among the Iraqis. He now claims that we went to war for humanitarian reasons. But the record shows clearly that he used that argument only after his first public rationale – that Saddam was building weapons of mass destruction — completely collapsed. He claimed that he was going to war to deal with an imminent threat to the United States. The evidence shows clearly that there was no such imminent threat and that Bush knew that at the time he stated otherwise. He claimed that gaining dominance of Iraqi oil fields for American producers was never part of his calculation. But we now know, from a document uncovered by the New Yorker and dated just two weeks to the day after Bush's inauguration, that his National Security Counsel was ordered to "meld" its review of "operational policies toward rogue states" with the secretive Cheney Energy Task Force's "actions regarding the capture of new and existing oil and gas fields."

We also know from documents obtained in discovery proceedings against that Cheney Task Force by the odd combination of Judicial Watch and the Sierra Club that one of the documents receiving scrutiny by the task force during the same time period was a detailed map of Iraq showing none of the cities or places where people live but showing in great detail the location of every single oil deposit known to exist in the country, with dotted lines demarking blocks for promising exploration – a map which, in the words of a Canadian newspaper, resembled a butcher's drawing of a steer, with the prime cuts delineated. We know that Cheney himself, while heading Halliburton, did more business with Iraq than any other nation, even though it was under U.N. sanctions, and that Cheney stated in a public speech to the London Petroleum Institute in 1999 that, over the coming decade, the world will need 50 million extra barrels of oil per day. "Where is it going to come from?" Answering his own question, he said, "The middle east, with two thirds of the world's oil and the lowest cost is still where the prize ultimately lies."

In the spring of 2001, when Cheney issued the administration's national energy plan – the one devised in secret by corporations and lobbyist that he still refuses to name – it included a declaration that "the [Persian] Gulf will be a primary focus of U.S. international energy policy."

Less than two months later, in one of the more bizarre parts of Bush's policy process, Richard Perle, before he was forced to resign on conflict of interest charges as chairman of the Defense Policy Board, invited a presentation to the Board by a RAND corporation

analyst who recommended that the United States consider militarily seizing Saudi Arabia's oil fields.

The cynical belief by some that oil played an outsized role in Bush's policy toward Iraq was enhanced when it became clear that the Iraqi oil ministry was the only facility in the country that was secured by American troops following the invasion. The Iraqi national museum, with its priceless archeological treasures depicting the origins of civilization, the electric, water and sewage facilities so crucial to maintaining an acceptable standard of living for Iraqi citizens during the American occupation, schools, hospitals, and ministries of all kinds were left to the looters.

An extensive investigation published today in the Knight Ridder newspapers uncovers the astonishing truth that even as the invasion began, there was, quite literally, no plan at all for the post-war period. On the eve of war, when the formal presentation of America's plan neared its conclusion, the viewgraph describing the Bush plan for the post-war phase was labeled, "to be provided." It simply did not exist.

We also have learned in today's Washington Post that at the same time Bush was falsely asserting to the American people that he was providing all the equipment and supplies their commanders needed, the top military commander in Iraq was pleading desperately for a response to his repeated request for more equipment, such as body armor, to protect his troops. And that the Army units under his command were "struggling just to maintain relatively low readiness rates."

Even as late as three months ago, when the growing chaos and violence in Iraq was obvious to anyone watching the television news, Bush went out of his way to demean the significance of a National Intelligence Estimate warning that his policy in Iraq was failing and events were spinning out of control. Bush described this rigorous and formal analysis as just guessing. If that's all the respect he has for reports given to him by the CIA, then perhaps it explains why he completely ignored the warning he received on August 6th, 2001, that bin Laden was determined to attack our country. From all appearances, he never gave a second thought on that report until he finished reading My Pet Goat on September 11th.

Iraq is not the only policy where the President has made bold assertions about the need for a dramatic change in American policy, a change that he has said is mandated by controversial assertions that differ radically from accepted views of reality in that particular policy area. And as with Iraq, there are other cases where subsequently available information shows that the President actually had analyses that he was given from reputable sources that were directly contrary what he told the American people. And, in virtually every case, the President, it is now evident, rejected the information that later turned out to be accurate and instead chose to rely upon, and to forcefully present to the American people, information that subsequently turned out

to be false. And in every case, the flawed analysis was provided to him from sources that had a direct interest, financial or otherwise, in the radically new policy that the President adopted. And, in those cases where the policy has been implemented, the consequences have been to detriment of the American people, often catastrophically so. In other cases, the consequences still lie in the future but are nonetheless perfectly predictably for anyone who is reasonable. In yet other cases the policies have not yet been implemented but have been clearly designated by the President as priorities for the second term he has asked for from the American people. At the top of this list is the privatization of social security.

Indeed, Bush made it clear during his third debate with Senator Kerry that he intends to make privatizing Social Security, a top priority in a second term should he have one. In a lengthy profile of Bush published yesterday, the President was quoted by several top Republican fundraisers as saying to them, in a large but private meeting, that he intends to "come out strong after my swearing in, with privatizing Social Security."

Bush asserts that – without any corroborating evidence – that the diversion of two trillion dollars worth of payroll taxes presently paid by American working people into the social security trust fund will not result in a need to make up that two trillion dollars from some other source and will not result in cutting Social Security benefits to current retirees. The bipartisan Congressional Budget Office, run by a Republican appointee, is one of many respected organizations that have concluded that the President is completely wrong in making his assertion. The President has been given facts and figures clearly demonstrating to any reasonable person that the assertion is wrong. And yet he continues to make it. The proposal for diverting money out of the Social Security trust fund into private accounts would generate large fees for financial organizations that have advocated the radical new policy, have provided Bush with the ideologically based arguments in its favor, and have made massive campaign contributions to Bush and Cheney. One of the things willfully ignored by Bush is the certainty of catastrophic consequences for the tens of millions of retirees who depend on Social Security benefits and who might well lose up to 40% of their benefits under his proposal. Their expectation for a check each month that enables them to pay their bills is very real. The President's proposal is reckless.

Similarly, the President's vigorous and relentless advocacy of "medical savings accounts" as a radical change in the Medicare program would – according to all reputable financial analysts – have the same effect on Medicare that his privatization proposal would have on Social Security. It would deprive Medicare of a massive amount of money that it must have in order to continue paying medical bills for Medicare recipients. The President's ideologically based proposal originated with another

large campaign contributor – called Golden Rule — that expects to make a huge amount of money from managing private medical savings accounts. The President has also mangled the Medicare program with another radical new policy, this one prepared for Bush by the major pharmaceutical companies (also huge campaign contributors, of course) which was presented to the country on the basis of information that, again, turns out to have been completely and totally false. Indeed the Bush appointee in charge of Medicare was secretly ordered – we now know – to withhold the truth about the proposal's real cost from the Congress while they were considering it. Then, when a number of Congressmen balked at supporting the proposal, the President's henchmen violated the rules of Congress by holding the 15 minute vote open for more than two hours while they brazenly attempted to bribe and intimidate members of Congress who had voted against the proposal to change their votes and support it. The House Ethics Committee, in an all-too-rare slap on the wrist, took formal action against Tom DeLay for his unethical behavior during this episode. But for the Bush team, it is all part of the same pattern. Lie, intimidate, bully, suppress the truth, present lobbyists memos as the gospel truth and collect money for the next campaign.

In the case of the global climate crisis, Bush has publicly demeaned the authors of official reports by scientists in his own administration that underscore the extreme danger confronting the United States and the world and instead prefers a crackpot analysis financed by the largest oil company on the planet, ExxonMobil. He even went so far as to censor elements of an EPA report dealing with global warming and substitute, in the official government report, language from the crackpot ExxonMobil report. The consequences of accepting ExxonMobil's advice – to do nothing to counter global warming – are almost literally unthinkable. Just in the last few weeks, scientists have reached a new, much stronger consensus that global warming is increasing the destructive power of hurricanes by as much as half of one full category on the one-to-five scale typically used by forecasters. So that a hurricane hitting Florida in the future that would have been a category three and a half, will on average become a category four hurricane. Scientists around the world are also alarmed by what appears to be an increase in the rate of CO2 buildup in the atmosphere – a development which, if confirmed in subsequent years, might signal the beginning of an extremely dangerous "runaway greenhouse" effect. Yet a third scientific group has just reported that the melting of ice in Antarctica, where 95% of all the earth's ice is located, has dramatically accelerated. Yet Bush continues to rely, for his scientific advice about global warming, on the one company that most stands to benefit by delaying a recognition of reality.

The same dangerous dynamic has led Bush to reject the recommendations of anti-terrorism experts to increase domestic security, which

are opposed by large contributors in the chemical industry, the hazardous materials industry and the nuclear industry. Even though his own Coast Guard recommends increased port security, he has chosen instead to rely on information provided to him by the commercial interests managing the ports who do not want the expense and inconvenience of implementing new security measures.

The same pattern that produced America's catastrophe in Iraq has also produced a catastrophe for our domestic economy. Bush's distinctive approach and habit of mind is clearly recognizable. He asserted over and over again that his massive tax cut, which certainly appeared to be aimed at the wealthiest Americans, actually would not go disproportionately to the wealthy but instead would primarily benefit middle income Americans and "all tax payers." He asserted that under no circumstances would it lead to massive budget deficits even though common sense led reasonable people to conclude that it would. Third, he asserted – confidently of course – that it would not lead to job losses but would rather create an unprecedented economic boom. The President relied on high net worth individuals who stood to gain the most from his lopsided tax proposal and chose their obviously biased analysis over that of respectable economists. And as was the case with Iraq policy, his administration actively stopped the publication of facts and figures from his own Treasury Department analysts that contained inconvenient conclusions." As a result of this pattern, the Congress adopted the President's tax plan and now the consequences are clear. We have completely dissipated the 5 trillion dollar surplus that had been projected over the next ten years (a surplus that was strategically invaluable to assist the nation in dealing with the impending retirement of the enormous baby boom generation) and instead has produced a projected deficit of three and one half over the same period. Year after year we now have the largest budget deficits ever experienced in America and they coincide with the largest annual trade deficits and current-account deficits ever experienced in America – creating the certainty of an extremely painful financial reckoning that is the financial equivalent for the American economy and the dollar quagmire in Iraq.

Indeed, after four years of this policy, which was, after all, implemented with Bush in control of all three branches of government, we can already see the consequences of their economic policy: for the first time since the four-year presidency of Herbert Hoover 1928–1932, our nation has experienced a net loss of jobs. It is true that 9/11 occurred during this period. But it is equally true that reasonable economists quantify its negative economic impact as very small compared with the negative impact compared with Bush's. Under other Presidents the nation has absorbed the impact of Pearl Harbor, World War II, Vietnam War, Korean war, major financial corrections like that in 1987 and have ended up with a net gain of jobs nonetheless. Only Bush ranks with Hoover. Confronted with

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this devastating indictment, his treasury secretary, John Snow, said last week in Ohio job loss was "a myth." This is in keeping with the Bush team's general contempt for reality as a basis for policy. Unfortunately, the job loss is all too real for the more than two hundred thousand people who lost their jobs in the state where he called the job loss a myth.

In yesterday's New York Times Magazine, Ron Suskind related a truly startling conversation that he had with a Bush White House official who was angry that Suskind had written an article in the summer of 2002 that the White House didn't like. This senior advisor to Bush told Suskind that reporters like him lived "in what we call the reality-based community," and denigrated such people for believing that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernable reality.that's not the way the world really works anymore.when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality, judiciously as you will, we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors, and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do."

By failing to adjust their policies to unexpected realities, they have made it difficult to carry out any of their policies competently. Indeed, this is the answer to what some have regarded as a mystery: How could a team so skilled in politics be so bumbling and incompetent when it comes to policy?

The same insularity and zeal that makes them effective at smashmouth politics makes them terrible at governing. The Bush-Cheney administration is a rarity in American history. It is simultaneously dishonest and incompetent.

Not coincidentally, the first audits of the massive sums flowing through the Coalition Provisional Authority, including money appropriated by Congress and funds and revenue from oil, now show that billions of dollars have disappeared with absolutely no record of who they went to, or for what, or when, or why. And charges of massive corruption are now widespread. Just as the appointment of industry lobbyists to key positions in agencies that oversee their former employers has resulted in institutionalized corruption in the abandonment of the enforcement of laws and regulations at home, the outrageous decision to brazenly violate the law in granting sole-source, no-bid contracts worth billions of dollars to Vice President Cheney's company, Halliburton, which still pays him money every year, has convinced many observers that incompetence, cronyism and corruption have played a significant role in undermining U.S. policy in Iraq. The former four star general in charge of central command, Tony Zinni, who was named by President Bush as his personal emissary to the middle east in 2001, offered this view of the situation in a recent book: "In the lead up to the Iraq war, and its later conduct, I saw, at a minimum, true dereliction, negligence and irresponsibility; at worst lying, incompetence and corruption. False rationales presented as a justification; a flawed strategy; lack of planning;

the unnecessary alienation of our allies; the underestimation of the task; the unnecessary distraction from real threats; and the unbearable strain dumped on our over-stretched military. All of these caused me to speak out...I was called a traitor and a turncoat by Pentagon officials."

Massive incompetence? Endemic corruption? Official justification for torture? Wholesale abuse of civil liberties? Arrogance masquerading as principle? These are new, unfamiliar and unpleasant realities for America. We hardly recognize our country when we look in the mirror of what Jefferson called, "the opinion of mankind." How could we have come to this point?

America was founded on the principle that "all just power is derived from the consent of the governed." And our founders assumed that in the process of giving their consent, the governed would be informed by free and open discussion of the relevant facts in a healthy and robust public forum.

But for the Bush-Cheney administration, the will to power has become its own justification. This explains Bush's lack of reverence for democracy itself. The widespread efforts by Bush's political allies to suppress voting have reached epidemic proportions. The scandals of Florida four years ago are being repeated in broad daylight even as we meet here today. Harper's magazine reports in an article published today that tens of thousands of registered voters who were unjustly denied their right to vote four year ago have still not been allowed back on the rolls.

An increasing number of Republicans, including veterans of the Reagan White House and even the father of the conservative movement, are now openly expressing dismay over the epic failures of the Bush presidency. Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and a veteran of both the Heritage Foundation and the Reagan White House, wrote recently in Salon.com, "Serious conservatives must fear for the country if Bush is re-elected. based on the results of his presidency, a Bush presidency would be catastrophic. Conservatives should choose principles over power." Bandow seemed most concerned about Bush's unhealthy habits of mind, saying, "He doesn't appear to reflect on his actions and seems unable to concede even the slightest mistake. Nor is he willing to hold anyone else responsible for anything. It is a damning combination." Bandow described Bush's foreign policy as a "shambles, with Iraq aflame and America increasingly reviled by friend and foe alike."

The conservative co-host of Crossfire, Tucker Carlson, said about Bush's Iraq policy, "I think it's a total nightmare and disaster, and I'm ashamed that I went against my own instincts in supporting it."

William F. Buckley, Jr., widely acknowledged as the founder of the modern conservative movement in America, wrote of the Iraq war,

"If I knew then, what I know now about what kind of situation we would be in, I would have opposed the war."

A former Republican Governor of Minnesota, Elmer Andersen, announced in Minneapolis that for the first time in his life he was abandoning the Republican Party in this election because Bush and Cheney "believe their own spin. Both men spew outright untruths with evangelistic fervor." Andersen attributed his switch to Bush's "misguided and blatantly false misrepresentations of the threat of weapons of mass destruction. The terror seat was Afghanistan. Iraq had no connection to these acts of terror and was not a serious threat to the United States as this President claimed, and there was no relation, it is now obvious, to any serious weaponry." Governor Andersen was also offended, he said, by "Bush's phony posturing as cocksure leader of the free world."

Andersen and many other Republicans are joining with Democrats and millions of Independents this year in proudly supporting the Kerry–Edwards ticket. In every way, John Kerry and John Edwards represent an approach to governing that is the opposite of the Bush–Cheney approach.

Where Bush remains out of touch, Kerry is a proud member of the "reality based" community. Where Bush will bend to his corporate backers, Kerry stands strong with the public interest.

There are now fifteen days left before our country makes this fateful choice – for us and the whole world. And it is particularly crucial for one more reason: T The final feature of Bush's ideology involves ducking accountability for his mistakes.

He has neutralized the Congress by intimidating the Republican leadership and transforming them into a true rubber stamp, unlike any that has ever existed in American history.

He has appointed right–wing judges who have helped to insulate him from accountability in the courts. And if he wins again, he will likely get to appoint up to four Supreme Court justices.

He has ducked accountability by the press with his obsessive secrecy and refusal to conduct the public's business openly. There is now only one center of power left in our constitution capable of at long last holding George W. Bush accountable, and it is the voters.

There are fifteen days left before our country makes this fateful choice – for us and the whole world. Join me on November 2nd in taking our country back.