

Dispelling Myths About George Bush

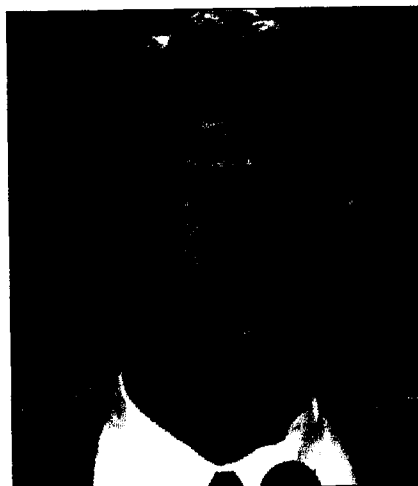
By J. MICHAEL WALLER

Thanks in large part to the Internet, the Bush-bashing extremists have launched a global smear campaign that is feeding the masses a steady diet of misinformation.

President George W. Bush was a "deserter" from the U.S. military, claims filmmaker Michael Moore. Worse, says Democrat Party chief Terry McAuliffe: "George Bush never served in our military in our country." And not only that, adds McAuliffe, he went AWOL. Such smears of the president, transparently filled with inconsistencies and inaccuracies, are being floated everywhere by his political opponents at the start of what promises to be a vicious campaign.

In another era such rumors and conspiracy theories raised against a sitting president would have been ignored as the raving of cranks. But the Internet has leveled the playing field between editors of reputable media and lone quacks, allowing political hucksters to flood the

Mythmakers: McAuliffe (left), Kennedy (middle) and Soros (right) all have thrown fuel on the Hate Bush fire.



information market with factoids and distortions that have injected new harshness and cynicism into the presidential re-election campaign. Obsessive liar. Wartime chicken. Heir to a Nazi fortune. Tool of the Jews.

Some of the more bizarre rumors got legs when senior political figures who certainly know better picked up lunatic themes and mainstreamed them for public discourse. Such extreme, vitriolic and false allegations gained political cover last summer when billionaire George Soros and Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) accused the president of everything but treason for having invaded Iraq and declared the ousting of Saddam Hussein to have been a fraud. The spores of discontent found fertile ground among angry and near-demoralized liberals and leftists who convinced themselves that Bush stole the 2000 presidential election in criminal collusion with the justices of the Supreme Court and therefore view him as illegitimate and a usurper. This



sort of thing gained traction when Soros and other wealthy Bush-haters pumped millions of dollars into febrile Websites and strident TV ads [see "Soros Resolves to Bring Bush Down," Dec. 9-22, 2003]. This extremism pushed the envelope of political discourse from expressing legitimate policy differences to madcap ad hominem attacks aimed at undermining public support for what began as a bipartisan war on terrorism.

Some political scientists are concerned that anti-Bush politicization of the war on terror seems to be based on a deliberate plan to damage the war effort in ways similar to the cultural fraying that dashed the will of U.S. leaders to win the war in Vietnam, making it impossible to wage a coherent long-term effort against terrorists and their sponsors and repeating the Vietnik days of rage with more bombing and terrorism in American streets. Observers are starting to notice that many of those spreading false accusations against Bush began their activist careers in the pro-Hanoi movement of the 1960s [see cover story, p.18].

Thanks to Internet technology, the domestic political campaign being led against Bush by the Democratic extremists has gone global, fueling anti-U.S. groups abroad with a steady, high-carb diet of misinformation and willful disinformation, turbocharging a global electronic echo chamber that analysts say is encouraging hatred of the nation and diminishing U.S. leadership in the war effort by casting doubts on the most innocuous of administration statements and policies. The anti-Bush Websites in the United States have been linked to hundreds of similar sites around the world and form part of a global anti-American network of electronic activists. A French site, www.antibush.fr.fm, links to a set of "anti-U.S.A." Websites, including the "U.S.A. Haters Homepage," a Russian site called "I Hate U.S.A.," and another devoted to what it calls "Anti-





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At your service: Despite all the rumors that he didn't serve in the military, Bush volunteered for a risky assignment.

U.S.A. News From the World." A German anti-Bush site taking its cues from the Democratic extremists features portals called "Anti-America" and "Anti-U.S.A. Groups" and "F—k U.S.A."

The most persistent allegation is that the president of the United States and the leaders of his national-security team are pathological liars. The central inquisitors appear to be the Soros-funded Website *MoveOn.org* and editors of *The Nation* magazine, especially its Washington editor, David Corn, who authored a screed called *The Lies of George W. Bush: Mastering the Politics of Deception*.

Corn offers up a crib full of complaints against the president, which the White House and Republican National Committee have simply ignored. And never mind that Corn's worst tirades

against the president, linked from *MoveOn.org*, are not "lies" at all, but simply presidential statements that the testy Corn happens not to like. Listing Bush's top-10 most outrageous "lies" from the hundreds he says he has documented, Corn reveals that his modus operandi is to twist every policy disagreement into a falsehood.

Here are some of the president's 10 worst lies, according to Corn:

- Bush's 2000 campaign theme, "It's time to restore honor and integrity to the White House."
- "I'm a uniter, not a divider."
- "My [tax] plan unlocks the door to the middle class of millions of hard-working Americans."
- "We must uncover every detail and learn every lesson of September the 11th."
- "[We are] taking every possible step to protect our country from danger."

Nothing the president says, his critics argue, should be believed. By casting

doubt on the president's every word, the critics are rejecting any possible explanation or refutation. And White House political strategists have not smacked down many of these damaging allegations before they could spread, at times inadvertently raising more questions than answering them. Enjoying the fun, *Time* magazine recently ran a cover showing President Bush with two faces and claiming a credibility gap.

The main accusations range across the spectrum of the bizarre:

President Bush never served in the military. Yes, that's what Democratic National Committee chief Terry McAuliffe said: "George Bush never served in our military in our country."

Bush did serve in the military, but he chickened out of dangerous military service. Was Yale University senior George W. Bush a coward during the Vietnam War? Rather than a possible two-year draft in the regular forces, Bush chose to volunteer for a six-year hitch with the Air National Guard. Where privilege might have landed him in a safe administrative position, he chose one of the riskiest jobs in the force, piloting a high-performance but old jet fighter, the Convair F-102 "Delta Dagger." His mission during the Cold War — what is now called homeland defense — was vital: to intercept Soviet Tu-95 strategic nuclear bombers that ran regular doomsday missions up and down the Eastern seaboard threatening U.S. cities with nuclear destruction.

Bush's F-102 was a dangerous machine to fly. Built in the 1950s, according to the U.S. Air Force Museum, the primitive single-engine plane, with a delta-wing design that pilots say made it tough to control, could fly at supersonic speed with an arsenal of 24 unguided rockets and six guided missiles to intercept incoming aircraft. Col. William Campenni, who served with Bush in the same squadron, wrote in a Feb. 11 letter to the *Washington Times*, "Our Texas Air National Guard lost several planes right there in Houston during Lt. Bush's tenure, with fatalities. Just strapping on one of those obsolescing F-102s was risking one's life."

Bush is a deserter who went AWOL from military service. Okay, the extremists concede when challenged, so Bush flew dangerous supersonic interceptors during the Vietnam War to protect the country against a nuclear attack, actually intercepting Soviet bombers. Even if he wasn't a chicken, they say, he shied away from fulfilling his National Guard military service. These critics point to an apparent gap near the end of Bush's fighter-pilot duty, after he had moved from Texas to Alabama and served in the

Alabama National Guard. Was he a "deserter," as Moore claims? No, Bush was honorably discharged. Did he go AWOL, as McAuliffe alleges? While McAuliffe and other critics offered no evidence, the White House and Republican Party left this chestnut from the 2000 campaign unresolved until now, finally scrambling to dig out 30-year-old military documents and releasing pay and accreditation records from Bush's "missing" times of service. No one has apologized to Bush who, despite politics, is upset at the vitriolic accusations.

The most bitter new criticism of the president has swirled around his successful military effort to finish off the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. Suddenly the bipartisan agreement about the existence of Saddam's weapons-of-mass-destruction (WMD) programs — an agreement that formally had been given the imprimatur of the United Nations — dissolved in an acid bath of bile. And some of the Democrats' most heated allegations against Bush, *INSIGHT's* survey finds, have a curious origin.

The Bush-is-a-liar-about-Iraq assault began immediately after the president's Sept. 12, 2002, speech to the United Nations, in which he outlined the reasons why the civilized world needed to go after Saddam. And this time the attack didn't begin at home but in Baghdad. "Full of lies," sniffed Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz. Iraqi Foreign Minister Najji Sabri told the U.N. delegates, "After a long time of utilizing the American propaganda machine, along with official statements of lies, distortion and falsehood, the focus was basically trained on inciting the American public against Iraq." In a matter of time, Bush's domestic political opponents would be using the same words. Among their themes:

Bush went to war in Iraq for oil. Some of Bush's more implacable domestic critics accused the administration, both before and after the 2003 invasion, of going to war for oil. Saddam himself launched that message in a Sept. 16, 2002, letter to the United Nations. His deputy, Aziz, coordinated the line the next day at a "solidarity conference" of international antiwar activists and emissaries in Baghdad, telling supporters, "America ... wants to control the oil in Iraq." Subsequently, the Marxist-Leninist Workers World Party and its front organizations in New York City and Washington, which coordinated the nation's largest antiwar protests in collaboration with Ba'athist officials in Baghdad, adopted the "No war for oil" slogan.

Bush knew there was no threat and distorted intelligence to justify war. "Despite repeated warnings from the



ASTRID RIECKEN/THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Lies at work: *The disinformation campaign is fueling hatred of America and compromising the U.S. war effort.*

CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency," *MoveOn.org* alleges, "President Bush and his administration hyped and distorted the threat that Iraq posed. And now that reality is setting in, the president wants to pin the blame on someone else." In reality, Bush's assessment of Saddam's threat was supported by earlier public statements from his predecessor, Bill Clinton, former national-security adviser Sandy Berger, and former secretary of state Madeleine Albright, as well as prominent senators such as John Kerry of Massachusetts, who voted for the war but now calls Bush a liar. By reminding the public of the bipartisan and international consensus about Iraq's reported WMD programs, the administration in *MoveOn.org's* view is trying to "pin the blame on someone else."

The Iraq threat was bogus and the war wasn't necessary. Here *MoveOn.org* is promoting a "documentary" called *Uncovered: The Whole Truth About the Iraq War*, which purports to show factual proof that the Iraq war, in its words, "wasn't necessary." In fact, *Uncovered* offers no proof at all. The fine print in its promotional literature says it presents "interviews with more than 20 experts, all of whom have informed opinions about the reasons we were given for war and the evidence presented to support those reasons."

But informed opinions supported by evidence are not facts, and any program that features disgraced former U.N. weapons inspector Scott Ritter, who reportedly took money from Saddam-related interests to produce a program of his own, cannot be taken seriously



DEBBIE HILL/IFPI

despite the views of other experts. As an indication of the seriousness of its presentation, *Uncovered* boasts endorsements from comedian Al Franken, *The Nation* publisher Katrina van den Heuvel, lefty-liberal actors Martin Sheen and Mike Farrell and musical artist Moby.

Bush is doing his father's bidding. Whatever the president did in Iraq, he was doing the bidding of his father, George H.W. Bush, who drove Saddam's forces from Kuwait in 1991. According to various versions of this one, the younger Bush either had a grudge against Saddam for trying to assassinate his daddy in 1993, or he is a tool of his father because some of his top aides served in the earlier Bush administration. Early caricatures of the president showed him, then a relative newcomer to foreign policy, as a captive of the senior Bush and his advisers. Indeed, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice had served on the elder Bush's National Security Council (NSC) under Gen. Brent Scowcroft, who currently heads the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB); Secretary of State Colin

Powell was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under George H.W. Bush; and Vice President Dick Cheney was his secretary of defense.

Were they the cabal that designed the liberation of Iraq in 2003? Rice, it is generally acknowledged, runs the weakest NSC in decades, staffed heavily with career Foreign Service officers and not known for trying to control the two powerful and often conflicting personalities leading the State Department and Pentagon: Powell and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Before the war, liberals had heaped praise on Powell for allegedly trying to restrain the more hawkish Rumsfeld. And it is an open secret in Washington that Rumsfeld and the elder Bush were anything but friends. The other senior member of the Bush national-security team, CIA Director George Tenet, is a lifelong Democrat and the only Cabinet-level appointee held over from the Clinton administration. That leaves PFIAB chief Scowcroft, who before the war wrote a *Washington Post* op-ed urging the president not to invade Iraq.

The president disregarded his advice. And every reporter who has covered the administration's national-security policymaking has reason to know with near certainty that the current President Bush is very much his own man.

The Bush family is morally corrupt, condoning drug trafficking. As further proof of the president's unsuitability to remain in office, some of his critics are recycling antique canards that his father, as vice president under Ronald Reagan, was tied to cocaine traffickers in Latin America. These allegations came originally from Kerry himself, in 1988, when he spent his first years in the Senate trying to help keep the communist-led Sandinistas in power in Nicaragua. Vice President Bush said at the time, "It's all been looked into, and I would challenge Sen. Kerry, Democrat of Massachusetts, to show some evidence and stop leaking out information that is not true." Even Kerry's very liberal hometown newspaper, the *Boston Globe*, quashed this conspiracy theory, discrediting Kerry's source, saying his "assertions are clouded by his inability to provide much documentary evidence of his involvement with the scheme."

President Bush owes his family inheritance to Adolf Hitler, and his grandfather, Prescott Bush, helped finance the Nazi rise to power in Germany. These stories had circulated for years but resurfaced on May 13, 2003, in the Cuban Communist Party newspaper *Granma*, headlined, "Bush Family Funded Adolf Hitler." As the Associated Press reports, Prescott had been on the board of Union

Banking Corp., whose majority owner, the Thyssen family of Germany, indeed had funded the Nazis against a feared communist takeover of Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. Family leader Fritz Thyssen broke with Hitler over the 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom against the Jews, was stripped of his citizenship and fortune, and was in a Nazi prison at the time the elder Bush sat on that board. There is no evidence that Prescott Bush, who owned just one share of Union Banking, had anything to do with the Thyssen political work in Germany.

Some critics go even further to accuse the president of having inherited ill-gotten profits from a Nazi slave-labor operation near the Auschwitz death camp in Poland. But the Polish company in which Prescott Bush had an interest, Silesian-American Corp., was stolen by the Nazis in 1939, the year before Auschwitz was built. Discussing this controversy, columnist Joe Conason of the *New York Observer* writes, "Henry Ford was a Nazi collaborator. Joseph P. Kennedy Sr. was a Nazi sympathizer. Unless additional information emerges to indict him, Prescott Bush Sr. was neither. To misuse such terms for political advantage against his grandson is to trivialize very grave offenses."

If Bush isn't tied to the Nazis, at least he acts like one. Soros was the first major figure during this campaign season to accuse President Bush of Nazi-like tendencies. In 2002 and 2003, mulling how he could use his fortune to bring down the president, the superrich currency speculator decided that the administration's post-9/11 counterterrorism methods were reminiscent of Hitler's regime. He told the *Washington Post*, "When I hear Bush say, 'You're either with us or against us,' it reminds me of the Germans."

That helped give cover to others. Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), the self-styled orator whose floor speeches often quote the philosophers of ancient Rome and Athens, finally snapped on Oct. 17, 2003, when he gave a floor speech recalling Hans Christian Andersen's story in which "the emperor has no clothes." He closed with an open comparison of President Bush to Nazi propaganda minister Hermann Goering. Other stories swirled on the Internet accusing presidential political strategist Karl Rove of having family ties to the Nazis.

Paradox: Bush foreign and defense policy is controlled by the Jews. If Bush isn't controlled by Nazis or big-oil interests, he must be controlled by the Jews. What other reason would motivate the president to overthrow Saddam Hussein? These critics aren't crass or politically suicidal enough to sneer the word

"Jews" openly, so they use a code word: neoconservatives.

Irving Kristol, the most prominent founder of the movement, defines the term this way in his book *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea*: "I would say it [neoconservative] is more a descriptive term than a prescriptive one. It describes the erosion of liberal faith among a relatively small but talented and articulate group of scholars and intellectuals."

Predominantly Jewish New Yorkers, many with former Trotskyite backgrounds, the early neoconservatives stuck with the Democratic Party well into the Reagan era. Like many non-Jewish Polish, Ukrainian and other émigrés from Central and Eastern Europe, the neocons understood the nature of the communist enemy far better than any liberal — or for that matter, than the Republican establishment. From the dawn of the Cold War, they opposed the Eisenhower strategy of mere "containment" of the Soviet Union, as designed by George F. Kennan, arguing strenuously for "rolling back" Soviet communism: a policy that would become known as "regime change." By the 1960s they had embraced the internationalist idealism of Woodrow Wilson and the hard-nosed "big stick" philosophy of Theodore Roosevelt. They congregated around Kristol and Norman Podhoretz, and enunciated their intellectual arguments in *Commentary* magazine, published by the American Jewish Council, and other journals.

But they were not all Jewish, with former education secretary William Bennett and Catholic intellectual Michael Novak counted among their ranks. Some critics on both left and right questioned their patriotism because of their philosophical support for Israel. But Ronald Reagan tapped into their movement for talent to help him and his conservative team bring down the Soviet Union, appointing neoconservative professor Jeane Kirkpatrick, who is not Jewish, as his ambassador to the United Nations after reading one of her articles in *Commentary*.

Those who were soft on the Soviet Union during the Cold War just can't seem to forgive *Commentary*, the neocons, Reagan, and his friend and successor George W. Bush for their commitment to rid the world of the evil empire. And that may be why the president's harshest critics resort to such extreme distortions and lies about his policies and his person. Maybe they want to give evil a chance.

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