

IT4-- "A TIME FOR TRUTH- BUSH'S REELECTION THREATENS YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES", 10/04

***"It's absolutely essential that eight weeks from today, on Nov. 2, we make the right choice, because if we make the wrong choice, then the danger is that we'll get hit again."
-- Vice-President Richard Cheney, Des Moines, 9/7/04***

***"The major impact of September 11 has been to make people frightened of death, scared that something is going to happen to them. The objective horror of the fact that we could basically could die ourselves is the real issue."
-- Dr. Robert Firestone***

George Bush can be defeated this election day, but only if his opponents begin to attack him on his greatest weakness. The facts are overwhelming and incontrovertible that George Bush's bungling of his first duty - to protect Americans - has made it more likely that you, your family and/or tens of thousands of other Americans will die from future domestic 9/11s in coming years. If all those opposing Bush acted upon this truth - i.e., behaved as if their own life and the lives of their loved ones, are threatened by the President's monumental incompetence - Mr. Bush wouldn't have a chance.

The basic facts cannot be challenged. You are less safe from death for two reasons: (1) the Administration has underfunded securing our ports, chemical and nuclear power plants, trains, police and firefighters, leaving millions of Americans dangerously unprotected. And (2) it has simultaneously increased the threat to us by spending \$200 billion in a no-win war Iraq that has increased anti-American hatred and the recruitment of terrorists dedicated to killing us, diverted us from the fight against Al-Qaeda, destabilized friendly governments, and over-stretched our military.

Defeating George Bush requires that his opponents mobilize around the following kind of message: "The President's policies have made it more likely that you and your loved ones will die from future attacks on us at home. It's inexcusable that this Administration

inspects only 5% of our air cargo and 5% of the containers entering this country by sea, has cut police budgets, failed to fully fund our firefighters, and has left chemical plants which could kill hundreds of thousands of Americans dangerously unprotected. Mr. Bush's argument that he fights our enemies abroad rather than at home is absurd - we clearly need to do both and he has done neither. Incredibly, the President has failed to adequately fund homeland security while increasing the threat of terrorism from abroad by wasting \$200 billion in Iraq. Your life may depend upon defeating George Bush this fall."

Almost inconceivably, however, anti-Bush forces and media critics have largely avoided this theme. In denial about the threat they themselves face, oblivious to the fact that Republicans are winning this election because they understand the public's legitimate fears of another 9/11, they have chosen instead to tut-tut the Republicans for "fear-mongering". Conservatives, meanwhile, totally ignore their whining and continue to manipulate the public's fears of another 9/11 to their considerable political benefit.

Raising fears of another September 11 here at home has been the key tactic employed by the Republicans to gain support for their overall agenda. Fear of death and the mistaken belief that the President was acting decisively to protect us, pushed the President's approval rating from mediocre to 90% in the weeks following 9/11. And the public's belief that he can protect them better than his opponent remains his strongest advantage over Kerry today.

The latest example of the success of Republican efforts to manipulate the fear of death issue is the astounding report in the September 22 N.Y. Times that Bush - the most anti-woman candidate in American history- is leading Kerry by 48-43 among women, whereas Al Gore carried 54% of women in 2000. The Times reported that women feared a domestic attack more than men, and that a recent Times/CBS poll found that 48% had alot of confidence that Bush could protect them vs. 29% who felt that way about Kerry. The piece quoted a Democratic strategist as saying that "Kerry's failure to fight back against (the Swift Boat Veterans) attack fed a perception, particularly

among married women, that he would not fight for them and their children." It reported that the same Times/CBS News poll found Bush was beating Kerry 59-22 among married women who were registered to vote, so-called "security Moms".

One has only to contrast the Democratic and Republican conventions to understand why Bush is making inroads with women. Democrats barely mentioned the fact that the President's policies have increased the possibility that Americans will die from terrorism in coming years. The Republicans talked about nothing but how the President is protecting us from death, and his opponents cannot. They came across as strong, decisive and powerful, Democrats as well-meaning but weak, on the central issue of our day.

Anti-Bush forces have failed to respond effectively to Republican fear-mongering for a variety of reasons. Political experts shy away from the issue because they believe it benefits the President. Their logic is summed up by a Democratic strategist quoted in Time magazine on May 3, 2004, as saying "no matter how bad Bush does on the war and 9/11, just having voters think about it kills us."

There is also an understandable and even admirable liberal squeamishness about increasing fear levels in our society, since it so often leads to support for less civil liberties and more violence.

But there is a deeper reason, as well. Although each and every one of us is in fact threatened by terrorism at home, and the public is right to be frightened, liberals tend to deny their own fears. Conditioned by a lifetime of opposing violence, war, police brutality and a variety of other social injustices, they lack the psychological framework required to respond to the new threats of violence posed by 21st century terrorism.

The problem is, however, that the public's legitimate fears of dying will not go away just because Democrats refuse to respond to them. On the contrary. The Republicans will continue to manipulate these fears to their political advantage, increasing actual violence,

restrictions on civil liberties, and the risk of more terror even as they claim to be making us safer.

A recent study by Skidmore Professor Sheldon Solomon and eight other social psychologists ("Deliver Us From Evil: The Effects of Mortality Salience and Reminders of 9/11 on Support for President George W. Bush") sheds light on why Bush's opponents are cutting their own throats by avoiding the fear of death issue. The study found that reminding participants of death "increased support for President Bush " and "significantly reduced support for ... John Kerry." They also found that the increased support for the President "was not at all limited to conservative individuals."

The study is based on the work of sociologist Ernest Becker, who wrote in The Birth and Death of Meaning, "it is fear that makes people so willing to follow brash, strong-looking demagogues with tight jaws and loud voices ... Ah, to give oneself over to their direction - what calm, what relief." The study explains that "popular support for leaders is partly the result of the need to allay a deeply rooted fear of death ... The appeal of the leader lies in his or her perceived ability to both literally and symbolically deliver the people from illness, calamity, chaos and death ..."

Given the powerful role that unconscious fears of death play in this election, it is clearly time for Bush's opponents to stop whining about Republican fear-mongering and mobilize instead around the clear, strong, and overwhelming case that the President's incompetence on homeland and national security has increased the likelihood that tens of thousands of Americans will die from terrorist attacks in coming years.

The President's greatest failure to protect Americans has been his refusal to adequately fund homeland security, even as he wasted \$200 billion and increased the threat of terrorism by his disastrous policies in Iraq.

Matthew Brzezinski reports in Fortress America, for example, that "DHS's (the Department of Homeland Security's) \$36 billion

budget is a misleading number ... In reality, the sum does not represent a dramatic increase over pre-9/11 outlays. It simply lumps together the existing budgets of the twenty-two federal agencies that comprised DHS ... which is why I kept hearing about money woes and equipment shortages wherever I went. The truth of the matter is that homeland security is a shoestring operation ..." He also notes that Bush's support of corporations has allowed them time and again to defeat Democratic efforts to strengthen security at home.

A recent report based on dozens of official sources, compiled by the Center for American Progress ("Failing Grades: America's Security Three Years After 9/11), provides Bush's opponents with all the ammunition they need to demonstrate the President's failures to protect us. The study reports that:

- o "Only 5 percent of the nearly 8 million seaborne containers entering the United States every year are screened", and "70% percent of transportation executives rate the security risks to maritime cargo as 'very high' or 'high'." Experts agree that the risk of a nuclear bomb entering the United States in a seaborne container is one of the greatest we face, one that could kill millions. The President's failure to focus on this problem is inexcusable.**

- o "The Coast Guard estimates that securing U.S. ports will cost \$7.3 billion over 10 years, but the Bush Administration has distributed only \$441 million in grants."**

- o "The United States has roughly 66,000 chemical plants with 4,000 of them identified as 'high risk.' Despite the dangers of a terrorist attack on these facilities, no federal laws exist that require chemical companies to assess vulnerabilities and reduce the risk of chemical release". Brzezinski also reports "according to the Environmental Protection Agency more than one hundred of these plants could endanger up to a million lives with poisonous clouds of ammonia, chlorine, or carbon disulfide that could be released into the atmosphere over densely populated areas by attack. The military ranked a strike against the chemical industry as second only to biological warfare (and ahead of nuclear devices) in the total number**

of mass casualties it would produce ... As a result (of industry lobbying which killed the Chemical Security Act) two years after the lessons of 9/11, virtually anyone could still gain entry into thousands of these sites across the country."

o "Authorities now screen only about 5 percent of the 2.8 million tons of cargo placed on commercial passenger aircraft despite a mandate in the 2001 Aviation and Transportation Security Act. Yet TSA estimates there is potentially a 65 percent chance that terrorists are planning to place explosives in commercial cargo. Among transportation executives surveyed, 80 percent rated the security risks to air cargo as 'very high' or 'high'."

o "More than two million railcars and 500 train stations used by millions of passengers every day remain virtually unprotected. The Department of Homeland Security lacks a comprehensive strategy to protect commercial and passenger railways ... The annual shipment by rail of 83 million tons of hazardous materials like chlorine is nothing short of a time-bomb."

o "Bush Administration cutbacks have resulted in fewer police on the streets today than there were on September 11, 2001. Police departments across the country - which play a vital role in identifying and tracking down potential terrorists and cells - are experiencing personnel shortages due to budget-driven layoffs, cuts in federal support, increased overtime due to homeland security alerts and overseas deployments of officers who serve in the National Guard and Reserves ... the Bush Administration's 2005 budget calls for a 31.9 percent decrease in law enforcement funding from levels approved by Congress in FY2004."

o "Fire departments across the country remain woefully unprepared and ill-equipped: only 10 percent have the personnel and equipment to respond to a building collapse and 40 percent of firefighters have not received training for responding to a nuclear, biological or radiological attack."

o "Forty thousand tons of spent nuclear fuel stored at nuclear plants around the country are vulnerable to theft. Guard training, fire protection, and the security of spent nuclear fuel pools are inadequate."

The report goes on to document numerous other Bush Administration failures in providing adequate Homeland Security, from failing to adequately train first responders in the event of an attack, to mismanaging the Department of Homeland Security, to inadequately screening potential terrorists.

And its failure to provide homeland security is all the more shocking in the context of the increased threat of terrorism from abroad that the report also identifies. The Administration has failed to control the international proliferation of nuclear weapons ("less weapons-grade nuclear material has been secured in the two years since 9/11 than in the two years prior to the attacks"), failed to secure Afghanistan where the Taliban has been resurrected, failed to stem rising attacks against Americans around the world, alienated world opinion, and weakened our military by overusing the National Guard and stretching our troops too thin.

"The Bush Administration has supported cuts in combat pay, health insurance, education, and disability care for soldiers deployed abroad and their families at home. Taken together these steps threaten the future of the all-volunteer force," the report concludes.

Bush can still be defeated. But to do so his opponents will need to show Americans why they can better respond to their fears of death than President Bush and the Republicans.

It is an easy case to make.

The time has come to make it.