

# OPINION

THE BATTALION

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## No more Gore

### Gore's views are too extreme for John Kerry and party to succeed in November



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Shock value is probably rather hard to come by once one has claimed to have invented the Internet, but with each successively outrageous comment, Al Gore somehow manages to up the ante on his commentary.

Gore's propensity to exaggerate — to put it mildly — is hardly a secret; this hyperbolic tendency of his has been widely documented since his days as former President Bill Clinton's vice president. However, in a recent interview with *The New Yorker*, Gore crossed the line when he compared President Bush's Christian faith to the religious convictions of Islamic extremist groups such as al-Qaeda. Gore's comments transcended the realm of partisan politics; likening Bush to terrorists who hate America is nothing less than a personal attack. Due to the extremism of many of his statements, Kerry should not allow Gore to speak on his behalf, much less at his behest, as Gore alienates the very voters Kerry is trying to court.

A brief review of Gore's most notorious verbal gaffes is in order.

There was, of course, his infamous comment about the Internet, which has already been noted. Then there was the time he regaled listeners at a union meeting with a rendition of "Look for the Union Label," explaining to those assembled that the song was among the lullabies he heard as a child. However, it was later pointed out that the song was written in 1975, when Gore was 27.

And who can forget Gore's anecdote about prescription drugs, his dog and his mother-in-law? To illustrate the high cost of prescription drugs, Gore told a Tallahassee audience that although his dog and his mother-in-law take the same arthritis medication, his mother-in-law's prescription costs \$108, the dog's \$37.50, according to *USA Today*. It was later discovered that no such incident actually occurred, at least not in Gore's family.

Nevertheless, many of Gore's supporters find his commentary rather endearing, and as long as a listener is willing to blur the line between fact and fiction, falsified anecdotes about his past do not seriously harm anyone. Extreme accusations against a man, particularly a sitting president, for something as personal and intangible as his faith, however, do. Gore's claims deal a serious blow not only to his credibility, but the credibility of everyone for whom he is campaigning, including Kerry.

"It's the American version of the same fundamentalist impulse that we see in Saudi Arabia, in Kashmir, in religions around the world: Hindu, Jewish, Christian, Muslim. They all have certain features in common," Gore told *The New Yorker*, arguing that Bush's faith

places emphasis on "vengeance" and "brimstone," according to *WorldNetDaily.com*. The absurdity of this claim is especially evident in light of the fact that Gore is criticizing Bush's mainstream,

Christian faith, despite labeling himself Southern Baptist. The Bush camp's response to Gore's recent comments can be summed up by the words of a White House spokesman quoted by *Fox News*:

"Consider the source." In addition to calling Gore's credibility into question, many Republicans also criticize his delivery and method. "Some of the things he has said have been outrageous, and he says them in this high-pitched scream," said Republican strategist Keith Appell, who likens Gore to "some kind of cheerleader on acid," according to *Fox News*.

But none of Gore's vitriol has seemed to deter the Kerry campaign from using Gore as one of its front men. *Fox News* quotes senior Kerry adviser David Morehouse as saying, "Gore will be a tremendous asset to us in a number of targeted battleground states, and we're happy to have his help. He's a former vice president who's entitled to say what he believes." This statement seems logically troubling at first. After all, most of the battleground states Morehouse refers to are so-named because they tend to be politically moderate, and while Gore's fervent accusations may hold some appeal for rank-and-file Democrats farther to the left, it seems unlikely that an extreme position would draw voters who are moderate by definition. Andy Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, seconds this idea, saying, "Swing voters tend to be moderate, and if he comes across as too over the top, there's a risk," according to *Fox News*. Yet, Democrats are apparently willing to take this risk for a very simple reason: Gore triggers the memory of Clinton, whose glory days are Democrats' bread and butter.

Any nostalgia Gore may arouse is unlikely to persist in the face of defamation as extreme as comparing Bush to the terrorists who perpetrated Sept. 11. It stands to reason that a characteristically moderate voter would be anything but swayed by statements from a man who is so quintessentially immoderate. So long as Gore continues to make outrageous and unsubstantiated claims and Kerry looks to swing voters for support, aligning Kerry with Gore is a losing strategy.



CHRIS GRIFFIN • THE BATTALION

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## Cindy McReynolds says Bush can ensure U.S. safety

As Nov. 2 approaches and Americans solidify their choices for a presidential candidate, it has become clear that the central issue of this election will be national security. Because the defining characteristic of President Bush's term in office has been his leadership in the War on Terror, many Americans will make their choice based on two fundamental questions: Is the world a safer place today than when Bush took office, and could Sen. Kerry do a better job? The answer is clear. Despite occasional mistakes, Bush has succeeded in drawing a clear distinction between good and evil and articulating America's moral right to defend itself. Bush is the only candidate who will keep America safe.

In the years before Sept. 11, American foreign policy had collapsed into a pattern of appeasement. Both parties fell short of standing up to America's enemies, beginning with the 1991 failure to remove Saddam Hussein during Desert Storm, and ending with the Clinton administration's lack of response to the bombings of the World Trade Center in 1993, the American Embassies in Africa 1998 and the USS Cole in 2000.

These years of complacency finally resulted in the worst terrorist attack in America's history on Sept. 11. Immediately, the Bush administration recognized that drastic foreign policy changes were necessary to stop the pattern of attacks. During the next year, the Bush Doctrine, which places responsibility for terrorist acts on nations that harbor terrorists, legitimizes preemption and unilateralism and seeks to actively promote freedom and democracy throughout the world emerged.

Under Bush's leadership, the United States has successfully avoided major terrorist attacks at home for three years, which alone would appear to be an improvement over the past decade. However, America has also taken steps to contain terrorism abroad. Of the eight nations on the State Department's list of terrorist sponsors, three have become far less of a threat. Afghanistan is now conducting democratic elections and its terrorist camps have been destroyed. In Iraq, a brutal dictator has been replaced by an interim government committed to combating terrorism and bringing freedom to the Iraqi people. Even Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi agreed to surrender his weapons of mass destruction program, and the components he could have used to enrich uranium are now in U.S. hands. Furthermore, early this year, U.S. and Brit-

ish intelligence contributed to ending A.Q. Kahn's secret nuclear proliferation network in Pakistan.

Bush's opponents often cite recent terrorist attacks such as those in Iraq, Spain and Russia as evidence that the War on Terror is failing. However, the State Department's annual "Patterns of Global Terrorism" report indicates that since 2001, the number of annual attacks and the number of victims killed have declined.

Kerry believes that he could do a better job of protecting America by building an international coalition. When he acknowledges the 40 nations with forces deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan at all, he has referred to them as "some trumped-up, so-called coalition of the bribed, the coerced, the bought and the extorted." He has not, however, made it clear whom he is accusing of bribery, coercion or extortion, nor has he indicated whether the nations he has just insulted will play any role in the coalition he hopes to build.

In October 2002, Kerry voted to authorize the use of force in Iraq. Recently, when asked whether he would have gone to war knowing what he knows now, he responded, "You bet we might have," which would indicate that even in retrospect, he stands by his vote. Unfortunately, he also said in a CBS interview "I am against the war. The way the president went to war was wrong."

Kerry's ambiguity cannot be trusted with the lives of troops overseas or civilians at home. Bush's leadership has not been perfect, but it has been consistent; the principles he outlined in the days after Sept. 11 have not changed over the past three years.

Bush has drawn an international line in the sand, dividing those nations committed to fighting terrorism from those who endorse it. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, Americans have seen diplomacy and rhetoric translated into prompt and decisive action, unhindered by endless requests for international support. America needs a leader who is committed to her security, even when her international image is at stake.

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## Jonathan Smith does not feel safe in post-Bush world

President Bush leads democratic candidate John Kerry 58 percent to 31 percent on the question of who would do the best job of defending the country against terrorists, according to a Pew Research Center poll. Bush supporters are hopeful that terrorism will be the most important issue in this election, as their candidate may seem safer to most Americans by a wide margin. In reality, the country is only marginally safer from terrorist attacks after Sept. 11, as there are still huge problems with Bush's anti-terror philosophy.

The most significant danger remaining in the post-Sept. 11 era is America's nearly open border with Mexico and Canada. According to *Time* magazine, three million illegal aliens enter the country each year — or close to 8,000 a day. Those who are assigned to protect our borders have insufficient resources to combat a problem as large as illegal immigration. The paths used by illegal immigrants to enter the country can also be used to terrorize America. Extremists who wish to harm America can become lost in the large crowd of Mexicans that cross over into our country every year.

What has Bush done about the problem of our open borders? He made a bad situation worse — instead of provisioning troops to stop the flow of illegal immigrants or cracking down on illegal immigrant labor, Bush has offered a plan of amnesty for illegal immigrants. Even though this plan has not come completely into effect, the announcement has caused confusion below the border, and many would-be illegal aliens now think they are welcome in America. This significantly increased the number of illegal immigrants entering the country this year, a group of people who blaze a path for enemies of America to follow.

If Bush is going to turn a blind eye to the entry points of potential terrorists, perhaps he should attempt to catch terrorists before they

enter America. Unfortunately, since Sept. 11, the Bush administration has failed to catch the most dangerous terrorist in the world: Osama bin Laden. Maj. Gen. Eric Olson told *The Associated Press* that Osama bin Laden's trail has turned cold. Yet, *CBS News* reported that some military commanders believe Osama bin Laden is still running the show based on "the involvement of well-trained foreign fighters in attacks near the Pakistani border." In other words, the worst enemy of America still has power three years after Bush attacked Afghanistan to capture bin Laden and destroy al-Qaida.

What is even scarier than losing bin Laden is the actions of countries in the so-called Axis of Evil. According to *Fox News*, Iran refused demands by Europe to end its nuclear program last week. Iran still plans to produce enriched uranium, an essential component of nuclear weapons. In North Korea, according to a BBC report, the government stopped negotiations to end its nuclear program last Thursday. These two announcements mean the enemies that Bush labeled as the most dangerous in the world early in his administration are working toward having the capacity to make weapons of mass destruction. The potential creation of WMDs in rogue states combined with the openness of America's borders during Bush's presidency created a scenario where a terrorist is able to make a WMD and bring it into our homeland.

During the Republican National Convention, the primary theme (delivery by Zell Miller and Dick Cheney) was that electing Kerry could increase the likelihood of a future terrorist attack. The truth of the matter is that no one really knows how much better Kerry could be at defending the country from terrorist attacks because he has never had the job. Unlike Bush, he doesn't have a presidential record to run on. Yet if Cheney's words are true, and "the biggest threat we face today is having nuclear weapons fall into the hands of terrorists," Bush's record fails at his most crucial duty. Just because a politician says a country is safer does not make it so.

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