

The Triple-I Administration Immoral, Illegal, Incompetent

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October 2006**

People praise or fault the Bush administration for the Iraq war, its stand on abortion and gay rights, its policies on economics and social security, and so on. Arguments on these issues go on endlessly, but they rarely change minds. Meanwhile, America gets more divisive and the world more dangerous.

There is a much more fundamental issue regarding the Bush administration, which perhaps America can agree on, for it is based not on opinion but on facts. Simply put, the *behavior* of the Bush administration has been *Immoral*, *Illegal*, and *Incompetent*. The extent of this administration's massive Triple-I Behavior is outlined below.

The Triple-I issue is too important for our country and the world to be dismissed lightly. A Triple-I Administration can, and is, ruining this country —not because of its policies but because of its immoral, illegal, and incompetent behavior. Our nation has been divided, our moral fiber and the human values on which this great nation was founded are being eroded, we have lost the respect of much of the world, and, in consequence, we are losing our ability to influence for the good.

Republicans, Democrats, Independents — all should be worried about this Triple-I Administration and should do whatever possible to prevent further such behavior. For years, those in power in Congress have turned a blind eye to the administration's Triple-I Behavior, and every day the behavior goes unchecked, the country suffers more.

America needs an open, straightforward, moral, and competent administration, one that listens to the people and works with Congress. America needs a Congress that acts in a bipartisan manner, carrying out the checks and balances that were written into our Constitution. And, America needs an administration and Congress that debate the issues in good faith and work for the good of America and the world. We don't have any of that now, and the whole world knows it. Once this Triple-I Administration is gone, it will take America a long time to heal the wounds and sores that it caused and gain back the respect of the people of this world.

Immoral Behavior

The claim of immoral behavior has three parts: (1) the administration has condoned and taken part in torture, (2) it has lied extensively, and (3) it has been suppressing and manipulating facts for years.

1. Torture. Every religion will say that torture is immoral. On his website, David Gushee gives five important reasons why "torture is always wrong" for Christians, making several references to the Bible. But this administration has encouraged and has taken part in torture. Here are examples.

- (1) President Bush openly opposed the McCain amendment banning torture. The latest bill concerning detainees at Guantanamo still allows inhumane treatment of prisoners. Vice President Cheney has been an advocate for allowing harsh interrogation techniques.
- (2) The CIA has engaged in extraordinary rendition, spiriting people away to countries known to engage in torture. German citizen Khaled El-Masr, Osama Mustaf Hassan (abducted by the CIA in Milan), and Canadian Maher Arar were abducted, taken to other countries, tortured, and let go five months to a year later, never charged with a crime, and never compensated for the ways their lives were ruined. A report by Dick Marty of Switzerland, states that more than a hundred people were secretly renditioned to or from European countries by the CIA in recent years, many for the purpose of torture.
- (3) Guantanamo has been in the news repeatedly for the inhumane treatment of prisoners. In summer 2004, the International Committee of the Red Cross complained to our government that the procedures at Guantanamo were tantamount to torture. Many prisoners who have been released have complained of torture.
- (4) No one needs reminding of the frightful goings-on at Abu Ghraib.

The United States used to be respected around the world for its freedom and for its stand on human rights. The Bush administration's behavior regarding the treatment of prisoners has completely changed that. Meanwhile, the many

Americans who do believe in human dignity are ashamed at what has been done in the name of this country. Long ago, Congress should have told this administration that there is no compromise: torture is immoral, is against our principles, and will not be allowed.

2. Lies and misleading statements. One of the ten commandments of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam states that one should not lie or give false testimony. Truth is a basic principle of all religions. Yet, the Bush administration has time and time again resorted to misleading statements and lies. A House minority report titled *The Constitution in Crisis* mentions many of these lies and misleading statements, and several websites have shown through careful analysis that statements by Bush, Cheney, Rice, and Rumsfeld leading up to the war with Iraq were at best misleading and at most lies.

One infamous lie is Bush's statement on 20 April 2004 that, "Anytime you hear the United States government talking about wire tap, it requires—a wire tap requires a court order. ... When we're talking about chasing down terrorists, we're talking about getting a court order before we do so." Years before, Bush had ordered warrantless wiretapping. Another lie: Four days after Katrina, Bush said, "I don't think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees." But a video appeared on the Internet, showing him being briefed on 28 August.

Recently, in an interview on CBS, he said, "We don't torture", but the whole world knows that this administration has been torturing people. All through summer 2006, Bush has been telling us how much safer we were because of our going to war with Iraq, but information from a National Intelligence Report from April 2006 says otherwise.

Time and time again, this administration is caught in misleading statements. This behavior has lost the administration the trust and respect of millions. Listening to the administration on the TV or radio has no meaning any more, for one cannot believe what they say.

3. Suppression and manipulation of facts. A report of the Union of Concerned Scientists from March 2004 discusses "A well-established pattern of suppression and distortion of scientific findings by high-ranking Bush administration appointees." There is strong documentation, the report says, of a wide-ranging effort to manipulate the government's scientific advisory system to prevent the appearance of advice that might run counter to the administration's agenda, and there is evidence that the administration often imposed restrictions on what government scientists can say or write about sensitive topics.

Here is an example. The New York Times reported in June 2003 that the White House edited a report on climate change, whittling down a long section on the risks from rising global temperatures to a few noncommittal paragraphs. EPA staff protested, to no avail, saying that the section on climate "...no longer accurately represents scientific consensus on climate change."

Another example. In June 2003, Chief Medicare Actuary Richard Foster provided the White House with data that indicated that the Medicare legislation being pushed by the Triple-I Administration would cost 25% to 50% more than the administration's public estimates. The administration did not disclose this information. In fact, Foster was ordered under pain of severe consequences not to disclose that information to Congress.

These are just a few samples of the suppression and manipulation of facts by this Triple-I Administration.

When the administration cannot be trusted to act in good faith, in an open and honest way, when the administration cannot be trusted to speak the truth, the whole country and the world suffers tremendously.

Illegal Behavior

A 2005 minority report of the House Judiciary Committee states that the Bush administration violated several federal laws by (1) committing fraud against the United States; (2) making false statements to Congress; (3) violating the war powers resolution; (4) misusing government funds; (5) violating federal laws and international treaties prohibiting torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment; (6) retaliating against witnesses and other individuals; and (7) leaking and improperly using intelligence.

Other groups are concerned with the illegal actions of the Triple-I Administration. In August 2006, the American Bar Association House of Delegates adopted a resolution that "The American Bar Association opposes, as contrary to the rule of law and our constitutional system of separation of powers, the misuse of presidential signing statements ...". Bush has attached signing statements to more than 750 bills including a bill that outlaws torture, reserving the right to waive the law if he wants. Some GOP Senators have condemned him for this. Republican Congressman Ron Paul has said that Bush has presided over a system-wide doctrine of violating the Constitution at every turn and should be impeached.

And then, of course, Bush knowingly broke the law requiring warrants for wiretaps.

These are just a few but alarming examples of illegal behaviour by this Triple-I Administration. There is a pattern, a habit by this administration of doing what it wants, regardless of the law, and using secrecy and lies where possible to hide its actions.

Incompetent Behavior

Some people want to continue with the Bush administration because the current state of the world requires a strong person at the helm, and Bush is the man. The behavior of this administration argues for just the opposite. In four major situations, the Bush administration has shown itself to be incompetent: (1) the Afghan War, (2) the Iraq war, (3) the response to Katrina, and (4) the Medicare prescription reform. Further, the Triple-I Administration's use of torture is another instance of incompetence. How many times does the administration have to mess things up before people realize how incompetent it is?

(1) In Afghanistan, the Bush administration took troops and money away —some say illegally— before the job was done in order to start the Iraq War. We haven't found Bin Laden, the war in Afghanistan has cost us \$37 billion so far, and terrorism and insurgency are rearing their head again. The Afghan problem is getting worse, not better.

(2) In Iraq, the incompetence has been stated many times: (1) too few troops initially, (2) initial failure to protect anything (including ammunition dumps) except the embassy and oil fields, (3) absence of a coherent plan for post-war governance, (4) disbanding the Iraq army, which put thousands of men on the streets with nothing to do, (5) banning Baath Party members from taking part in reconstruction, making them more liable to become part of the insurgency, (6) privatizing state-owned industries, which created instant mass unemployment, (7) lack of armor for soldiers and vehicles, (8) corruption and waste caused by massive no-bid contracts to insider companies like Halliburton, instead of investing in local qualified Iraqi firms or using UN-supervised public works programs —the list goes on and on. A large part of the incompetence was the Triple-I Administration's failure to listen to anyone who suggested anything different from what the administration wanted. This type of behavior is called "group think", and the results have been well documented in business literature.

(3) The government's response to Katrina was itself a monstrous catastrophe, and the Bush administration had a direct hand in creating that catastrophe. One cause was mismanagement and the appointment of unqualified people to high positions. In fact, this president has a history of appointing people based not on qualifications but on cronyism. President Carter was once asked for his views on FEMA. Carter said that he created FEMA with three important principles in mind: (1) FEMA would report directly to the president; (2) FEMA would have enough money; and (3) FEMA would be directed and managed by professionals. The Bush administration failed to protect all three principles, and you see what happened.

Bush was briefed on Katrina in the days leading up to that storm, and you can watch a video of it on the Internet. His response at that briefing, his actions during and just after Katrina, and his initial response to 9/11 were the opposite of what one would expect of a leader in a crisis.

(4) Medicare prescription plan. All seniors will remember the chaos that reigned with the start of this plan in January 2006. A Byzantine labyrinth of confusing plans, miscommunication among pharmacies, drug companies, and insurance companies, seniors unable to obtain their promised medicines — it was a nightmare. Six million low-income seniors who were receiving free medications were suddenly charged with deductible and unaffordable co-payments. The States had to step in to help out. Bush had hailed this Medicare prescription plan as a signature domestic achievement, and it was a complete disaster.

(5) A final word about torture. Not only is it immoral to torture people, it is incompetent. People will say anything when being tortured, so one gets little truth out of torturing people. Further, those you torture —and their relatives and friends— hate you for the rest of their lives. Had all prisoners in Iraq been treated in a civilized manner, with respect, they might have seen the true nature of the American people and changed their views. Instead, they saw the dark side of the American people, as exhibited by this Triple-I Administration, and because of that, thousands and even millions now hate us.