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Just Cut Out Their Tongues

by Thom Hartmann

The CBS/Rather/Bush/Guard affair - regardless of how it ultimately turns out - has brilliantly deflected the issue of George W. Bush having strings pulled to get him into the Guard, and then not fulfilling his service requirements. Anytime the issue is raised in the future - regardless of facts or context - partisan Republicans will simply dismiss it by saying, "Those documents were forged." That four-word sound byte will be remembered long after the details of Bush's failures have dimmed from popular memory. Politically, it was a masterstroke.

And not only does it hurt Bush family enemy Kerry, but also gets back at Bush family enemy Dan Rather, against whom they've nursed a 16-year grudge.

The Bush family's hostility to Rather first broke the surface of public attention back in 1988, when Vice President George H.W. Bush was confronted on network television about his various roles in the criminal affair now known as Iran/Contra. At the time, rumors were flying that in the fall of 1980 then-VP-candidate Bush had negotiated with Iran to hold the American hostages until after the election. The hostages were not only held throughout the election campaign, but were released the very hour Ronald Reagan was sworn into office. The ongoing dragged-out hostage crisis (and Carter's failed attempt at rescue) had knocked the incumbent president down so far in the polls that the long-shot ticket of Reagan/Bush won.

When it later came out, in part because of an investigation started by Senator John Kerry, that after the 1980 election Reagan/Bush were illegally selling American missiles to the Iranians "in exchange for hostages" at a time there were no hostages (the Iranian hostages had been freed, and the Lebanese hostages not yet taken), speculation intensified. The key to busting the whole deal open and indicting George H.W. Bush, some congressional investigators believed, would be Bill Casey. As the manager of the 1980 Reagan/Bush campaign, he would have known of the deal, and persistent allegations floated around Washington that he'd even helped organize the initial negotiations between Bush and Iranian representatives.

When Reagan/Bush took the White house, they elevated campaign manager Casey to the role of Director of the CIA. And the congressional committees looking into Iran/Contra so wanted to talk with Casey that they took the rare step of subpoenaing a sitting head of the CIA.

As White House insider Barbara Honegger wrote in her groundbreaking book "*October Surprise*," Casey "reportedly attended meetings in Paris, France, on October 19 and 20, 1980, with Iranian officials and agents of French intelligence to arrange an arms-for-hostages-delay deal with Iran. The morning of his first scheduled under-oath testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee on the secret Iran initiative he was struck by seizures in his CIA headquarters office in Langley, Virginia, and underwent speech-incapacitating left-brain surgery shortly thereafter. Had he lived to testify, according to life-long friend and counsel Milton Gould, Casey would have told the 'entire truth.' He died on May 6, 1987."

Since the left temporal lobe of the brain - "Broca's region" - controls speech, some "conspiracy minded" folks suggested at the time that this was simply a hi-tech version of the mob cutting out an informer's tongue.

Six months after Casey was silenced, on January 25, 1988 in a CBS broadcast, Dan Rather cornered Vice President George H.W. Bush about the whole Iran issue, and Bush became furious. Barely able to speak, his face twisted with rage, Bush blurted out: "It's not fair to judge my whole career by a rehash on Iran. How would you like it if I judged your career by those seven minutes when you walked off the set in New York?" Bush's voice was cracking with hysteria as he added, "Would you like that?"

Dan Rather has been on the Bush family enemies list ever since. But he's not alone.

Another member of the Bush family enemies list is Senator John Kerry, who opened the precursor to the Iran-Contra investigations, which brought about the demand for Casey's testimony. Kerry then led inquiries into the Bank of Commerce and Credit International (BCCI), which broke open a tangled web that included organized crime, international terrorists, and members of both the Bush family and the Bin Laden family.

Indeed, as The Wall Street Journal noted in a front page story on December 6, 1991 ("Family Ties: How Oil Firm Linked To a Son of Bush Won Bahrain Drilling Pact"/ "Harken Energy Had a Web Of Mideast Connections; In the Background: BCCI" by Thomas Petzinger Jr., Peter Truell And Jill Abramson): "The mosaic of BCCI connections surrounding Harken Energy may prove nothing more than how ubiquitous the rogue bank's ties were. But the number of BCCI-connected people who had dealings with Harken -- all since George W. Bush came on board -- likewise raises the question of whether they mask an effort to cozy up to a presidential son."

This all came into the open because of the tenacious efforts of former prosecutor and U.S. Senator John Kerry. As David Corn noted in [an article](#) first published in The Nation: "In the fall of 1992 Kerry released a report on the BCCI affair. It blasted everyone: Justice, Treasury, US Customs, the Federal Reserve, [Democrats] Clifford and Altman (for participating in 'some of BCCI's deceptions'), high-level lobbyists and fixers, and the CIA. The report noted that after the CIA knew the bank was 'a fundamentally corrupt criminal enterprise, it continued to use both BCCI and First American...for CIA operations.' The report was, in a sense, an indictment of Washington cronyism. In the years since, there's been nothing like it."

Which brings us to what may be the most recent Bush family political dirty trick.

Back during the years when BCCI and the Bin Ladens were helping prop up one of George W. Bush's failing oil businesses, Karl Rove was perfecting the art of using misdirection to win political campaigns. James Moore and Wayne Slater, who wrote "[Bush's Brain](#)" - the unauthorized biography of Rove - noted that when Rove ran Bill Clements' campaign in Texas in 1986, he is alleged to have bugged his own office to distract voters from the real issues of the campaigns. "Who bugged Rove?" became the big story in the news for weeks, pushing other issues off the front page (and implying that Rove and his candidate were the victims of dirty tricks). Rove's candidate won an upset victory.

Others have suggested - although there is no clear evidence one way or the other - that Rove was behind the appearance in the Gore campaign of Bush's debate prep notes. Had Bush "lost" the debates in a big way, the issue could have been deftly shifted to the Gore campaign having had advance copies of his notes.

Perhaps it's a short leap from bugging your own office, to planting debate prep materials with your opponent, to placing phony documents to kill an issue.

For example, Robert Sam Anson points out in a September 16, 2004 article in [The New York Observer](#) that, "Mr. Rather's report hadn't been over 10 minutes when a post appeared on the right-wing Web site FreeRepublic.com from 'TankerKC,' saying the documents were 'not in the style that we used when I came into the USAF . can we get a copy of those memos?'"

This was followed in a few hours by a detailed typographic analysis from another blogger named "Buckhead" - even though the typography had only been shown on television, not exactly a medium conducive to examining typographic nuance.

The blog site that "broke" the story of the alleged forgery of the documents Dan Rather had shown the world was, to quote Robert Sam Anson, "the repository for anti-Jew, anti-Catholic, anti-homosexual, anti-John Kerry rants by Jerome R. Corsi, Ph.D."

For some, the name may sound familiar. As Anson continues: "And whom, you ask, is Dr. Corsi? Co-author of the best-selling 'Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry,' that's who."

And now we learn from CBS that "Buckhead" - the blogger who posted to Corsi's website detailed information about the memos' typography just 3 hours after the story had aired on CBS - wasn't a typesetter or typographer at all. Instead, he's a lawyer, Harry MacDougald, who [the LA Times notes](#), has "strong ties to conservative Republican causes who had helped draft the petition urging the Arkansas Supreme Court to disbar President Clinton after the Monica S. Lewinsky scandal" and has connections, at least institutionally, to Ken Starr and other senior Republicans.

Most recently, it's been reported by [The New York Times](#) that the Texas man who may have passed the documents along to Dan Rather was Texas Air National Guard senior advisor and former Lt. Colonel Bill Burkett.

In February of 2004, [USA Today](#) reported Burkett claimed to have witnessed and overheard senior Guard officers working to do a thorough "cleansing" of George W. Bush's National Guard records for a biography Karen Hughes was writing before his last run for president. If true, Burkett - another Bush family enemy - is now on the short list of potential fall guys in this case.

It's enough to make you wonder who's next on the schedule for temporal-lobe brain surgery...

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