

# CHAPTER 15

## THE CHICKENHAWK SMEAR

*Chickenhawk is an epithet used in United States politics to criticize a politician, bureaucrat, or commentator who votes for war, supports war, commands a war, or develops war policy, but has not personally served in the military, especially one who opted out of a previous war on dubious grounds. - Wikipedia*

In July 2007, Clinton sycophant Joe Conason attacked Republican presidential candidates Rudy Giuliani and Mitt Romney for their lack of military experience. According to Conason, the GOP “seems to prefer its hawks to be of the chicken variety.”

“Born in 1944, young Rudy was highly eligible for military service when he reached his 20s during the Vietnam War,” Conason wrote. “He did not volunteer for combat—as Kerry did—and instead found a highly creative way to dodge the draft.”

Turns out that Giuliani received a student deferment and then, later, “drew a high lottery number and was never drafted.”

Romney also received a student deferment. Later, he received a deferment as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

“But it is hard to blame Romney for choosing missionary work over military service,” Conason wrote. “After all, the Mormons didn’t send him to proselytize in the slums of the Philippines, Guatemala or Kenya. They sent him to France.”<sup>1</sup>

Conason’s assertion that Kerry volunteered for combat is contradicted by Kerry’s own words. “I didn’t really want to get involved in the war,” Kerry said in a little-noticed contribution to a book of Vietnam reminiscences published in 1986. “When I signed up for the swift boats, they had very little to do with the war. They were engaged in coastal patrolling and that’s what I thought I was going to be doing.”

According to the *Boston Globe*, “But two weeks after he arrived in Vietnam, the swift boat mission changed—and Kerry went from having one of the safest assignments in the escalating conflict to one of the most dangerous. Under the newly launched Operation SEALORD, swift boats were charged with patrolling the narrow waterways of the Mekong Delta to draw fire and smoke out the enemy. Cruising inlets and coves and canals, swift boats were especially vulnerable targets.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.salon.com/opinion/conason/2007/07/20/rudy\\_and\\_romney/](http://www.salon.com/opinion/conason/2007/07/20/rudy_and_romney/)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.boston.com/globe/nation/packages/kerry/061603.shtml>

Kerry was assigned duty that he did not volunteer for, and it appears that he immediately began looking for a creative way to get out of Vietnam as soon as possible.

Oh, and Kerry did unsuccessfully attempt to defer his military service for another year after he graduated from Yale. He wanted to continue his studies in France.<sup>3</sup>

Incidentally, Conason's biography makes no mention of his own military service.

As is the case with most smears offered by liberals, the chickenhawk smear is accompanied by a great deal of hypocrisy. The Constitution requires no military prerequisite before a man or woman can become president. Abraham Lincoln, who presided over the Civil War, served briefly during the Black Hawk War of 1832. However, he readily acknowledged that he spent more time swatting mosquitoes than fighting Indians. When is the last time you heard Lincoln characterized as a chickenhawk?

Democrat Woodrow Wilson did not serve in the military. During his reelection campaign in 1916, his campaign slogan was "He kept us out of the war." A month after he began his second term, Wilson took America into World War I to make "the world safe for democracy." Was Wilson a chickenhawk? Apparently not.

While Franklin Delano Roosevelt did serve as this nation's Assistant Secretary of the Navy, he never served a day in uniform. He could have served during World War I, which took place several years before he contracted polio, but he did not. Nevertheless, this did not preclude him from leading this country during most of World War II. It is clear that Roosevelt wanted to get involved in World War II, yet no liberal would ever call Roosevelt a chickenhawk.

Between World War II and 1992, every president had served in the military. However, things changed with baby boomer Bill Clinton's candidacy. Clinton had not served during the Vietnam War and, if he prevailed during the Democratic primary season, his general election opponent would be Republican George H.W. Bush, a man who had joined the U.S. Navy on his eighteenth birthday and had earned the Distinguished Flying Cross.

During the fall of 1991, the national press began asking questions about Clinton's avoidance of the draft. George Stephanopoulos, a Clinton campaign senior adviser, noted in his memoirs that he urged Clinton to provide better, cleaner answers. "You would have thought I had called Clinton a draft dodger," Stephanopoulos wrote. "Hillary spoke first, and she was incensed. 'Bill's not going to apologize for being against the Vietnam

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<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2004/03/07/wkerr07.xml&sSheet=/news/2004/03/07/ixnewstop.html>

War?' Ignited by her intensity, Clinton launched into a red-faced tirade against the war and said he'd rather lose the race than say it was right."<sup>4</sup>

Clinton had been telling the press and his own staff that he never received a deferment because he decided to take his chance in the lottery instead. That lie was exposed in February 1992 when ABC reporter Mark Halperin handed Stephanopoulos a copy of Clinton's letter to Army Colonel Eugene Holmes.\* Holmes was the director of the University of Arkansas Reserve Officers' Training Corps program in 1969 when Clinton sought his help in avoiding the draft. Clinton had received his second draft notice (he claims he received the first too late while he was in England) and had an induction date of July 28, 1969. Holmes, after receiving pressure from Sen. William Fulbright, a Rhodes scholar and former president of the University of Arkansas, agreed to accept Clinton into the ROTC on July 17, 1969, with the understanding that Clinton would complete basic training the following summer. Clinton's draft notice was nullified and his draft board reclassified him 1-D (reservist deferment) on August 7, 1969.<sup>5</sup>

Having avoided the draft, Clinton returned to England for the second year of his Rhodes Scholarship program. While there, he met Father Richard McSorley, an antiwar Jesuit who had taken a sabbatical to visit peace groups throughout the world. Both Clinton and McSorley participated in an antiwar demonstration at the U.S. Embassy. The following day they marched back to the embassy and left white crosses to symbolize the deaths of Americans.<sup>6</sup>

According to McSorley in his 1979 book *Peace Eyes*, Clinton was one of the organizers of the demonstration, which had the support of British peace organizations such as the British Peace Council, an arm of the KGB-backed World Peace Council.

On December 1, 1969, a lottery drawing—the first since 1942—was held at Selective Service National Headquarters in Washington, D.C. With the new lottery system, Clinton realized that the odds were now in his favor. Two days after the lottery drawing, he wrote his infamous letter to Holmes. "First, I want to thank you, not just for saving me from the draft, but for being so kind and decent to me last summer, when I was as low as I have ever been," Clinton wrote. "One thing which made the bond we struck in good faith somewhat palatable to me was my high regard for you personally. In retrospect, it seems that the admiration might not have been mutual had

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<sup>4</sup> *All Too Human*, p. 71.

\* Holmes survived the Bataan Death March in the Philippines in 1942, which, in my mind, makes Clinton's broken pledge to him all the more egregious. In 2002 our family made the trip from Bataan to San Fernando, Pampanga, in an air-conditioned car. The trip took several hours. It is difficult to imagine how Holmes and his fellow soldiers survived that march in the extreme heat and humidity with little food or water. Many did not. At San Fernando, the men were loaded into train boxcars and transported to Camp O'Donnell. Packed like sardines, those who died en route to the POW camp did not fall to the floor of the boxcar until it was unloaded.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.snopes.com/politics/clintons/felon.asp>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-17365684.html>

you known a little more about me, about my political beliefs and activities. At least you might have thought me more fit for the draft than for ROTC.”

“I decided to accept the draft in spite of my beliefs for one reason: to maintain my political viability within the system,” Clinton continued. “For years I have worked to prepare myself for a political life characterized by both practical political ability and concern for rapid social progress. It is a life I still feel compelled to try to lead.”<sup>7</sup>

Clinton ended up not being drafted and not serving in the ROTC. Of course, supporters of George H.W. Bush pointed to Clinton’s letter to show that he had been lying about his avoidance of the draft, and that he had used dubious means to avoid military service. Fortunately for Clinton, a Vietnam War hero gave him a way out of the controversy.

Although he himself had “kept up his criticism of Mr. Clinton’s explanation of his draft record during the Vietnam War”<sup>8</sup> during the Democratic primary season in 1992, Sen. Bob Kerrey of Nebraska, a Medal of Honor recipient, attacked Clinton’s GOP detractors when they issued the same criticism. “The condition of having a special draft status was not created by Bill Clinton,” Kerrey said. “It was created and later allowed by politicians like George [H.W.] Bush and his mentor, Richard Nixon.... God help us if, in 1992, the people who brought us the tragedy of Vietnam use it in a deceptive way to hold onto power.”<sup>9</sup>

Of course, the only deception in the Clinton draft story came from Clinton Inc. That deception continued even after Clinton left the White House. In *Living History*, Hillary Clinton’s 2003 memoir, the current presidential candidate wrote, “I knew that Bill respected military service, that he would have served if he had been called and that he would also have gladly enlisted in World War II, a war whose purpose was crystal clear.” As we have seen, Clinton was called to serve—twice. He just failed to answer those calls.

Clinton’s maneuvering to avoid military service during the Vietnam War was far more creative and deceptive than anything Giuliani or Romney did. Yet there does not seem to be any record of Conason criticizing Clinton’s avoidance of the draft, let alone any examples of Conason calling Clinton a chickenhawk. As someone who deployed the troops more than 40 times during his presidency,<sup>10</sup> Clinton certainly fit the definition of “chickenhawk” that was shared at the beginning of this chapter. Clinton deployed troops to, among other places, Haiti, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Bosnia, Liberia, and Kosovo, but was never called a chickenhawk by his fellow liberals.\* For

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/clinton/etc/draftletter.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0CE7DD1F3EF93BA15751C0A964958260>

<sup>9</sup> Kevin L. Groenhagen, *Liberals Say the Darnedest Things* (1993)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.cdi.org/issues/usforces/deployments.html>

\* Remarkably, some liberal Web sites list former Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld as a chickenhawk, even though he served in the U.S. Navy from 1954 to 1957 as a naval aviator and flight instructor. Clinton’s last secretary of defense, William Cohen, who oversaw Operation Desert Fox (Iraq) and Operation Allied Force (Kosovo), had a military career that consisted of just one day in ROTC.

example, when Al Franken published *Rush Limbaugh is a Big Fat Idiot* in 1996, he included a chapter entitled “Operation Chickenhawk.” The fictional Vietnam War squad in the chapter was made up of Dan Quayle, Newt Gingrich, Rush Limbaugh, Pat Buchanan, Phil Gramm, Clarence Thomas, and George Will. Bill Clinton did not make the squad. Nor did Franken, who had a student deferment during Vietnam.

Clinton went on to defeat George H.W. Bush in 1992 and Bob Dole, another World War II veteran, in 1996. It appeared that a candidate’s military service was no longer an issue in presidential politics. In 2000, the chickenhawk epithet was used rarely against George W. Bush, who served in the Texas Air National Guard (TANG), and his running mate, Dick Cheney, who received student deferments and the “hardship” exemption (3-A) during Vietnam. Al Gore, the Democratic presidential candidate had served in Vietnam, but just for a few months as a military journalist. Gore’s vice presidential running mate, Joe Lieberman, like Cheney, received student deferments and the hardship exemption.

However, things changed in 2004 when Bush faced John Kerry, the junior senator from Massachusetts. Even after serving as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces for more than three years and leading those forces in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Bush’s 30-year-old military record suddenly became an issue.

Kerry had chastised Bob Kerrey 12 years earlier when Kerrey tried to make an issue out of Bill Clinton’s failure to serve in the military. On February 27, 1992, the day after Kerrey attacked Clinton in Atlanta, Kerry took to the Senate floor:

The race for the White House should be about leadership, and leadership requires that one help heal the wounds of Vietnam, not reopen them; that one help identify the positive things that we learned about ourselves and about our nation, not play to the divisions and differences of that crucible of our generation.

We do not need to divide America over who served and how. I have personally always believed that many served in many different ways. Someone who was deeply against the war in 1969 or 1970 may well have served their country with equal passion and patriotism by opposing the war as by fighting in it. Are we now, 20 years or 30 years later, to forget the difficulties of that time, of families that were literally torn apart, of brothers who ceased to talk to brothers, of fathers who disowned their sons, of people who felt compelled to leave the country and forget their own future and turn against the will of their own aspirations?

Are we now to descend, like latter-day Spiro Agnews, and play, as he did, to the worst instincts of divisiveness and reaction that still haunt America? Are we now going to create a new scarlet letter in the context of Vietnam?\*

Certainly, those who went to Vietnam suffered greatly. I have argued for years, since I returned myself in 1969, that they do deserve special affection and gratitude for service. And, indeed, I think everything I have tried to do since then has been to fight for their rights and recognition.

But while those who served are owed special recognition, that recognition should not come at the expense of others; nor does it require that others be victimized or criticized or said to have settled for a lesser standard. To divide our party or our country over this issue today, in 1992, simply does not do justice to what all of us went through during that tragic and turbulent time.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, Kerry himself and his party—the “latter-day Spiro Agnews”—decided to divide the country over the Vietnam War in 2004.

Democratic National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe appeared on Fox News on January 31 and said, “George Bush never showed up [for TANG duty]. He was AWOL from the Alabama National Guard. He didn’t fight in any battles and General Clark did. So I will put General Clark up against George Bush any day of the week.”<sup>12</sup> McAuliffe repeated the charge on February 1: “I look forward to that debate when John Kerry, a war hero with a chest full of medals, is standing next to George Bush, a man who was AWOL in the Alabama National Guard. George Bush never served in our military and our country. He didn’t show up when he should have showed up.”<sup>13</sup> Incidentally, McAuliffe never served a day in uniform.

Responding to the lies from McAuliffe and other Kerry allies, Bush on February 10 released his National Guard pay and retirement records. The documents indicated that Bush received credit for nine days of active duty between May 1972 and May 1973, the period that Democrats have cited as evidence that he failed to meet his military responsibilities. He left the National Guard with an honorable discharge eight months shy of the obligatory six years in 1973, to attend Harvard Business School.<sup>14</sup>

Of course, the records were facts, and facts mean little to liberal Democrats. On February 12, Secretary of State Colin Powell appeared on Capitol Hill and had this exchange with Rep. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio:

**BROWN:** We count on you. The president may have been AWOL, the vice president said he had other priorities during Vietnam, other high

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\* As we saw in Chapter 13, Kerry attempted to put that “new scarlet letter,” i.e., “chickenhawk,” on Rush Limbaugh.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110004646>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.factcheck.org/article140.html>

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4230576/>

administrative officials never served. You understand war. We absolutely count on you. And I think a lot of us wonder what happened between that “Post” interview and your statement the next day when you said the president made the right decision.

**POWELL:** First of all Mr. Brown, I won’t dignify your comments about the president, because you don’t know what you’re talking about. Second, let me get to the points you’re raising.

**BROWN:** I’m sorry. I don’t know what you mean, Mr. Secretary.

**POWELL:** You made reference to the president.

**BROWN:** I said he may have been AWOL.

**POWELL:** Mr. Brown, let’s not go there. Let’s just not go there in this hearing. If you want to have a political fight on this matter that is very controversial and I think is being dealt with by the White House, fine. Let’s not go there.<sup>15</sup>

Brown’s online biography noted that he was born in 1952, but made no mention of military service. I called his office and was told that he, like Cheney, received a student deferment. Apparently, he also had other priorities during Vietnam. Unfortunately, the people of Ohio awarded the demagogic Brown with a seat in the U.S. Senate in 2006.

On February 13, Bush appeared on *Meet the Press* and was asked how he was able to leave the National Guard eight months early. “Well, I was going to Harvard Business School and worked it out with the military,” Bush answered.<sup>16</sup>

With the AWOL lie exposed, the liberal attack machine then turned to Bush’s early discharge from TANG. For example, the *Kansas City Star’s* Rhonda Chriss Lokeman on February 15, 2004 wrote, “While untold numbers of young men and women were losing their limbs and lives in Southeast Asia, Bush somehow ‘worked things out.’”

If Lokeman had bothered to consult a history book, she would have learned that no American men or women were losing their limbs and lives in Southeast Asia at the time Bush “worked things out” with the military. Bush was last paid for Guard duty on July 30, 1973. The last U.S. combat troops left Vietnam on March 29, 1973. The official halt of combat activity in Southeast Asia occurred on August 15, 1973, when the U.S. bombing of Cambodia ended. In other words, official combat activity in Southeast Asia ended *before* Bush began business school. (There is no record of Lokeman writing a similar column concerning how Clinton worked things out to avoid induction into the Army in July 1969. Nearly 10,000 U.S. servicemen were killed in action during that year.)

On April 28, Sen. Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey, a World War II veteran, delivered a speech on the floor of the Senate in which he attacked

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<sup>15</sup> <http://cnnstudentnews.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0402/11/acd.00.html>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4179618>

Kerry's opponents. "The lead chickenhawk against Sen. Kerry [is] the vice president of the United States, Vice President Cheney," Lautenberg said. "He was in Missouri this week claiming that Sen. Kerry was not up to the job of protecting this nation. What nerve. Where was Dick Cheney when that war was going on?"

According to CNN, "In a speech Monday at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, Cheney attacked Kerry's votes in the Senate to cut weapons programs, his opposition to the 1991 Persian Gulf War and recent comments that the war on terror should not be thought of primarily as a military operation."

Clearly, Cheney's remarks were directed at Kerry's votes, not his military service. But that fact did not stop Lautenberg from pointing to a poster with a drawing of a chicken in a military uniform defining a chickenhawk as "a person enthusiastic about war, provided someone else fights it."<sup>17</sup>

During the same month, Democratic Rep. Nancy Pelosi, the future Speaker of the House, said, "As far as we know, Senator Kerry got three Purple Hearts for risking his life in Vietnam and President Bush got a dental examination in Alabama." Rep. Jim McDermott, D-Wash., speaking on the House floor, characterized Bush's TANG service as "missing without action."<sup>18</sup>

When the Democratic National Convention took place in late July, Kerry, who in 1992 said, "The race for the White House should be about leadership, and leadership requires that one help heal the wounds of Vietnam, not reopen them," put his Vietnam service front and center. He met up with his so-called "band of brothers," 12 veterans of the Swift boats he captained in Vietnam and Jim Rassmann, a Green Beret he rescued from a river in the Mekong Delta, in Boston. Together they crossed the Boston Harbor aboard the LuLu E taxi ship, which had been adorned in red, white and blue. According to the *Washington Post*, "Everything about the day was orchestrated to stir memories of Kerry's military service and his support from the men and women in uniform.... The unspoken message: Kerry served in combat, while George W. Bush served stateside in the National Guard."<sup>19</sup>

The following day, Kerry began his acceptance speech with the words, "I'm John Kerry, and I'm reporting for duty" and a salute. "And in this journey," Kerry said. "I am accompanied by an extraordinary band of brothers led by that American hero, a patriot called Max Cleland." Cleland, of course, is the former senator from Georgia who lost three limbs in Vietnam. He had just introduced Kerry.

Kerry continued: "I know what kids go through when they are carrying an M-16 in a dangerous place and they can't tell friend from foe. I know what

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2004/ALLPOLITICS/04/28/lautenberg.kerry/index.html>

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.usatoday.com/news/politicselections/2004-04-28-democrats-cheney\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/politicselections/2004-04-28-democrats-cheney_x.htm)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A21842-2004Jul28.html>

they go through when they're out on patrol at night and they don't know what's coming around the next bend. I know what it's like to write letters home telling your family that everything's all right when you're just not sure that's true." Before concluding his speech, he threw in one more reference to Vietnam, just in case viewers missed the others: "I learned a lot about these values on that gunboat patrolling the Mekong Delta with Americans—you saw them—who came from places as different as Iowa, Oregon, Arkansas, Florida, California. No one cared where we went to school. No one cared about our race or our backgrounds. We were literally all in the same boat. We looked out, one for the other and we still do."

On August 5, the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth (SBVT) aired their first television commercial. SBVT first went public with their opposition to Kerry the previous May. This first spot, "Any Questions," questioned Kerry's service in Vietnam. SBVT's second commercial, "Sellout," released on August 20, criticized Kerry's testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.<sup>20</sup> In addition, SBVT founder and spokesman John O'Neill and Jerome Corsi published the book *Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry* during August.

Five days after the second SBVT commercial aired, Cleland attempted to deliver a protest letter to Bush at his ranch in Crawford, Texas. The letter, signed by Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, Ernest "Fritz" Hollings of South Carolina, phony Vietnam veteran Tom Harkin of Iowa, Jack Reed of Rhode Island, Tom Carper of Delaware, and Jon Corzine and Frank Lautenberg, both of New Jersey, said "you owe a special duty" to condemn attacks on Kerry's military service.

Of course, these same senators remained silent when members of their own party attacked Bush's military service. And they remained silent as the attacks on Bush continued during the remainder of the campaign.

Ironically, SBVT's criticism concerning Kerry's testimony varied little from criticism offered by a former Secretary of the Navy six months earlier:

To be sure, Kerry deserves condemnation for his activities as the leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). In the early 1970s, this small organization — never more than 7,000 veterans out of a potential pool of 9 million — became the darling of the anti-war movement and the liberal media. Its activities went far beyond simply criticizing the politics of the war to repeatedly and dishonestly misrepresenting the service of Vietnam veterans and the positive feelings most felt after serving.

Kerry's own comments were filled with hyperbolic exaggerations that sought to make egregious acts seem commonplace. During a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing in 1971, he testified that fellow veterans had routinely "raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.swiftvets.com/index.php?topic=Ads>

telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Genghis Khan.” With those words, he defamed a generation of honorable men. No matter how he spins it today, at a minimum, he owes them a full and complete apology.<sup>21</sup>

The author of those words was James Webb, who was elected as a Democrat to the U.S. Senate in November 2006 after receiving endorsements from, amongst others, Max Cleland.<sup>22</sup> It’s doubtful that Webb’s Democratic colleagues in the Senate have demanded an apology for his attack on Kerry. And Kerry certainly has not offered a full and complete apology to those he defamed in 1971.

As our troops continued to fight in Afghanistan and Iraq, the battle over service during the Vietnam War waged on. On September 8, *60 Minutes Wednesday* aired its infamous piece on George W. Bush’s National Guard service. “*60 Minutes* has obtained government documents that indicate Mr. Bush may have received preferential treatment in the Guard after not fulfilling his commitments,” Dan Rather claimed.

Almost immediately, readers of Powerlineblog and other weblogs began questioning the authenticity of the documents. It appeared that the memos had been produced by a modern Microsoft Word application and not a circa 1970 typewriter.

“Based on what we now know, CBS News cannot prove that the documents are authentic, which is the only acceptable journalistic standard to justify using them in the report,” said a CBS statement issued on September 20. “We should not have used them.” CBS also announced that it was “commissioning an independent review of the process by which the report was prepared and broadcast to help determine what actions need to be taken.”<sup>23</sup> According to the report, which was issued in January 2005, “The combination of a new *60 Minutes Wednesday* management team, great deference given to a highly respected producer and the network’s news anchor, competitive pressures, and a zealous belief in the truth of the segment seem to have led many to disregard some fundamental journalistic principles.” Four CBS News employees, including three executives, were let go by the network for their role in preparing and reporting the discredited story about Bush’s National Guard service.<sup>24</sup> Rather, who had hoped to take down Bush, instead stepped down as the anchor of *CBS Evening News* in March 2005.

One aspect of Rathergate overlooked by most in the media was Rather’s own military record. According to Bernard Goldberg in *Bias*, he called

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<sup>21</sup> [http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/editorials/2004-02-18-veterans-edit\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/editorials/2004-02-18-veterans-edit_x.htm)

<sup>22</sup> [http://hotlineblog.nationaljournal.com/archives/2006/05/va\\_sen\\_dem\\_sena.html](http://hotlineblog.nationaljournal.com/archives/2006/05/va_sen_dem_sena.html)

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/09/20/politics/main644539.shtml>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/01/10/national/main665727.shtml>

Rather in February 1996 to give the anchor a heads up on an opinion piece he had written for the *Wall Street Journal*. “I told him it was about a story that had run on his evening newcast a few days earlier,” said Goldberg, who was then a CBS News reporter and producer. “That it was about how the story was cynical and biased and loaded with cheap shots aimed at one of the candidates running for president. I also told him about how the supposedly objective news story was part of an ongoing problem at the networks.”

The anchor became angry. “Rather’s voice started quivering, and he told me how in his young days, he had signed up with the Marines—not once, but twice!” Goldberg wrote. However, Rather washed out of Marine boot camp and, thus, never earned the title “Marine.”\* In other words, a “phony Marine” had dishonestly attacked Bush’s military service.

While Kerry and his allies in his party and the media were belittling Bush’s TANG service, those who were currently serving in uniform did not buy Kerry’s newfound respect for the military. In September 2004, an Army Times Publishing Co. survey of more 4,000 full-time and part-time troops found that 73 percent said they would vote for Bush, while just 18 percent said they would vote for Kerry.<sup>25</sup>

In the end, Bush and Cheney prevailed in the 2004 election, Kerry returned to the Senate as Massachusetts’ junior senator, and Rather and his team of partisans lost their positions with CBS News. That should have put the chickenhawk smear to rest. However, it soon reemerged to be used against younger Republicans.

On July 27, 2007, Lawrence Korb of the Center for American Progress appeared before the House Armed Services Committee and argued that proponents of the surge in Iraq should call for a draft.\*\* After Rep. Michael Turner, R-Ohio, questioned Korb’s argument, Think Progress, the blog operated by Center for American Progress, labeled Turner a “chickenhawk” for having the temerity to question Korb. “Turner is a classic ‘chickenhawk,’ a term used to refer to strident war proponents who have never personally experienced war,” wrote Faiz Shakir, Think Progress’ research director. “Korb, on the other hand, is a Navy captain who served in Vietnam.”<sup>26</sup>

Think Progress included a link to the Wikipedia entry on Lawrence Korb. Interestingly, as of November 21, 2007, the word “Vietnam” did not appear

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\* Liberals who have never served in the military seem to think that anyone off the street can join the service and make it through boot camp. However, Rather’s experience is not that uncommon. For example, when I went through Marine Corps boot camp in 1982 our platoon started with 75 recruits. On graduation day eleven weeks later, there were just 41 of us left.

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/elections/nation/president/2004-10-03-bush-troops\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/elections/nation/president/2004-10-03-bush-troops_x.htm)

\*\* Korb had apparently flip-flopped on the draft issue. In the December 2001 issue of *The American Enterprise*, he argued against the reinstatement of the draft. “It is hard to imagine that the war against terrorism along with a possible war in Iraq could not be handled by the more than 2 million volunteers already in our forces,” Korb wrote. “The all-volunteer force has given us the most professional and competent military in our history.”

<sup>26</sup> <http://thinkprogress.org/2007/07/27/michael-turner/>

at all on the page. The entry does note that Korb served on active duty from 1962 to 1966 as a naval flight officer and that he retired from the Naval Reserve with the rank of captain. Korb also outlined his military experiences in testimony before the Congressional Commission on Overseas Bases. “Finally, as a young naval flight officer,” Korb said, “my ‘homeport’ for my last year on active duty was on the Japanese Island of Okinawa.”<sup>27</sup> However, he made no mention of serving in Vietnam. I contacted Korb via e-mail and asked about his service. “I was in Vietnam in 1965 and 1966,” he replied.

Korb apparently did not spend his entire last year of active duty on his “homeport” of Okinawa. However, it is also possible that Korb’s service in Vietnam was a bit less significant than Think Progress implied. Nevertheless, Think Progress suggested that a congressman who did not serve in the military had no right to question a man who served in uniform. Or, more exactly, Think Progress was arguing that a Republican congressman who did not serve in the military had no right to question a liberal man who served in uniform. After all, Think Progress was silent when Democrat Sherrod Brown was disrespectful towards Colin Powell. They also remained silent when Hillary Clinton suggested that General David Petraeus was a liar<sup>28</sup> and their allies with MoveOn.org portrayed Petraeus as “General Betray Us.”<sup>29</sup> In fact, Think Progress itself has questioned Petraeus’ motives and competency. For example, in an October 22, 2007 post, Satyam Khanna, a Think Progress research associate, wrote, “In the end, President Bush and Gen. Petraeus’s strategy has failed at its primary goal. Nevertheless, Petraeus wants to buy more time for his unsuccessful attempt to quell Iraq’s civil war.”<sup>30</sup> Khanna, like Shakir, has not spent a day in the military.<sup>31</sup>

Michael Scheuer, who headed the CIA’s bin Laden unit, addressed this dishonest tactic in *Imperial Hubris*: “The inference has an obvious twofold purpose—to implicitly denigrate the questioner by impugning his or her bravery or patriotism, and to explicitly suggest that if the questioner has not served in the military, he or she has no experience on which to base pertinent questions. It is appalling to see how well this despicable tactic works to put questioners on the defensive.” Scheuer also pointed out that it was “the decidedly unmilitary Abraham Lincoln who taught that eminent moral coward from West Point, George B. McClellan, that the path to victory lay in destroying the Army of Northern Virginia and not in capturing Richmond.”<sup>32</sup>

Incidentally, Turner was born in 1960, making him a trailing-edge baby boomer. When Turner was in his late teens and twenties, the United States

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<sup>27</sup> [http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=2418&from\\_page=../index.cfm](http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=2418&from_page=../index.cfm)

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2007/9/15/10264/5649>

<sup>29</sup> <http://pol.moveon.org/petraeus.html>

<sup>30</sup> <http://thinkprogress.org/2007/10/22/petraeus-security-withdraw/>

<sup>31</sup> <http://thinkprogress.org/about>

<sup>32</sup> pp. 183-184.

was not involved in any full-scale wars.\* The same cannot be said about John Podesta, the president and CEO of the Center for American Progress. Podesta, born in 1949, was of draft age during the Vietnam War but, instead of serving in the military, he attended Knox College. Interestingly, just four days before the Turner-Korb exchange, Podesta penned an opinion piece for the *Washington Post* in which he noted that he served as President Clinton's chief of staff when Clinton launched a war against Slobodan Milosevic in 1999.<sup>33</sup> In April 1999, Podesta appeared on *Meet the Press* and explained that the Clinton administration had a contingency plan for using ground troops in "a combat force, rather than as peacekeepers."<sup>34</sup> It should also be noted that Podesta was the Clinton administration official who, on December 15, 1998, informed "congressional leaders that U.S. forces would launch an attack on Iraq the following day."<sup>35</sup> Podesta had become Clinton's chief of staff just two months earlier, at a time when it was clear that the United States was headed towards a showdown with Iraq. He certainly knew at the time that he would have to be a proponent of the use of force against Iraq. Therefore, using his own think tank's definition of chickenhawks, i.e., "strident war proponents who have never personally experienced war," Podesta, like his former boss in the White House, is a classic chickenhawk.

Unfortunately, the chickenhawk smear is now being used against Republicans born after the baby boom. On July 13, 2007, Max Blumenthal, a Media Matters for America research fellow, attended the College Republican National Convention. "Like the current Republican leaders who skipped out on Vietnam, the GOP's next generation would rather cheerlead from the sidelines for the war in Iraq while other, less privileged young men and women fight and die," Blumenthal said. "Along with videographer Thomas Shomaker, I captured a vivid portrait of the hypocritical mentality of the next generation of Republican leaders."<sup>36</sup>

According to Blumenthal, those who support the war in Iraq, yet do not serve in the military, are hypocrites. This charge has also been leveled at President Bush's daughters. (Incidentally, no one demanded that Chelsea Clinton, then 19, serve in her father's war in Kosovo. If Hillary is elected president, it is unlikely that anyone will demand that Chelsea serve as part of any of her mother's military deployments.)

There are major flaws with Blumenthal's dishonest argument. First, a Washington Post-ABC News Poll in October 2001 found that 94 percent of

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\* Interestingly, Shakir later added this update to his smear against Turner: "Commenter Midwest Product fine-tunes the definition of 'chickenhawk': 'A chickenhawk is someone who ascribes the bravery of soldiers in wartime to themselves because they take a pro-war position.'" Using this "fine-tuned" definition, it would be even more difficult to classify Turner as a chickenhawk since he did not ascribe the bravery of soldiers in wartime to himself during his exchange with Korb.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/22/AR2007072200883.html>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/europe/9904/11/nato.attack.05/>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/iraq/stories/unscom121898.htm>

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/max-blumenthal/generation-chickenhawk-t\\_b\\_56676.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/max-blumenthal/generation-chickenhawk-t_b_56676.html)

Americans supported military action in Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup> That 94 percent included millions of Democrats, perhaps even Blumenthal himself. Of course, just a tiny fraction of these Democrats enlisted after 9/11. Are the rest, including Blumenthal, chickenhawks because they failed to join the military after al Qaeda attacked us?

Second, Blumenthal's father, Sidney, was a Clinton administration adviser from 1997 to 2001. According to Wikipedia, the junior Blumenthal was born on December 18, 1977. If that is correct, he had just turned 21 as Clinton launched his preemptive strike against Iraq during Operation Desert Fox. Blumenthal did not enlist then. Nor did he enlist several months later when Clinton launched his air campaign over Kosovo and Serbia. He was not a part of Operation Joint Guardian in Kosovo after the air campaign had ended. He wasn't one of the thousands of military personnel in Saudi Arabia conducting operations over Southern Iraq. He was not in the Persian Gulf area when the USS *Cole* was bombed in October 2000. Now, either Blumenthal opposed each and every one of these operations or he is, by his own definition, a chickenhawk.

Third, Sidney Blumenthal announced on November 15, 2007 that he would no longer write a column for Salon.com because he had joined the Hillary Clinton campaign as a senior adviser. If Hillary becomes president, the senior Blumenthal will almost certainly find a position in her White House. Given that al Qaeda is unlikely to surrender the day after Hillary is inaugurated, the war against terrorism will continue and Hillary, unless she follows her husband's example, will take actions against al Qaeda in that war. If the junior Blumenthal does not enlist to take part in that war, and instead leaves it to "less privileged young men and women fight and die," how can we not conclude that he is a chickenhawk?

Fourth, we have never had a war in which all supporters of that war were required to serve. Even during World War II, in which Hillary says her husband would have served, not all men served in a military uniform. For example, Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) was 24 when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. He worked as a gas-station attendant, grocery-store clerk, and shipyard welder during World War II. As a member of the Ku Klux Klan, the only uniform he wore during those years came with a hood.

Finally, even at the current level of support for our military presence in Iraq, if everyone who supported that presence were in uniform in Iraq, there would be more Americans in Iraq than Iraqis.

Now I'm not suggesting that the junior Blumenthal is a coward. In fact, he demonstrated a great deal of bravery when confronting a prominent conservative in 2006. In an article entitled "An Inherited Genetic Disorder," the conservative wrote about Blumenthal and his father. "If Max's father had a sense of decency, his paternal instincts might have led him to caution his

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/vault/stories/data112801.htm>

son before embarking so early on a bottom-feeding career,” wrote the conservative. “But Sidney Blumenthal has no such decency and would not even know how to perform this paternal function if it occurred to him to do so.”

Before writing these words, the conservative had been “interviewed” by an “imposter journalist,” who asked him what he thought of Max Blumenthal. “Still unaware that he was standing next to me, I said ‘He’s a chip off the scuzzy old block,’” the conservative wrote. “The plant asked me how I spelled ‘scuzzy.’ S-C-U-Z-Z-Y. Then he said: ‘That’s Max Blumenthal,’ who glared hard at me and vanished.”<sup>38</sup>

On his own blog, Blumenthal shares a slightly different version of the encounter. According to Blumenthal, after the conservative, David Horowitz, made his “scuzzy” comment, he smiled at Horowitz and offered him an invitation him to insult him to his face, which he declined. “Even if Horowitz’s own account were accurate, he would not appear as any more courageous,” Blumenthal wrote. “Amid all his bluster, Horowitz concedes that he was only brave enough to insult me behind my back.”<sup>39</sup>

To fully appreciate the courage it took for Blumenthal to offer such an invitation, we have to consider how imposing a man Horowitz is. At the time of their encounter, Horowitz was 67 years old. In addition, Blumenthal is roughly half a foot taller than Horowitz. You can’t help but admire how this young man mustered up the courage to confront Horowitz.

Of course, as is the Blumenthal modus operandi, Blumenthal lied to his readers. A video of the exchange on YouTube shows Horowitz saying, to Blumenthal’s face, “You have been sleazy.”<sup>40</sup>

In 1992, Sidney Blumenthal actually questioned George H.W. Bush’s World War II record.<sup>41</sup> In addition, when announcing that Blumenthal would be leaving Salon.com to join Hillary’s presidential campaign, Salon editor Joan Walsh noted that Blumenthal “presided over one of the best accounts of George W. Bush’s missing year in the Texas Air National Guard.”<sup>42</sup>

If Blumenthal, who was born in 1948 and apparently received student deferments during the Vietnam War, attacked the military service of Bush 41 and Bush 43, just imagine the attacks he would have launched against Rudy Giuliani or Mitt Romney had either of them won the Republican presidential nomination. The media, which in 1992 quickly dismissed Bill Clinton’s extraordinary efforts to avoid the draft, would have undoubtedly treated Giuliani’s or Romney’s lack of military service as a very serious issue.

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Printable.aspx?GUID={A4E14527-630C-40DD-8218-175399B8DBC1}>

<sup>39</sup> [http://maxblumenthal.com/2006\\_04\\_01\\_maxblumenthal\\_archive.html](http://maxblumenthal.com/2006_04_01_maxblumenthal_archive.html)

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDcXF0cUldU>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/clinton/stories/blumenthal061697.htm>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.salon.com/opinion/walsh/salon/2007/11/15/blumenthal/index.html>

How will the Democrats treat John McCain, a Vietnam veteran and former POW? If past is prologue, they will not hesitate to attack the GOP's presumptive nominee's war record. Sen. Jay Rockefeller in April offered a preview of what is likely to come during the fall "McCain was a fighter pilot, who dropped laser-guided missiles from 35,000 feet," Rockefeller said. "He was long gone when they hit. What happened when they (the missiles) get to the ground? He doesn't know. You have to care about the lives of people. McCain never gets into those issues."<sup>43</sup>

Consider the case of Congressman B. Carroll Reece (R-Tenn.). According to William F. Buckley, Reece, a supporter of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, had the following exchange with Congressman Wayne Hays (D-Ohio) in 1954:

Hays: I will say this to [you] ... that out where I come from we have a saying that if a man double-crosses you once that is his fault: if he double-crosses you twice, that is your fault. I just want you to know you won't get the second opportunity.

Reece: ... there is no living man can justifiably say that... [I] have ever double-crossed anybody or ... failed to keep ... [my] word.

Hays: I am saying both ... is that clear enough? There is no inference there, is there?

Reece: That does not disturb me a particle.

Hays: I know. You are pretty hard to disturb. I thought they had more guts in Tennessee.<sup>44</sup>

The Democrat Hays was member of the Officers' Reserve Corps, United States Army, from 1933 until called to active duty as a second lieutenant on December 8, 1941. He received a medical discharge in August 1942, just eight months after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. What about Reece, the Republican whose courage Hays attacked? According to Buckley, Reece "had been decorated in the first World War with the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal, and the Purple Heart. He had been awarded the Croix de Guerre with palm, cited for bravery by Marshall Petain, by Generals Edward, Hale, and Lewis."<sup>45</sup>

Reece was ultimately elected to 18 terms and served in the House longer than anyone else in Tennessee history. Hays didn't fare quite as well. According to *Time* magazine, the portly Hays, 65, resigned from the House in 1976 after admitting that he had had an affair with Elizabeth Ray, 33, whom he employed as a \$14,000-a-year committee clerk although she claimed that she could neither type nor file.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> [http://www.wkyc.com/news/news\\_article.aspx?storyid=86773](http://www.wkyc.com/news/news_article.aspx?storyid=86773)

<sup>44</sup> *Up From Liberalism*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,947699-1,00.html>

If the Democrats were wise, they would stop using the chickenhawk smear. After all, none of the Democratic leaders in Congress has military experience, and there may come a day when the media no longer have a double standard concerning Democrats and their lack of service. Consider Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-Ill.), the fourth-highest ranking Democrat in the House and a former Clinton White House staffer. Emanuel is much more of a Baryshnikov than a Schwarzkopf. According to the *Washington Post*, Emanuel was “a wiry-thin, foul-mouthed\* ballet dancer from Chicago who moved to Little Rock in the fall of 1991 as one of the first advisers to Bill Clinton’s presidential campaign.”<sup>47</sup>

George W. Bush wore a flight suit and flew an F-102 when he was in his twenties. Rahm Emanuel wore a tutu and pranced around on a stage when he was a younger man. If he were to seek higher office in the future, would he really like to have that brought up?\* Or would he prefer that voters instead take into consideration what he did as a White House staff member and lawmaker?

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\* When Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair made their first joint appearance after the Monica Lewinsky story broke, Emanuel reportedly said to Blair, “This is important. Don’t f\*\*k it up.”  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1944305,00.html>

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/clinton/stories/rahm101698.htm>

\* Note to Rush Limbaugh: If Emanuel does seek higher office, you might consider “Ballerina” by Styx, a band formed in Emanuel’s hometown of Chicago, as his theme song.