

### 3

#### THE 'NO ATTACKS MYTHOLOGY'

(From *One Nation Under Fear* by Bob Cesca)

Every time you state your case,  
the more I'd like to punch your face.

—The Flaming Lips  
*Haven't Got A Clue*

The Bush Republican refrain “we haven't been attacked in [*fill in the blank*] years” remains a popular applause line delivered by all varieties of fear mongers, from Vice President Cheney, who boasts that “it’s no accident”; to Senator McCain, whose shriveled, Grinchy heart is only slightly larger and less cybernetic than Cheney’s. Here’s Senator McCain on a particularly hilarious episode of the weekend comedy show *FOX News Sunday*:

MCCAIN: But look, the fact that **there has not been an attack on the United States in four years** is an indicator of some success. **That doesn't mean there isn't going to be an attack tomorrow** and that we must be on our guard.  
[emphasis mine]

But after 9/11, if you said well, we're going to be able to go four years without an attack, then I think a lot of people would have been surprised. **So let's give the President and this administration some credit for that.**<sup>1</sup> [emphasis mine]

While completely misrepresenting the absence of an attack, notice how the senator once again crow-barred some legitimate fear mongering into his ridiculous kudos to the administration: *there might be an attack... tomorrow!* Just like the day before a major snowstorm, I imagined panicked hoards of cowardly Bush Republicans across the nation hearing this news and bolting for the grocery store to stock up on bread, milk, toilet paper

and, of course, adult diapers.\* Imagine their relief when, the next day, Monday January 23, 2006, there was definitely *not* another terrorist attack.† Luckily for a disappointed Rudy Giuliani he saved his receipts and was able to return the festive party hats, fruit punch and duct tape.

And then there's Vice President Cheney who loves to repeat this no-attack-since-September 11 myth. Here's the vice president during an interview with WDAY Radio on October 24, 2006:

I think the basic proposition is, of course, that we've gone more than five years now without another attack inside the homeland. On the day after that attack back in '01, if somebody had put that proposition to you, I don't think anybody would have been willing to bet we could go five years without an attack.<sup>2</sup>

The implication is that the Bush administration's doctrine of illegal invasions, illegal eavesdropping, illegal torturing and unconstitutional suspension of habeas corpus—not to mention the illegal outing of an undercover CIA agent tasked with tracking loose nukes—have collectively prevented further terrorist attacks. Without these policies, the fear mongers suggest, the terrorists surely would've attacked again. So we ought to support their authoritarian trampling of the Constitution...or else.

In March of 2008, Congress tried to pass legislation that explicitly prohibits CIA interrogators from torturing prisoners of war. By way of background, this anti-torture provision was stricken from the now famously ineffectual Detainee Treatment Act, also known as the McCain Amendment back in December of 2005. You might recall that there was, what I consider to be a “staged” battle between Senator McCain and the White House over the senator's desire to, with the amendment, codify the anti-torture language of the U.S. Army Field Manual for Human Intelligence Collector Operations, and apply its rules to all United States personnel dealing with detainees in Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere. Vice President Cheney personally lobbied against the amendment and Senator McCain apparently cut a deal with the vice president so that the Field Manual rules

---

\* Talk radio host Bill Cunningham only.

† There wasn't another terrorist attack that day—on American soil, that is. There were, however, nine attacks in Iraq.

would not apply to CIA interrogators. Naturally, the president overruled the entire amendment with one of his signing statements. But we don't torture, right? So why the signing statement?

More than three years later, in March of 2008, Congress passed a bill that would finally ban the CIA's use of torture. Senator McCain, the anti-torture maverick he is, voted *against* the bill—effectively voting in favor of the use of American torture chambers. And, of course, the president vetoed the bill anyway. The president's excuse?

Because of their hard work, and the efforts of many across all levels of government, **we have not suffered another attack on our soil since September the 11th, 2001.**<sup>3</sup> [emphasis mine]

While we're here, it's worth noting the president's knee-jerk fear mongering on the anti-torture bill:

If we were to shut down this program and restrict the CIA to methods in the Field Manual, we could lose vital information from senior al Qaeda terrorists, **and that could cost American lives.** [emphasis mine]

The truth is that there *have* been additional terrorist attacks on American soil—"inside the homeland," as Vice President Cheney calls it. There have been numerous additional terrorist attacks against American citizens since September 11. There have been literally thousands of terrorist attacks elsewhere since September 11—all of this despite the fear mongering; despite the syllabus of crimes perpetrated by the Bush administration; despite this overpriced, bloody and misappropriated war on terrorism.

Yet there exists this "we haven't been attacked since..." delusion—what I call the "No Attacks Mythology"—which serves to artificially enhance the cataclysmic Bush national security record. Perhaps the Bushies continue to beat this mythology to death, and their supporters continue to repeat it, because no one I'm aware of in the very serious corporate media have directly challenged Senator McCain or Vice President Cheney or President Bush on its veracity. It's not difficult to nail them on this one, after all, because

out of all of their obvious lies, this one is pock-marked with semantic holes large enough to fit Ann Coulter's bulbous Adam's apple. In the course of seven years of recent history, the *only* media figure who has ever come close to challenging the No Attacks Mythology has been Jon Stewart who, once again, illustrated his courageous proficiency for taking up questions the traditional news media are afraid to ask when he confronted Lynn Cheney after she repeated the No Attacks Mythology on an October, 2007 edition of *The Daily Show*.

LYNN CHENEY: You know I think when the history books are written, we will look back on this period of time, and we will say on 9/11 we really thought within six months we would be attacked again. Even six weeks. It's been more than six years and that is not an accident. I think this administration, my husband and the President deserve a lot of credit for that.

JON STEWART: Okay. Well. Alright. There were—I mean there was the anthrax thing. And there was—and you know the first time they bombed the World Trade Center, it was eight years until we got attacked again—

LYNN CHENEY: Well yes, but there were many attacks between 1993 and the World Trade Centers coming down in 2001! Remember the USS Cole, for example? There were worldwide bombing going on. The bombings at the embassies in Africa.

JON STEWART: Right.

LYNN CHENEY: So the terrorists weren't—uh—weren't reluctant to damage American interests and kill Americans. [pregnant pause] Friends?

JON STEWART: Friends. You know they have been doing that all these past six years. I mean you know the Spanish bombings, the English bombings, and then all the bombs in Iraq.

LYNN CHENEY: Yes, yes, but we're talking about American interests.

JON STEWART: Aren't we interested in—I had assumed they were our allies, but alright.<sup>4</sup>

As I watched Lynn Cheney attempting to dismiss and parse Stewart's counterpoints, I wished for Comedy Central to give *The Daily Show* an extra twenty minutes of airtime in which Stewart could keep going. But there wasn't enough time to fully expose the game Cheney was playing: to mix up the locations and targets until the issue was reduced to a confusing semantic M.C. Escher painting.

And, just as with her husband and Senator McCain and other like-minded fear mongers, she exhibited an ultimately self-refuting level of arrogance by accelerating down this mythological road in the first place. But she threw it out there anyway because she believed that no one would dare challenge *her*—the very smart and very serious second lady and American Enterprise Institute wizard—on such a flimsily constructed fairy tale. They have to know that while this plays to their mouth-breathing base, it's extraordinarily easy to rip apart. Nevertheless, they roll it out to this day because they're just that cynical about their people; they peg their supporters as automatons who will blindly repeat the No Attacks Mythology despite the blindingly obvious truth to the contrary.

The truth is that during the eight years of the Clinton administration there were just four Islamic terrorist attacks against America and, as Lynn Cheney put it, "American interests." Four.

- The first World Trade Center bombing occurred on February 23, 1993, a little more than one month into the Bill Clinton administration. *Casualties*: six Americans killed and 1,040 wounded.
- Five and a half years later, on August 7, 1998, al-Qaeda car bombers hit the United States embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya.

*Casualties:* 212 killed, four thousand wounded in Kenya. Eleven killed and eighty-five wounded in Tanzania. Most are African civilians.

- On October 12, 2000, a suicide bomber attacked the USS Cole docked in Yemen. *Casualties:* seventeen Americans killed, thirty-nine wounded.

It's both factual and intellectually honest to suggest that President Clinton presided over almost eight full years without an Islamic terrorist attack *on American soil*. He did so without torturing. He did so without illegally invading and occupying a nation for illegitimate reasons. He did so without gathering your phone records from the telecommunications companies. He did so without suspending habeas corpus and leaning on the orange-alert panic button. And he did so as a member of the Democratic Party.

However, yes, there were several other attacks in which Americans were senselessly murdered. To be sure, President Clinton's record isn't spotless on terrorism. But it's a statistical and empirical fact that President Clinton's record is exponentially better than the collective record of these fear mongering braggarts—these authoritarian criminals and cowards.

Throughout this dark ride between September 11 and today, there have been numerous terrorist attacks on American interests, Mrs. Cheney. There have been numerous attacks on American soil, Senator McCain. There have been thousands of Americans killed and thousands of American allies killed in overseas attacks, Mr. Vice President.

It goes without saying that Jon Stewart was dead right to mention the anthrax attacks. Five Americans were killed by the toxic letters mailed by apparent Islamic fundamentalists, though everyone in the very serious corporate media seem to have forgotten about these letters and the subsequent fatalities—perhaps because there wasn't dramatic videotape. Who knows. It remains unmentioned in the context of the televised reporting of the administration's so-called "No Attacks" record that NBC News, CBS News, ABC News, the *New York Post* and the *National Enquirer* were targets of the

anthrax attacks. Seriously, you'd at least think the corporate stooges who run these outfits would remind us every damn day about how they were assaulted with evil-doer anthrax letters. In an age of fear mongering for ratings gold, it's a potential Nielsen bonanza to report *terrorism* and *anthrax* in the same sentence. Here's the content of the anthrax letter sent to NBC News:

09-11-01

THIS IS NEXT

TAKE PENACILIN NOW

DEATH TO AMERICA

DEATH TO ISRAEL

ALLAH IS GREAT

That's easily enough for an MSNBC "Doc Block" special that rivals any of their salad-tossing *Lock Up: San Quentin* prison shows. Nevertheless, knowing that NBC News had been sent a letter with such a message enclosed along with, of course, anthrax, the late Tim Russert allowed Vice President Cheney to repeat the following on a September 10, 2006 edition of *Meet the Press*:

CHENEY: But the fact of the matter is: I think we've done a pretty good job. And I don't know how you can explain five years of no attacks, five years of successful disruption of attacks, five years of, of defeating the efforts of al-Qaeda to come back and kill more Americans.<sup>5</sup>

With all due respect, Russert failed to remind the vice president about those *other* attacks, even though Russert was nothing if not masterful at catching people like Cheney in various misstatements and contradictions. In this case, Russert could've held up a copy of the NBC "Allah is great" letter between his thumb and index finger just like he used to whenever he would nail a public official to the wall. But he didn't for some reason. The anthrax attacks were entirely ignored.

Of course, Cheney and the rest of his regime of fear mongers always seem to conveniently forget about the anthrax attacks when they're discussing their awesome terrorist-fighting skills. They conveniently forget about the attacks...until, that is, they need to make a case for invading Iraq:

VICE PRES. CHENEY: ...It's the fact that we've also seen [Saddam Hussein] in these other areas, in chemicals, but also especially in biological weapons, increase his capacity to produce and deliver these weapons upon his enemies.

MR. RUSSERT: But if he ever did that, would we not wipe him off the face of the Earth?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: Who did the anthrax attack last fall, Tim? We don't know.

MR. RUSSERT: Could it have been Saddam?

VICE PRES. CHENEY: I don't know. ... But, like I say, I point out the anthrax example just to remind everybody that it is very hard sometimes, especially when we're dealing with something like a biological weapon that could conceivably be misconstrued, at least for some period, as a naturally occurring event, that we may not know who launches the next attack.<sup>6</sup>

*Scary! We just don't know when or where!* I imagine this is why, as he watched at home, Sean Hannity's testicles permanently retracted into his body cavity.\*

Clearly, the vice president was running through the same semantic trick popularized by the administration to make their case for invading Iraq: the coupling of September 11 and Saddam Hussein. If you read the various statements, they don't specifically marry the two topics as *A-to-B*, cause-and-effect relationships, but they include them in the same sentence to form a devilishly clever inference. For instance, I

---

\* I have no idea the actual status of Hannity's testicles. For that, you'll need to ask Mr. Colmes.

could say, “Vice President Cheney doesn’t eat adorable baby orangutans, but you’ve never seen him *not* eating one, so... you... tell... me.” Now I didn’t specifically say that the vice president eats adorable baby orangutans, but I’m sure you gathered the inference that, yes, the vice president eats those fuckers on toast. So in the case of his anthrax statement on *Meet the Press*, he obviously intended to conflate anthrax, terrorism and Iraq without explicitly making that connection, even though anyone with functioning brain tissue knew what he meant: the anthrax attacks were acts of terrorism carried out by Iraqi terrorists. Meanwhile, the anthrax attacks are conspicuously missing from his terrorist attack arsenal when the No Attack Mythology swings into action.

And then there’s the series of terrorist attacks that everyone has almost entirely forgotten about—everyone, that is, except for the families and friends of those Americans who were killed.

The terrorists were nicknamed “The Beltway Snipers,” or “The D.C. Snipers.”

While a distracted Bush administration were scaring the piss out of Americans in order to coerce enough support for their manifest invasion of Iraq, two Islamic extremists named John Allen Muhammed and Lee Boyd Malvo killed sixteen people during the late summer and early autumn of 2002 in and around the Capital Beltway and Interstate 95. Muhammed and Malvo had engaged in similar attacks in several other states and their ultimate plan was to recruit more jihadists to carry out further sniper attacks across the country.

For two months, Americans in Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia were afraid to commute along one of the most heavily trafficked highways on the eastern seaboard. The snipers received non-stop, panic-button press coverage for much of September and October of 2002—after all, every major American news outlet has at least one bureau within walking distance of the kill zone.

Now it’s easy to suggest that, compared with September 11, these attacks were small-time or insignificant compared to other terrorist attacks against American citizens. It’s easy to suggest that the D.C. Sniper shootings don’t count as major-league-evildoer terror strikes. The deadly truth is that by the time law enforcement officials finally

captured Malvo and Muhammed, they had killed more Americans (sixteen) than had been killed in the first World Trade Center bombing of 1993 (six). Almost as many Americans were killed by the D.C. Snipers as were killed in the USS Cole attack (seventeen).

But there haven't been any attacks on American soil since September 11, 2001, right?

*Senator McCain:* "there has not been an attack on the United States." Not true.

*Lynn Cheney:* "It's been more than six years and that is not an accident." Lie.

*Vice President Cheney:* "We've gone more than five years now without another attack inside the homeland," and, "I don't know how you can explain five years of no attacks." You *can't* explain it other than to say it's a lie; it's a wholesale fraud perpetrated on the American people.

And if Senator McCain, Vice President Cheney and Lynn "*Well yes, but there were many attacks between 1993 and the World Trade Centers coming down in 2001!*" Cheney are going to indict President Clinton on the overseas terrorist attacks of the 1990s as a means of besmirching the Democratic record on terrorism, then we have no choice but to compare these relatively few Clinton-era attacks with the endless list of overseas terrorist attacks against Americans, American allies and American interests during the George W. Bush administration.

To begin, I'll be a good sport and give Lynn Cheney the benefit of the doubt on the bombings in Madrid (191 killed, six hundred wounded) and London (fifty-six killed, seven hundred wounded). I'll also strike from the list the 2003 al-Qaeda bombing in Tunisia (fifteen killed, twenty wounded); the Istanbul attacks in November (fifty-three killed, 750 wounded); the 2002 attack on an American tanker in Yemen (one killed, twelve wounded, ninety thousand barrels of oil spilled); and the 2004 bombing at a Marriot in Islamabad where U.S. diplomats were staying (nine wounded). So we'll strike these from the list because Mrs. Cheney disputed these as attacks against America when Jon Stewart mentioned them. I'm a good sport.

Let's start with Iraq, which I think we can more or less agree that it's probably the most notable "American interest," as Mrs. Cheney put it, in the world right now.

This first set of terrorist attacks can specifically be attributed to al-Qaeda in Iraq. According to a September 2007 study by the Center for American Progress:

Al Qaeda in Iraq has been responsible for a large number of the attacks within Iraq: The group has claimed more than 200 incidents causing almost 2,000 fatalities. The group was led by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, who professed loyalty to Osama bin Laden, until his death in a U.S. airstrike on June 7, 2006. Zarqawi saw the group as the center of jihadist activities in Iraq, and it is mostly supported by Sunni Arabs. Tactics range from suicide attacks to kidnappings and smaller raids.<sup>7</sup>

Two hundred al-Qaeda attacks since the 2003 invasion. Nearly two thousand fatalities attributed specifically to al-Qaeda alone (the Center for American Progress doesn't list total casualties including those who were wounded, which, in Iraq, have numbered around ten times the total killed-in-action).

What makes this especially alarming is that al-Qaeda in Iraq only counts for around 2 percent of “the enemy” there. The other 98 percent of the so-called enemy in Iraq—insurgents and militia groups and such—have been routinely nicknamed “terrorists” by President Bush. How many times in the last seven years have we heard the president name Iraq as the “central front in the war on terror”? How many times have we heard the president suggest that if we withdraw or redeploy we'll be emboldening the terrorists? During a June 2005 address designed to reaffirm his commitment to the war, President Bush said:

There is only one course of action against them: to defeat them abroad before they attack us at home. [...] Our mission in Iraq is clear. We are hunting down the terrorists.<sup>8</sup>

Surely he didn't mean that our mission is to fight only 2 percent of the enemy there. He's talking about all of the enemy groups. So an additional 3,970 Americans have been killed and 29,080 Americans have been wounded while fighting an enemy that the president himself has labeled as “terrorists.”

A non-profit think tank called the Memorial Institute for Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT)<sup>9</sup> has been maintaining an online Terrorism Knowledge Base since the middle 1990s. In it, they report that between September 11, 2001 and March 2008, there have been 9,675 terrorist attacks in Iraq, accumulating 46,271 injuries and 26,161 deaths. In Afghanistan—that *other* American interest—there have been 1,069 terrorist attacks in which 2,323 people were injured and 1,809 people were killed.

Just to recap: from 1993 to 2001, there were four terrorist attacks against Americans and American interests. From 2001 to 2008 there have been, by the accounting of conservative groups and the military, literally tens of thousands of terrorist attacks against Americans and American interests.

And there's more.

Late last year, the popular far-right blogger Michelle Malkin proudly posted a link and widget created by a website called “Islam: The Religion of Peace.”<sup>12</sup> When I saw the widget Malkin was hosting, I was more than a little alarmed by the statistic it was tracking.<sup>13</sup>

It listed, at the time, 9,995 deadly terrorist attacks by “Islamic Terrorists” since September 11, 2001. As I write this chapter in March of 2008, their fear mongering toteboard has climbed up to 10,606 deadly terrorist attacks.



The anonymous coward who runs the Religion of Peace website has no love for the Muslim religion to be sure, but it also appears as if he or she is equally as insensitive and cruel to the victims of suicide bombers—evidenced by their front page above-the-fold “Picture of the Week” for the week of February 17-23, 2008. This picture is that of a cat dressed up like a suicide bomber: Middle Eastern regalia and fake explosives strapped around its stomach. I’m not making this up. The caption read: “Nine lives adds up to...a lot of virgins.”

Wow. Get it? The suicide bomber cat has nine...lives, so. Yeah. I don’t even know what else to say about that other than it forms a crazy trifecta: 1) far-right Bush

Republicanism, 2) suicide bombers and, 3) people who dress up their animals in human clothing.

Elsewhere on this Malkin-endorsed site, they list an additional ten terrorist attacks on American soil that occurred *after* the D.C. Sniper shootings,<sup>14</sup> including a December 2003 “attack” in which “A Muslim doctor deliberately allows a Jewish patient to die from an easily treatable condition.” However awful that might be, I think we can agree that it’s hardly an attack.



All of these additional attacks, whether legitimate or not, have occurred on President Bush’s and Vice President Cheney’s watch since September 11, 2001. Along with Senator McCain, they cannot be permitted to repeat this obviously untrue No Attacks Mythology without being called on it. They cannot continue to tell us that there haven’t been any attacks since September 11 when their own statistics and their own noise-makers refute every last word. They have failed in their pledge to keep America safe at all costs. Our president has given up on finding Bin Laden. Our ports aren't secured. At the airport, our security officials are unable to effectively determine the difference between a Capri Sun and liquid explosives (see the next chapter “Bottled Liquids Are

Banned From This Chapter”). And our first responders continue to operate without the proper funding and hardware.

The truth behind the No Attacks Mythology is that the war on terror has been entirely ineffectual. The authoritarian crimes orchestrated by the Bush Republicans have been achieved by injecting overwhelming amounts of propagandized fear into a nation already lousy with cowards; to further subjugate the American people—to break their will to resist—by waging an unrelenting assault on reason. It’s no wonder why the administration has gotten away with so much; they’ve simply confounded logic to the point of total exasperation (see Jon Stewart with Lynn Cheney, for example). According to their propaganda, there have either been many terrorist attacks and we need to “stay on the offensive” (at the expense of our national reputation and dignity, by the way), or there haven’t been any terrorist attacks since September 11, and we need to shower the Bush Republicans with kudos and votes and patriotic lapel pins for their awesome post-September 11 national security record. Senator McCain and Vice President Cheney and all of their cowardly supporters need to get their stories straight because their contradictory bullshit is showing.

The wrong approach against terrorism—the Bush approach—has made things much, much worse. A July 12, 2007 National Intelligence Estimate<sup>15</sup> determined that the policies of the Bush administration, supported by Senator McCain, have literally created all new generations of al-Qaeda terrorists. The *Washington Post* reported:

Al-Qaeda has reestablished its central organization, training infrastructure and lines of global communication over the past two years, putting the United States in a “heightened threat environment” despite expanded worldwide counterterrorism efforts, according to a new intelligence estimate.

Intelligence officials attributed the al-Qaeda gains primarily to its establishment of a safe haven in ungoverned areas of northwestern Pakistan. Its affiliation with the Sunni insurgent group al-Qaeda in Iraq, the report said, has helped it to “energize” extremists elsewhere and has aided Osama bin Laden's recruitment and funding.<sup>16</sup>

Heckuva job, Bushies!

Lynn Cheney told Jon Stewart that it's "no accident" we haven't been attacked again. Based on this evidence and with this regime in charge...it absolutely has been.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,182434,00.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061024-7.html>

<sup>3</sup> President's Weekly Radio Address. March 8, 2008.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/03/20080308.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://thinkprogress.org/2007/10/11/lynne-cheney-stewart/>

<sup>5</sup> September 10, 2006. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14720480/page/5/>

<sup>6</sup> September 8, 2002. <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/bush/meet.htm>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/09/alqaeda\\_map.html](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/09/alqaeda_map.html)

<sup>8</sup> *New York Times*, June 29, 2006. -

[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/29/politics/29ptext.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/29/politics/29ptext.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.mipt.org>

<sup>12</sup> <http://michellemalkin.com/2007/11/15/a-grim-milestone-ignored/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/Pages/AmericanAttacks.htm>

<sup>15</sup> *National Intelligence Estimate* dated July 12, 2007 titled "Al-Qaeda better positioned to strike the West."

<sup>16</sup> *Washington Post*, July 18, 2007 - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/17/AR2007071700099.html?hpid=topnews>