

Captain May – August 7, 2003 – unpublished essay:

“State of the Global War on Terror”

Back when George W. Bush was the governor of Texas I never dreamed that he had it in him to start a war. We in the down-home media thought him a harmless man who fully deserved a C average from his college, spoke with errors, and couldn't figure out whether he wanted to pronounce the language like a Texan or a Yankee. I met the man when I interviewed to be the Bush Team speech writer back in 1996. His media Medea, Karen Hughes, stood a full head taller than he did, and he hardly seemed bellicose.

But after September 11, 2001, the president was a changed man. He told us on television that he was a nice guy with a tough job to do. At the time we didn't know what the tough job was, but we rallied behind him as our leader because it was a time of crisis. According to General Wesley Clark (CNN Crossfire, June 25), the “tough job” the Bush Team then set about was a hawkish grab of control in the Middle East before the Chinese could ramp up a military to oppose an Asian sweep. It was high-stakes poker right out of the old West – all with the aim of making America a safer place, of course. The prez loved it.

Before the end of 2001, we had invaded Afghanistan to root out the Taliban and al-Qaeda. To date we are still rooting them out, but the defiant landscape of Afghanistan encourages them to take root again. It's about as frustrating for us as it was for the Soviets, who tried the same thing to no good result.

In his 2002 state of the union address the prez said we needed to oppose an Axis of Evil made up of Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Afterwards, the leaders of Iraq, Iran and North Korea began to act paranoid, and we were told that this was proof that that they were all crazy and dangerous.

For a solid year, the Bush Team spent a year fudging up intelligence to support an invasion of Iraq, and most of America became supportive as a result. But there were notable exceptions among top people. Secretary of State Colin Powell was one, and he tried to muffle the drumbeat of war, until Prez Bush bullied him back into line. Pentagon generals had their doubts about the details of the invasion and occupation of Iraq, until the SecDef Rumsfeld bullied them back into line. The intelligence community suggested that Iraq wasn't all that imminent a threat, until Veep Cheney bullied them back into line.

Needless to say, by this year's state of the union address, everyone was in line, and loudly cheering the Bush Team. From his bully pulpit, the prez preached a Baptist sermon of just war: Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and al Qaeda connections, represented an imminent threat, and needed to be neutralized, *pronto*, period!

On March 20 we began the job. The vast majority of misinformed America was in favor of it, while the vast majority of the informed world was against it. To keep us entertained and motivated, Bush Team member Victoria Clark, head cheerleader at Pentagon public affairs, offered up a prime time spectacular: *Shock and awe with embedded media*. It was as lame as bad porn, and about as well named.

The halftime show of the exploding Baghdad skyline deserves special note. By God, we must have lit up ten heathen temples in the Baghdad for each of our two towers. I loved the way the TV folks played with the images, sounds and speeds. It said a lot for American culture that we showed it for the dinner hour. You have go back all the way back to the Roman Coliseum to find a spectacle to match it.

But the best part of the whole thing was a bad-luck kid named Jessica who was turned into an ersatz Audie Murphy to give the cameras something to film other than the messy battle of Baghdad.

In his Mayday speech of 2003, the prez said that from now the U.S. would run the American Middle East the way it used to run the American West. All of that now seems dubious at present, especially to the troops hunkering down in desert firefights.

Before his recent retreat to Texas, the prez hastily summoned his media, whom he had not addressed since before the war, to bully them back into line. He testily told them that he responsibility for all his misleading reasons for war, but that it was his decision to take us for war. That was a mouthful of truth to spit out all at once!

I think the prez has signaled where he will fight his Alamo against his multiplying critics. He'll say "You all wanted revenge for 911. Well, I let you be a lynch mob and you let me pick out who got lynched. You can't blame me without blaming yourselves!" He'll be right, of course.

No two Texans think alike. The Bush Team, says something like "We have made significant progress in our long-term, global war on terror and against the Axis of Evil." Did you just read *global* war? Yep. *Axis*? Yep. Get it yet? The last time we had this kind of rhetoric was World War II. I believe that the "tough job" that

“nice guy” George W. Bush took upon us was taking control of the politics and resources of the world’s most dangerous region. He was willing to risk World War III for the prize then, and he’s willing to risk it now. When we begin to complain that we are sinking deeper into the quicksand, I expect the prez will try to bully *us* back into line, too. He’ll testily tell us that he’s been saying all along that it was a global war – and he’ll be right again.

Captain May , a Desert Storm volunteer, served on the general staff of the Army’s 75th Division, where he specialized in military intelligence and public affairs.