

Captain May – August 15, 2003 – unpublished essay:

“A wake up call to New York City”

Dear Citizens of New York City,

It's three o'clock in the afternoon Eastern Time, Friday, August 15, and Governor George Pataki is thanking President Bush for promising to pay you back for the costs that have been incurred by the power outage – only at the end he changed the true word, *incurred*, to the cover word, *occurred*. Pretty smart man, Governor Pataki, to change his wording like that. You see, I've got a pretty good idea that he was thinking of expenses *incurred* because nothing just *occurred* by chance.

You have just participated in a federal crisis exercise, that's all, and the governor knows it. I'm just speculating, mind you, but we Texans are noted for the crazy lengths to which we'll go to make a point...

There was no terrorist attack against the Big Apple, so be at ease. It can't be terrorism when it's your own government that's doing it, and like I said, this was just an exercise. Relax, you all did fine.

An important point to remember: the exercise was *not* psychological warfare executed by the commander in chief against the citizens of the nation's financial and media capital. Heck, saying that would be like saying that you have been tyrannized, and I can assure you that nowadays no responsible journalist would say a thing like that.

The prez just had a little fire drill, that's all. And anyhow, the way he timed it was ever so nice, seeing as how you got to take Friday off and make a three-day weekend of it. I suppose he'll get around to telling your media what to tell you about the reasons and results for the exercise. Maybe not, though; it depends on what he thinks is best for you.

I'm sure glad the *prez* didn't get blacked out! Nope, his photo op with the Marine Corps went just fine, and while you were in the dark he was enjoying dinner and drinks with the swankest Republicans on the Pacific Coast. He was as far away as he could be when your offices, homes, transportation and hospitals lost power. But he didn't need to be there to make sure you were OK; he knew why your power was off, so he wasn't worried.

His Thursday agenda showed good leadership, and I want to give him full credit. It was a manly and brave thing to visit those marines, while wearing a combat jacket in the 90-degree heat of southern California for half an hour, because it let the prez know a bit of what it feels like to wear combat gear in Baghdad, which is about as hot as Death Valley. He looked impressive as he told the young

servicemen that theirs was the generation that had to come forth for America's global war for righteousness. I guess when you've arranged a photo-op, you've got to go all out.

The prez needs good photo ops now, since combat ops in peacetime Iraq are ... er... *complicated* – and they're getting complicateder every day. The prez believes that this is due to the tendency of Iraqis to misunderstand the advantages of Reconstruction. Now, as a genuine Texan, I love to agree with George W. Bush when he talks tough, but I have to admit that I'm as dumb as the Iraqis when it comes to appreciating Republican Reconstruction, seeing as how we of the South didn't appreciate it much after the Civil War. Of course we were still Americans, albeit rebellious, and they are Middle Easterners, after all, and that makes all the difference. So I'll make no excuses for their bad manners towards our troops. In fact, I believe I have an explanation: We've corrupted them with Hollywood movie culture!

For all their prudery, I think the Iraqis are closet fans of *Casa Blanca*, that kissy, courageous classic. I saw it in an all-night movie theatre in Manhattan when I was in your town once. Bogie..., Bergman..., the airport scene – I cry every time. But the part that's messing with their minds is early on in the film, where Bogie is talking to an SS officer who has come from Nazi Germany to bully him for potentially harboring enemies of the Reich. Well, Bogie says he's pretty cynical when it comes to who eats who for dinner in this wicked old world, so he's not taking sides in the worldwide fracas. But then the Nazi pushes him a step too far by suggesting that one day forces of the Reich may be in the streets of New York City. Then Bogie quits being a neutral and says what every American has said since we ran King George out: Don't mess with New York City! And in case there are any neo-Nazis reading my words, Captain May sez it, too. Well, anyway, I think the folks in Iraq may have watched the movie and gotten the crazy idea that we can't mess with *Baghdad*.

I wish they'd sit still, cool down and quit bothering us for a while because we're trying to work for their best interests. Can't they see that we're trying to figure out a new way for them to live, instead of the way they've lived for centuries? Don't they understand that we have a difficult mission to not kill innocents in firefights, restore basic human services, arrest dissidents, pacify mullahs, tear down dissenting banners *and* win Iraqi hearts and minds for America! The fact that we're doing it all at the same time without planning for it in advance is, I believe, a tribute to the intelligence of the prez, who has bravely bade any Iraqi who doesn't agree with him to bring it on against our soldiers.

I'm not as brave as the prez, but I would like to make a humble offer: I'll gladly don my captain's bars again if he'll reactivate my commission and accompany me to Baghdad. He can play the part of Colonel William Travis, the hero of the Alamo, and I (a bit of a brawler, alas) will be Jim Bowie, blade in beltline. We'll stay there together until we get victory or death. I think that would be the best thing for him to do to prove his courage. It would be even braver than sending boys and girls to war for the reason that... What *was* the reason? Well, I admit I can't quite keep up with what the reason is any more, but real Texans don't need reasons. Let's just say we're there because the prez put us there, and I'd sooner question the ethics of the Catholic clergy than question the leadership of the prez. It doesn't make any sense to complain about his not looking before we leapt, now that we've landed in the middle of the quicksand, does it?

The above graph is a little bit of a downer. How 'bout a joke to jazz things up: I met a fell at the Peace House, which is down the highway from The Western Whitehouse, in Crawford, Texas this week. He was a real cowboy, called "Doc" by the townfolk. We were talking a lot of politics, and I asked him if he felt safer because the prez had so much more police power after 911. Doc looked at me with quizzed look, and asked "Safer from who?" I laughed until there were tears in my eyes, let me tell you. Does the joke still work for y'all up there in the boroughs?

Anyway, back to the emergency test you just went through, bear the prez no hard feelings for it. He knows we have to be ever-so-vigilant in his Global War on the Axis of Evil. It's not over by a long shot, because he still needs to liberate the people of Iran, North Korea and a hodgepodge list of their collaborators. Thank God we have nukes if we run out of troops – that's what real Texan Austin Bay wrote in his Houston Chronicle column yesterday.

If the emergency test scared you, or if, say, you panicked a little while you waited in hot elevators and subways, think of the greater public good. The ends justify the means, after all, and anyway, deaths were predictably light. I say we need a little crisis now and then to keep America on the Bush Team, and that's really where all freedom-loving Americans need to be, just ask the prez. When your country is fighting a worldwide war, you have to stay together at all costs. And anyway, like your governor said, the feds will pick up the costs.

Thankfully, you have a born-in-Connecticut Texan to tell you what's really important in a climate of crisis. Shucks, the prez loves you like a big brother.

So should we start having blackout drills all over the country, maybe even have a nation-wide one for Halloween night? Naw, I guess it wouldn't be as much fun now that it has already been done once. This trick-or-treat caper had to be a surprise! You got the trick, (especially the folks who died, RIP), but it should be a

real treat for big energy, which isn't making nearly as much money as it thought it would in Iraq. Thankfully, it will now have plenty to do here at home. This crisis exercise will convince most Americans that the silly people obstructing America's energy industries must get out of the way. I'm talking about people like environmentalist and peace activists, actors and editors with un-American activities going on. It was Barry Goldwater who said it, but it is the prez who's proving it to the world: "Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice." Left-wing paranoia about the right course of action has to be suppressed at all costs. We're in the middle of a worldwide war, after all.

Captain May is a former Army Intelligence and Public Affairs officer. He served on the general staff of the US Army's 75th Division.