

GDP fears AIDS and pies in NYC

By Danny Schechter
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A year and a half ago, we kept hearing about that fanatical and feared Republican Guard as the force that Saddam was relying on to save his regime. He didn't have just one Republican Guard, the "Butcher of Baghdad" had two – a SPECIAL Republican Guard. Remember? Now, here in America another Republican Guard is trying to save the Bush Regime. And it is not so special. Iraq's RG crumbled in the face of superior force. How will ours do in the week ahead?

Cry don't laugh. There are striking similarities. Both Guards relied on deception, manipulation of information and brute force, including torture. The Bathists crushed protests; the Bushists do the same, but they do it stealthfully behind the scenes with FBI intimidation and the refusal to allow demonstrators to assemble in a park that has long been a rallying ground. New York's Republican Guard mayor toadies up to the party hierarchy.

In Britain and around the world this is front page news – a peace rally banned in New York. The BBC reported it that way: "Organizers say the ban is a violation of their constitutional rights of assembly and free speech. A judge at New York's state Supreme Court has ruled that the rally, which was expected to attract a quarter of a million demonstrators, cannot be held in Central Park because of the damage which may be caused to the grass."

Save the grass and kill the constitution seems to be the order of the day. What is one likely result: "Organizers have warned that in the absence of a place to gather legally, demonstrators may move on Central Park afterwards and that could bring the possibility of provoking clashes with the police."

Increasingly this seems to be a planned provocation. The GOP knows how hostile this city is to them, how furious and enraged. They know how easy it is to get the kids fighting the cops – and voila we have a modern day Reichstag fire without the fire, a scene of just the kind of chaos that can be twisted and used to win support for strengthening the Patriot Act and keeping the gang in power in power.

GDP fears AIDS and pies in NYC / 2

Bush is planning to Nixon on this – to demagogue about the need for order and a strong America. If there is violence, as is probable given the hard-headed attitude of the city, the consequences are unpredictable. It is all escalating with few calm heads to cool things down. Another Vietnam parallel is threatening in the streets.

Maybe that's why all the talk of the NAM is so timely and relevant. AP reports that: "One of President Bush's top lawyers resigned from his campaign Wednesday, a day after disclosing that he had given legal advice to a veterans group airing TV ads challenging Democrat John Kerry's Vietnam War service. Benjamin Ginsberg, who also represented Bush in the 2000 Florida recount that made the Republican president, told Bush in a letter that he felt his legal work for the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth had become a distraction for the re-election campaign."

Another distraction was swatted away like a fly from the same wire story: "In Texas, Democrat Max Cleland was rebuffed when he tried to deliver a letter protesting the attack ad at Bush's ranch. The former Georgia senator, a triple amputee from his service in Vietnam, carried a letter from several Senate Democrats who wrote telling Bush that "you owe a special duty" to condemn the attacks on Kerry's military service."

Ginsberg blamed the media for hounding him from his job. Of course.

Meanwhile, that Swift Boat flap is still with us even though most if not all of the charges against John Kerry have been demonstrated as bogus. (I for one don't trust military sources on Vietnam. Period!)

Why let the facts get in the way of a good smear? Todd Gitlin writes on Salon: "William Faulkner got it right: The past is not dead, it is not even past. In a rancid and ghostly way, the Vietnam War churns on. So does the White House slime machine, though that runs more smoothly today – George W. Bush's plumbers don't operate out of a Nixonian Committee to Re-elect the President.

"Today's stench of lies about John Kerry is a stale remnant of the old lies about the war Kerry fought in. As the nation fights another botched war, today's purveyors of war lies are ghostly descendants of the last generation's unpunished deceivers. Indeed, John O'Neill of the outrageously named Swift Boat Veterans for Truth (and every TV talk show within reach) is the very same – the young man recruited by Charles Colson to do Richard Nixon's dirty work against the young Kerry in 1971."