

‘Veterans of Watergate’ Attack Kerry’s Record

by Gregory B. Murphy

The so-called “grass roots” Vietnam veterans organization that is attacking the war record of Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry in a national ad campaign should be called the “Watergate Veterans” group. The misnamed “Swift Boat Veterans for Truth,” is nothing but a Republican dirty tricks operation linked to the original Watergate criminals in the Nixon White House. Armed with hundreds of thousands of dollars from rich Texas supporters of the right-wing fanatic Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Tex.), the organization is running TV ads with false statements and slanders across the country.

But the real force behind the effort is “Beastman” Vice President Dick Cheney, who never served in combat, nor in the military at all, but whose psychology is what former Democratic Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche’s 2004 campaign identified as the bully who *enjoys* inflicting pain, or torturing other human beings. It is this “Beastman” psychology behind the dishonor that Cheney brought upon the U.S. military with his policy of torturing Iraqi prisoners to get “actionable intelligence,” which was exposed by U.S. Army General Antonio Taguba’s investigation. Although only low-level Military Police are being put on trial in court-martial, it was Cheney’s office, and his attorney, David Addington, who came up with the legal arguments to justify torture.

LaRouche, who heads LaRouche PAC, the nationwide political action committee which is organizing for a Democratic landslide victory in the 2004 elections, commented that all Kerry has to do in response, is ask the simple question, “Where was George W. when I was in Vietnam?” (A more pointed comment heard around Washington is that George W. could not put on a uniform during Vietnam, because he couldn’t fit it over his “habit.”)

Watergate Dirty Tricksters

The truth is that in the early 1970s, the ostensible head of Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, John O’Neill, was picked up by the Nixon White House to be the pro-war poster boy for Vietnam. Thirty-some years later, O’Neill’s old friend, Watergate figure-turned-fundamentalist-preacher Chuck Colson, is deeply involved with Bush and Cheney, and has called O’Neill to duty once again.

When Nixon was President, Colson picked up Navy Lieutenant O'Neill, who was heading a group called Vietnam Veterans for a Just Peace. O'Neill was pitted against Kerry, who had organized the group Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and he debated Kerry on the Dick Cavett Show in 1971. After Colson took O'Neill to meet Nixon and Kissinger, O'Neill's group was given special breaks as well as funding. An attorney, O'Neill later clerked for legal fascist, Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist, and was even considered for a federal judgeship appointment by President Bush "41."

Another DeLay machine rat in this nasty operation is Merrie Spaeth, the media person for the Swift Boat group. She has been tied to the attack ads targetting Sen. John McCain during the 2000 Republican primaries, when McCain ran against George W. Bush. Spaeth's husband, Tex Lazar, ran for Lieutenant Governor of Texas in 1994 with gubernatorial candidate George W. Bush.

'Cheap Stunt'

Bush supporter Senator John McCain denounced the anti-Kerry ads as "dishonest and dishonorable," and reminiscent of the tactics used against him in the primaries by the Bush campaign in 2000. "I think the Bush campaign should condemn the ad. . . . I can't believe the President would pull such a cheap stunt."

Asked at the White House briefing Aug. 5, 2004, about McCain's call for Bush to repudiate the Swift Boat ad, White House Spokesman Scott McClellan danced around, demanding that Kerry join Bush in banning all "soft money" ads (that is, ads from groups that are allowed to campaign on issues, and have no ceilings on donations).

There is also a credibility question. In a Salon.com article posted on July 18, 2004, it is reported that the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth had hired a private detective by the name of Thomas Rupprath, an ex-FBI employee, to conduct interviews of Vietnam "swift boat" veterans, including Kerry's own crew. But, they were hardly interested in truth. Some of the swift-boat veterans who served with Kerry refused to talk, because they felt that Rupprath was trying to put damaging words into their mouths. One of Kerry's former crew members who spoke to Rupprath, said that the transcript version of the interview had serious inaccuracies. This crew member was not alone in having his interview misrepresented.

One leading "attacker," Kerry's former commanding officer in Vietnam, Lt. Commander George Eliot, whose statements are featured in the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth attack television ad, now playing in key swing states, told the *Boston Globe* that his affidavit saying that Kerry didn't deserve his Silver Star medal was "a terrible mistake. . . . I'm the one in trouble here. . . . I knew it was wrong." In the 1996 Senate campaign, Eliot had defended Kerry against

similar charges. He gave no explanation for why he played into the Republican anti-Kerry operation.

Jim Rassmann who served with the U.S. Army 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam from 1968-69, and who asserts that Kerry saved his life, wrote in a *Wall Street Journal* column Aug. 10 that the Swift Boat Veterans are part of a "Republican smear campaign" not only against John Kerry, but spouting lies that "insult and defame all of us that served in Vietnam."

"Now, 35 years after the fact, some Republican-financed Swift Boats for Bush are suddenly lying about Kerry's service in Vietnam," Rassmann charged. He added that "they are calling him [Kerry] a traitor because he spoke out against the Nixon Administration's failed policies in Vietnam. . . . Some of these Republican-sponsored veterans are the same ones who spoke out against John at the behest of the Nixon Administration in 1971."

Rassmann further stated, "Americans are tired of smear campaigns against those who volunteered to wear the uniform. Swift Boat Veterans for Bush should hang their heads in shame."

The Money Trail

According to the latest filing with the IRS in compliance with laws on "527" issue advocacy groups, this so-called grassroots group said that it had raised \$158,750 in contributions. A close look at the filing shows that a certain Robert J. Perry gave the group \$100,000, and two others, John O'Neill and Hardin Crow, each gave \$25,000. This really mows the grass down to \$8,750—in other words, less than 6% of the total contributions were given in smaller amounts.

Who is this Robert J. Perry who seems to be the Swift Boats' guardian angel? He's a major funder of political action committees set up by House Majority Whip Tom DeLay.

Perry has given \$170,000 over the past two years to Texans for a Republican Majority, which has been in the middle of the notorious Texas redistricting fight, and is the subject of a grand jury probe. Perry has also given about \$50,000 to DeLay's Republican Majority Issues Committee; and \$10,000 to a political action committee that supported John Ashcroft's re-election bid. Since 1999, Daddy Bigbucks Perry has given \$6,000 to Bush's campaigns and has given \$27,325 to Tom DeLay and his political action committee, Americans for a Republican Majority.

Perry is also close to Bush's "strategist," Karl Rove, as witnessed by the massive funding coming from Perry and his family to the GOP. According to the Institute on Money in State Politics, Perry and his wife also gave more than \$3 million to Texas Republicans during the 2002 elections, \$200,000 to the GOP in Louisiana, and \$180,000 to Republicans in New Mexico.