



BLOG | Posted 02/24/2006 @ 10:03am

## White House Whitewash on Katrina?

I first posted this at [www.davidcorn.com](http://www.davidcorn.com)...

We all know how much this White House cherishes self-examination and accountability. So it was safe to assume that its just-released report on Hurricane Katrina would be a no-holds-barred, blistering, tell-all account of what went wrong--from the streets of New Orleans all the way to the Oval Office. But--can you believe it?--the report somehow managed to miss the missteps that occurred at the White House. There's no accounting of why George W. Bush, Dick Cheney or Andrew Card didn't move quickly to supervise the federal response to Katrina. Perhaps a chapter was lost on the way to the printer. I've done a word search on the main body of the 228-page report. Looking for the phrase "White House," I found six pages on which the White House is mentioned; four of those are in the recommendation section and describe how the White House can be involved in a better response *next time*.

Here are the other references to the White House (the bold emphasis is mine):

*\* p. 36 -- [A]s late as 6:00 PM EDT that day [August 29, the day Katrina made landfall, the DHS Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC) reported to senior DHS and **White House** officials that, "Preliminary reports indicate the levees in New Orleans have not been breached, however an assessment is still pending."*

*....At 6 PM EDT aboard a U.S. Coast Guard helicopter, Marty Bahamonde, a FEMA Public Affairs Official, observed the extent of the flooding and was "struck by how accurate" the earlier local reporting was of the levee breaches. He then called FEMA*

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## CAPITAL GAMES

David Corn



Washington--a city of denials, spin, and political calculations. They may speak English there, but most citizens still need an interpreter to understand its ways and meanings. **David Corn**, the Washington editor of *The Nation* magazine, has spent years analyzing the policies and pursuing the lies that spew out of the nation's capital. He is a novelist, biographer, and television and radio commentator who is able to both decipher and scrutinize Washington.

In his dispatches, he takes on the day-by-day political and policy battles under way in the Capitol, the White House, the think tanks, and the television studios. With an informed, unconventional perspective, he holds the politicians, policymakers and pundits accountable and reports the important facts and views that

*Director Michael Brown and other FEMA officials with his eyewitness account at approximately 8 PM EDT that day. Director Brown has testified that he subsequently called the **White House** to report the flooding information he received from Bahamonde. Following the calls, Mr. Bahamonde arranged a conference call with State, regional, and FEMA officials to recount what he had seen. An HSOC report marked 10:30 PM EDT, but not received at the **White House** until 12:02 AM EDT the next day, summarized the conference call and reported Mr. Bahamonde's observations on the extent of flooding throughout New Orleans.*

*\* p. 49 -- These [faith-based groups] groups succeeded in their missions, mitigated suffering and helped victims survive mostly in spite of, not because of, the government. These groups deserve better next time. Jim Towey, Director of the **White House** Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, said these folks were the foot soldiers and armies of compassion that victims of Katrina so desperately needed.*

Did Bush do anything wrong? Apparently not. Well, to be fair, the report does gently suggest that he apparently failed to act on his vision. The foreword notes,

*Hurricane Katrina prompted an extraordinary national response that included all levels of government--Federal, State, and local--the private sector, faith-based and charitable organizations, foreign countries, and individual citizens. People and resources rushed to the Gulf Coast region to aid the emergency response and meet victims' needs. Their actions saved lives and provided critical assistance to Hurricane Katrina survivors. Despite these efforts, the response to Hurricane Katrina fell far short of the seamless, coordinated effort that had been envisioned by President Bush when he ordered the creation of a National Response Plan in February 2003.*

So Bush had done the appropriate pre-disaster work. He had "envisioned" a "seamless, coordinated effort." Yet somehow that envisioned response did not happen on its own--while Bush was playing guitar at a Navy base in San Diego the day after Katrina hit. Well, shouldn't Bush have fired whoever was responsible for not putting his vision into practice? I supposed that would not be too compassionate.

go uncovered elsewhere.

Check out David Corn's new bestselling book, *The Lies of George W. Bush: Mastering the Politics of Deception* (Crown Publishers). For information, visit [www.bushlies.com](http://www.bushlies.com).

Photo Credit: Michael Lorenzini

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*also by*  
David Corn

#### **This Time, Rove's Tactics Failed**

David Corn | Democrats celebrate electoral victories in Virginia, New Jersey and California, they shouldn't waste time gloating. They need to find effective candidates like Tim Kaine and Jon Corzine who will build momentum. **SUB**  
11/21/2005 (web)

#### **After the Libby Indictment**

David Corn | The CIA leak scandal has revealed the Bush crew's dishonesty and hypocrisy. But don't expect the Special Prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald or Bush to ever explain what really happened. **SUB**  
11/21/2005 issue

#### **Can Dems Say 'Finito' to 'Scalito'?**

David Corn | If the nomination

And here's an interesting comparison. The House report on Katrina (written by Republicans) was titled, *A Failure of Initiative*. Bush's report is called *Lessons Learned*. Its not called *Lessons Learned Quickly*, for there still is no director of FEMA (to replace Michael Brown)--just an acting director.

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COMMENTS

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Think your buddy Karl Rove might be at work again, Mr Corn....

nobody going to notice this....as "Dubai-gate" going on!

*Posted by MASK 02/24/2006 @ 10:23am | [ignore this person](#)*

Haven't you heard? The inept response to hurricane Katrina simply proves that government doesn't work. And besides, since they were underpriveleged anyway, the relief effort worked out well for them, so says Momma Bush.

This is so ugly, I can hardly stand to look. I can't wait until the what-went-wrong-in-Iraq report comes out. Good thing we know that rascal Graener caused all the trouble at Abu Grahib, that part's out of the way. Oh well, at least we have accountability in our public schools now.

*Posted by MYPARADIGM 02/24/2006 @ 10:35am | [ignore this person](#)*

i notice how the report says that the faith-based groups deserve better next time. nothing about the other charitable organizations or government agencies or individuals or other nations. let's just give a whole bunch of money to the faith-based groups because they deserve better!

*Posted by LOVELOKI 02/24/2006 @ 11:02am | [ignore this person](#)*

I think the best lesson to be learned from Katrina is that if you're going to have a hurricane you need to have it in an election year. Check out the FEMA response in the Florida 'canes of 2004. They are just outstanding examples of generosity and efficiency.

I bet that 2006 will be good year too for the victims of hurricanes.

*Posted by FREEDOMPLEASE 02/24/2006 @ 11:11am | [ignore this person](#)*

yeah - maybe the dog ate the white houses paperwork, or someone's grandma died, or all those incompetants other than them screwed things up...what a pack of excuse making liars.

*Posted by IBBLEBLIBBLE 02/24/2006 @ 11:46am | [ignore this person](#)*

of Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court becomes the titanic battle that both sides in the judicial wars have been anticipating for years, Democrats must create a new playbook. If they stick to the same old strategies, they could end up wishing that Harriet Miers had fared better. *11/14/2005 (web)*

*more...*

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Britey Spears:

Ooops they did it again, they've broken the law, again.

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Eleven Democratic members of the House Judiciary Committee, lead by John Conyers Jr., (D-MI) Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee, joined by eleven other Representatives have mailed a letter to Treasury Secretary John Snow, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, and Attorney General Alberto Gonzales questioning the legality of the now-infamous UAE ports deal.

The letter, advanced to RAW STORY, follows:

# Dear Secretaries Snow, Rumsfeld, Chertoff, and Attorney General Gonzales:

We are writing to inquire regarding the Administration's procedures for allowing Dubai Ports World (DPW), a company based and controlled by the government of the United Arab Emirates, to take control of operations at major American ports.

At a briefing yesterday to staff of the House Armed Services, Intelligence, Homeland Security and Judiciary Committees, representatives from the Administration detailed the process they undergo for reviewing proposed transactions involving foreign investors. In that briefing, representatives from the Departments of Treasury, Homeland Security, Defense, State and others explained that after a 30-day review by the Committee on Foreign Investments in the United States (CFIUS), an inter-agency committee chaired by the Secretary of the Treasury, the members of that Committee exercise their judgment as to whether a subsequent 45-day review and preparation of a report is needed. As with almost all other cases involving foreign investment, in the case of the DPW transaction, the Bush Administration elected to forego such a review.

We have serious concerns about the described process because, as explained by the Administration, the review occurs only if the CFIUS decides in its discretion to do so. This does not appear to be a proper interpretation of the law. Under 50 U.S.C. App. • 2170(b), the CFIUS must conduct the 45-day investigation "in any instance in which an entity controlled by or acting on behalf of a foreign government seeks to engage in any merger, acquisition, or takeover which could result in control of a person engaged in interstate commerce in the United States that could affect the national security of the United States." This amendment, known as the "Byrd Amendment" and enacted in 1993, was intended to mandate that a review occurs if the transaction in any way "could" affect our national security. Prior to the Byrd Amendment, the determination to engage in this 45-day review period was discretionary to the Administration.

If any set of facts would implicate the mandatory language of the amended statute, it would appear to be covered by the case of Dubai Ports World - the company is "controlled" by a foreign government, and the operation of United States ports clearly "could affect the national security of the United States." As a matter of fact, the proposed acquirer of these interests, DPW, is 100% owned by the United Arab Emirates of Dubai. Thus, operation of our ports - already a troubling gap in our homeland security - is being turned over not simply to a foreign company, but to a foreign government. Indeed at yesterday's briefing, your representatives indicated that, at least as an initial matter, the Department of Homeland Security expressed such security concerns. If the Administration truly believed that "this deal wouldn't go forward if we were concerned about the security for the United States of America," as the President stated today, you would work to ensure that transactions of this nature would be subject to the full 45-day review as the law appears to require.

Other aspects of the Administration's review process are also troubling. We understand that little, if any, documentation reflecting the facts surrounding this acquisition and the reasons for its approval was created, including, apparently, any communication to the President informing him of the controversial decision. We are also advised that deliberations of this matter involving the members

of CFIUS were scant, confined to a single meeting.

Because of the above concerns, we request answers to the following:

What is your legal authority for failing to conduct mandatory reviews even where security concerns could be implicated? Has this legal interpretation been reviewed and confirmed by anyone in the present Administration - either before or after the September 11, 2001 attacks?

Were memoranda or other materials prepared outlining this legal interpretation by anyone in the present Administration? If so, by whom? Please provide copies of such memoranda or other materials. Were any dissenting memoranda or other materials prepared? If so, by whom? Please provide copies of such memoranda or other materials.

Did the President review the decision to approve the DPW transaction? Did he delegate his mandatory authority to make these decisions to other individuals within the Administration? If so, when and to whom? Please provide a copy of any delegation materials.

How many foreign direct investment transactions have been approved by the Administration? How many of these have been subject to the mandatory 45-day review period required by the Byrd Amendment?

Thank you in advance for your prompt response to this inquiry. Because this transaction is scheduled to be consummated on March 2, we hope you understand this is a matter of urgent and substantial concern. Please provide your responses to 2142 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515, fax 202-225-4423.

Sincerely,

[Signers were Conyers, Berman, Boucher, Nadler, Jackson Lee, Meehan, Delahunt, Wexler, Weiner, Linda Sanchez, Van Hollen, and Wasserman-Schultz]

*Posted by FREEDOMPLEASE 02/24/2006 @ 11:47am | [ignore this person](#)*

Sorry to change topics again....but a blog on a bogus abortion bill and another on a bogus report about Katrina are not doing it for me!

The above which is clearly a criminal act is much more meaty and now I'm learning that Scooter is apparently running from his graymail defense and is moving to have Fitzy removed as he was "improperly assigned"....it's pretty clear the defense is getting more and more desperate. The real question is.....does Libby trust Bush enough to take the full rap and get the pardon or is Libby scared enough about the prospect of 20+ years that he's considering spilling?

*Posted by FREEDOMPLEASE 02/24/2006 @ 12:05am | [ignore this person](#)*

Meanwhile, the same sort of indifference is mounting up out here in the northwest, where my state legislator is attempting to cow the rest of the state legislature into bailing out the Seattle Supersonics for two hundred million worth of repairs on their stadium. Ms. Prentice informs critics that she's tired of their "anti-business" and loser attitudes.

Out here in White Center, older people who've never had very good health counsel to begin with are expected to do without needed medicines for diabetes and hypertension, and of late, even the health counseling services that used to come from public health clinics, which are now more strapped for dollars than ever before. But the Sonics need a stadium, so property tax payers are expected to bail them out. I'd rather eat dirt. And by god, if the peculiar notion of entrepreneurialism or free enterprise continues to exist in this country- the idea that the public should assume the costs so that sports team owners can make a profit- I guess I'll be eating dirt soon enough.

The bastards who own this country won't be happy until they've done at every level what they did for New Orleans. And they have the unmitigated gall to ask why people like me detest them as much as we do.

*Posted by LEGBA 02/24/2006 @ 12:08am | [ignore this person](#)*

FREEDOMPLEASE, I'm with ya, the latest Libby news is disgusting. This court is illegal! Isn't that Saddam's defense?

Sorry to all others for going off topic as well ...

Is anyone else as offended as I am about the "boy who cried wolf" article on the home page, saying that the port deal is just the way things get done, but isn't it cool that Bush has to eat his words? As if there weren't serious cronyism problems. From davidcorn.com:

*The New York Daily News is reporting that two senior Bush officials--Treasury Secretary John Snow and David Sanborn, who Bush picked last month to run the U.S. Maritime Administration--have business connections to Dubai Ports World, the UAE company.*

Didn't we used to call this corruption?

*Posted by MYPARADIGM 02/24/2006 @ 12:16am | [ignore this person](#)*

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**OLDER** << Scooter Libby's Graymail

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