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## Turn off the life support: America is dead

By DOUG THOMPSON

03/09/07 "Capital Hill Blue" -- -- Maybe, just maybe, it's time to pull the plug on this failed democratic republic called The United States of America.

Turn off the life support. Disconnect the IVs. Bring in the priest for last rites. The US of A is brain dead with no chance for revival.

Some 40 years ago, I lost friends in the heat and squalor of Vietnam. They died in a war that never needed to be fought, supporting a cause that didn't exist for a government that lied to justify the fight.

A few years later, as a young reporter, I wrote about the attempts of Richard Milhous Nixon to destroy the Constitution of the United States. He failed because the system worked and both Congress and the Supreme Court exercised their powers in our system of checks and balances to restore order to a faltering nation.

"The lessons of Vietnam and Watergate provide a roadmap for the future," I wrote at the time. "With luck, our leaders can use that roadmap to avoid the mistakes of the past."

Now, 33-and-a-half years after the Vietnam War came to an end without resolution and Nixon left office without honor, I'm losing family of friends in the heat and squalor of Iraq. They die in a war that never needed to be fought, supporting a cause that doesn't exist for a government that lied to justify their sacrifices.

Another despot occupies the Presidency, an evil man whose lust for power surpasses Nixon and who poses a far greater danger to the Constitution. This time, however, the system is failing to protect America from despots. George W. Bush rides roughshod over a compliant Congress. The Supreme Court, packed with knee-jerk right-wingers who helped put Bush in office in 2000, abdicated its role long ago.

For a moment - a brief one to be sure - we held out hope that the voice of the voters

might be heard after the November midterm elections. But turning out the corrupt Republican leadership of Congress was not enough. Democrats who control the House lack the balls to take Bush on and the razor-thin majority in the Senate can't even get a vote together on a non-binding resolution.

Democrats Thursday unveiled a plan to bring troops home by the end of 2008 but Bush is already threatening a veto if the bill gets out of Congress, which is probably won't.

In the meantime, we've learned that Bush lied about both the size and cost of his "troop surge" that he claims will bring peace and stability to Iraq. Not only are we sending more troops in than he said, at a cost far higher than he projected, his own general on the ground says they will have to stay longer than he told the American people earlier this year.

Over at the U.S. Department of Justice, an contradiction of terms if we over heard one, the FBI has lied repeatedly about its use, and abuse, of the rights-robbing USA Patriot Act to obtain information on U.S. citizens. I find it disturbing that in all their rhetoric about restoring America to the people, the new Democratic leadership of Congress doesn't say a damn thing about repealing the USA Patriot Act, an ill-conceived bill crafted by former attorney general John Ashcroft, and hastily voted into law after 9/11 by shell-shocked representatives and Senators who later admitted they hadn't even read it.

Today we learn that the federal government, at the direction of the White House, routinely ignores the Freedom of Information Act and hides more and more government documents under a cloak of secrecy.

Both Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid joined with Republicans to vote not only for original passage of the USA Patriot Act but also to reauthorize it. Bush has used the act to justify spying on Americans, wiretapping without warrants and strip away the last protections of the Constitution.

While Congress slept and the Supreme Court looked the other way, the Bush administration has gone on its merry way seizing absolute control of the United States government. He fired independent thinking U.S. attorneys, replacing them with lockstep right-wingers who share his view of totalitarian control of government. He ignores the laws of Congress, issuing "signing statements" that give him the power to do whatever he wants. When the federal courts declared his wiretapping of Americans illegal, he ignored the ruling and appointed an in-house review panel that declared the program "legal."

It doesn't matter who controls Congress. Congress is a dead institution, ruled by timid legislators who no longer exercise any real role in the governing of this

nation.

It doesn't matter what the Supreme Court may or may not do. The President of the United States has declared himself a "war time President" and granted himself dictatorial rights that no one in Congress or the Court appears able to successfully challenge him.

The America we used to cherish is dead, replaced by a ruthless dictator. The America that more than 3,100 men and women died for in Iraq no longer exists. We might as well pull the sheet over Uncle Sam's head and prepare for the funeral.

Or can we, as a people, regain control of our government? Perhaps, but doing so will require drastic measures. I'm not talking about kicking out one party of political hacks and replacing it with another: Been there, done that, witnessed the failure.

We need to rethink this experiment called America. Maybe we need to start with a clean sheet of paper. Maybe it's time to recognize that our present America is a rotting corpse, devoured from within by the cancer of politics, corruption, greed and a lust for power.

Maybe it's time for a new American Revolution. After all, the last one started because another guy named George tried to destroy our way of life.

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