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 Creators Syndicate
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Politics, or insanity?

Plan to militarize Mexican border is sheer madness or blatant pandering

AUSTIN, Texas -- I hate to raise such an ugly possibility, but have you considered lunacy as an explanation? Crazy would make a certain amount of sense. I mean, you announce you are going to militarize the Mexican border, but you assure the president of Mexico you are not militarizing the border. You announce you are sending the National Guard, but then you assure everyone it's not very many soldiers and just for a little while.

Militarizing the border is a totally terrible idea. Do we have a State Department? Are they sentient? How much do you want to infuriate Mexico when it's sitting on quite a bit of oil? Bush knows what the most likely outcome of this move will be. He was governor during the political firestorm that ensued when a Marine taking part in anti-drug patrols on the border shot and killed Esequiel Hernandez, an innocent goat-herder from Redford, Texas. That's the definition of crazy -- repeatedly doing the same thing and expecting a different result.

I suppose politics could explain it, too. It's quite possible that lunacy and politics are closely related. It's still damned hard cheese for the Guard, though. The Guard is heavily deployed in Iraq, currently 20 percent of those serving, down from 40 percent last year. Some soldiers are sent back for multiple tours. Lt. Gen. James Helmly, head of the Army Reserve, said the Reserve is rapidly degenerating into "a broken force" and is "in grave danger of being unable to meet other operational requirements." Happy hurricane season to you, too. The Guard is also short on equipment and falling

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short on recruiting goals.

But right-wingers are very unhappy with Bush right now, and this is a strong, red-meat gesture that will make them happy, even if it does nothing to shut down the border. You want to shut down illegal immigration? You want to use the military as police? Make it illegal hire undocumented workers and put the National Guard into enforcing that. Then rewrite NAFTA and invest in Mexico.

Meanwhile, further proof that the entire party is cuckoo comes to us with the passage of another \$70 billion tax cut for the rich. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities says the average middle-income household will get a \$20 tax cut, while those making more than \$1 million a year will get nearly \$42,000.

The Washington Post editorialized, "Budgetary dishonesty, distributional unfairness, fiscal irresponsibility -- by now the words are so familiar, it can be hard to appreciate how damaging this fiscal course will be."

Both President Bush and Veep Cheney are still going around claiming if you cut taxes, your tax revenues increase. No, they don't. Now we're just in whackoville. It's not true. Their own economists tell them it's not true, but they go about claiming it is with the same desperate tenacity they clung to false tales of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. How pathetic.

Speaking of lunacy, the saddest report from Iraq is that American soldiers showing signs of psychological distress and depression are being kept on active duty, increasing the risk of suicide. The Hartford Courant reports that even soldiers who have already been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress syndrome are kept on duty. This has led to an increase in the suicide rate -- 22 soldiers in 2005. And as I have reported before, the military is unprepared to deal with the flood of head cases coming back from Iraq. How many ways can we mistreat our own soldiers, while the right makes this elaborate show of devotion to "the troops"?

The consistent pattern that runs through all these problems is the failure to distinguish fantasy from reality. Mexican immigrants keep crossing the border because they can get jobs here -- and most of those jobs are provided by companies whose CEOs support George W. Bush. That's where he can have an impact on the problem, should he choose to do so.

The \$70 billion tax cut is part of a continuing right-

wing fantasy going back to the Laffer Curve. Of course, clinging to demonstrably false economic precepts is understandable when you benefit from them, but at some point reality does intervene.


As for the Iraq fantasy and those who pushed it on a reluctant country through lies, disinformation and bending intelligence -- isn't there a law against that?


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