

**SEPTEMBER 1**

# Will newsmedia help Bush exploit 9/11 again?

**F**or a long time, the last refuge of scoundrels was "patriotism." Now it's "the war on terror." President Bush and many of his vocal supporters aren't content to wrap themselves in the flag. It's not sufficient to posture as more patriotic than opponents of the Iraq war. The ultimate demagogic weapon is to exploit the memory of Sept. 11, 2001.

The fourth anniversary will provide the Bush administration with plenty of media opportunities to wrap itself in the 9/11 shroud and depict Iraq war critics as insufficiently committed to defending the United States. A renewed attempt to justify the war as a resolute stand against terrorism is well underway.

On Aug. 24, eager to pull out of a political nosedive, Bush stood in front of National Guard members in Idaho and read from a script that was thick with familiar rhetoric: "Our nation is engaged in a global war on terror that affects the safety and security of every American. In Iraq, Afghanistan and across the world, we face dangerous enemies who want to harm our people, folks who want to destroy our way of life." And: "As long as I'm the president, we will stay, we will fight and we will win the war on terror."

Such presidential oratory has become routine. And anniversaries of 9/11 are occasions when the White House ratchets up the spin.

"In the ruins of two towers, under a flag unfurled at the Pentagon, at the funerals of the lost, we have made a sacred promise to ourselves, and to the world," President Bush proclaimed on Sept. 11, 2002. "We will not relent until justice is done and our nation is secure. What our enemies have begun, we will finish."

At the time, the Bush administration was building its agenda for an invasion of Iraq. "Mr. Bush wants the UN to compel Iraq to submit to weapons inspections, or face the consequences," ABC News reported. "And though he did not mention Saddam Hussein by name ... the White House says he had the Iraqi leader in mind when he warned America's enemies."

That's an example of how the propaganda tag-team of government and media has conveyed implicit lies as actual facts. While talking about 9/11, Bush said: "What our

enemies have begun, we will finish." And network reporting helpfully explained that "he had the Iraqi leader in mind." The absence of evidence didn't seem to matter much. Repeated countless times, such slick media maneuvers were able to convince a hefty chunk of the U.S. population that Saddam Hussein was involved with the 9/11 attacks.

When the second anniversary came around, Bush went to Walter Reed Army Hospital and visited soldiers who – in the words of one TV network – were "wounded in the war on terror, both in Afghanistan and Iraq." The president's comments in front of cameras were carefully targeted: "We're going to a church service to remember the victims, pray for their families, victims of 9/11, 2001. Today, this afternoon, Laura and I are here to thank the brave souls who got wounded in the war on terror, people who are willing to sacrifice in order to make sure that attacks such as Sept. 11 don't happen again."

During that hospital visit, the commander in chief made a pitch for war without any foreseeable end: "As I've told the American people right after Sept. 11, 2001, this will be a different kind of war and this will be a long war. And we're fighting this war on a lot of fronts, the major front of which is now in Iraq."

Last year, Sept. 11 fell on a Saturday, and the president's weekly radio address gained unusual visibility. Relatives of 9/11 victims surrounded Bush in the Oval Office as he made his little speech, which – in the words of NBC News – engaged in "linking the war on terror to the war in Iraq."

And so the media siege has gone, to this day. With routine assistance from news coverage, the Bush administration touts the U.S. war effort in Iraq as a legitimate response to what happened on Sept. 11, 2001. With the White House now desperate to shore up its sinking political fortunes, a vast amount of such propaganda is on the horizon.

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*"War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death."*

*For information, go to: [www.WarMadeEasy.com](http://www.WarMadeEasy.com).*

*Audio of his recent speech on "Building Agendas for War" is at:*

*<http://altnet.org/multimedia/24486>*