

Terrorists at the helm

REMEMBER the last presidential election? Remember George W. Bush parading about with a newly released State Department "Patterns of Global Terrorism" report showing that global terrorism in 2003 was at its *lowest* point in 20 years? Ooops. After the election was over, the State Department revised its statistics. It turns out that the global incidence of terrorist attacks in 2003 was actually at its *highest* point in 20 years. Of course such an honest mistake is easy enough to understand. Highest. Lowest. They both end in "est." You can see how they can easily be confused.

Bad as 2003 was, 2004 was far worse. According to the U.S. Government's National Counterterrorism Center, "significant" terrorist attacks rose from 175 in 2003, the highest number in 20 years, to 625 such attacks last year – the very highest number in, well, forever. And this number doesn't count attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq.

This doesn't bode well for our civil rights-consuming national security state either. And it certainly doesn't bode well for its oxymoronically named "War on Terrorism" terrorist wars. Going by these numbers, they seem to have done for terrorism what Ronald Reagan's War on Drugs did for the illicit drug trade – namely fertilize the fetid fields of despair where such maladies flourish.

Getting back to that last presidential election – why again did people vote for Bush? It certainly wasn't the economy or Bush's head-in-the-hot-sand denials about global warming. It wasn't a newfound love for Halliburton, Enron and CEOs in general. And

TERRORISTS AT THE HELM / 2

though the Bush forces worked overtime to turn out their homophobic base, in the end there just weren't enough hateful homophobes to swing an election. It was the security vote that was Bush's bread and butter. Who could best fight the so called War on Terror? That's the mantra that ushered the zombies to the polls.

The dumbass in the mirror

So the current challenge for the White House staff is – how to reconcile this new world record for terrorist mayhem with our supposedly successful \$300 billion War on Terror? Or more specifically, how can they protect Bush voters from the disconcerting experience of confronting these numbers – and ultimately confronting the reality of a dumbass staring at them each morning over a toothpaste bubbles in the bathroom mirror?

The answer to this problem is simple. It's what the Reagan administration did to confront rising unemployment. They changed the formula for counting the unemployed – fixing the numbers instead of the problem. Of course it's a bit harder to fix an almost fourfold rise in what was already a record incidence of terrorist attacks. This is really tricky math – much trickier than simple Reaganomics. So the Bush team did Reagan one better. After 18 years of publishing "Patterns of Global Terrorism," former Chevron Oil Vice President turned Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice simply cancelled the report. Nothing to worry about here. Let's get back to shopping like good patriotic Americans. Remember? The terrorists win when we stop shopping.

John Negroponte - our Osama?

Of course if we can simply wipe out terrorism by wiping out reports of terrorism (it's not like Fox News would have covered the report anyway), we should have no problem putting one of the world's most notorious living terrorists in charge of our anti-terrorism efforts. Yes, you read this right. The House and Senate Republicans, along with their Democratic toadies, are about to confirm John Negroponte as the United States' first National Intelligence Director. This move would put Negroponte in charge of the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the Defense Intelligence Agency and a host of other lesser known spook houses.

This warrants a quick look at Negroponte, who started his intelligence career as a Political Affairs Officer in 1964 at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. By 1967 the Saigon crew and the delusional sociopaths in the Johnson administration had America fully mired in the Vietnam quagmire, ultimately transforming Indochina into a killing field.

Negroponte whored around the State Department after the Vietnam War, ultimately coming of age as Ronald Regan's point man for the bloody Central American wars of the

1980s. In 1981 Reagan appointed Negroonte as Ambassador to Honduras. Though Honduras had no external enemies and hadn't experienced any contemporary military conflicts save for a small clash with El Salvador following a soccer game, Reagan increased their U.S. military aid twenty-fold under Negroonte's watch.

First kill the students

Unlike Guatemala and El Salvador, where guerrilla armies fought U.S.-backed military regimes, Honduras had no organized resistance and no well organized revolutionary movements – military or political. And they never would. Under Negroonte's watch, Honduras made preemptive strikes against the formation of any resistance by murdering any intellectual who showed promise of rising to power as an opponent of the ruling regime. This meant, for example, killing university student leaders and union organizers.

Soon after Negroonte took over as U.S. point man in Honduras, he arranged for the Pentagon and the CIA to form and train a new Honduran army intelligence unit which went by the name "Battalion 316." Looking back over that era, an official Honduran truth commission found Battalion 316 and related death squads directly responsible for the deaths of at least 184 Hondurans during Negroonte's reign – directly implicating Negroonte in a number of human rights violations. At their worst, Battalion 316 was also implicated in the torture-murders of thirty Salvadoran nuns and church workers who fled into Honduras after Salvadoran death squads murdered Archbishop Oscar Romero while he was conducting mass.

With the Honduran opposition adequately muzzled, and with Honduras adequately militarized, Negroonte got down to the real business at hand – turning Honduras into a staging ground for the U.S. backed Contra terrorist war against the social democratic Sandinista government in Nicaragua, and as a training camp for El Salvador's brutal military and death squads. Recent (2001) excavations at one of the former Honduran training camps for Salvadoran forces turned up 185 corpses.

Then sell some cocaine

Under Negroonte's watch, Honduras also became a major transshipment point for cocaine heading to the U.S. market. We now know that the proceeds from this Reagan Administration-sanctioned cocaine trafficking funded elements of the Contra War and other C.I.A. soft money operations in Central America. When the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (D.E.A.) started sniffing around Honduran airfields, Negroonte ordered the D.E.A. office in Honduras closed. Four years into Negroonte's reign as U.S. Ambassador to Honduras, El Salvador and neighboring Guatemala were awash in blood at the hands of

brutal U.S. backed military regimes, Nicaragua was suffering daily terrorist attacks against its civilian infrastructure (the U.S. trained contras targeted schools, health clinics, busses and elected officials), and American cities were experiencing cocaine epidemics.

Fast forward to the present era. One week after the 9-11 attacks in 2001, Bush nominated Negroonte to represent the U.S. at the United Nations. There, he set the stage to deliver false intelligence to the world community concerning alleged Iraqi weapons of mass destruction that were later found to never have existed. Negroonte played a major role starting the Iraq War just as his office in Saigon did a generation earlier in Vietnam.

In June of 2004, George W. Bush appointed John Negroonte as U.S. Ambassador to U.S.-occupied Iraq, where he again served as point man at the hot spot much as he did in Honduras. By January of 2005, Negroonte was once again overseeing the formation of death squads as the Bush administration instituted its "Salvador Option" in Iraq (see *Getting a Grip 2/3/05*).

As the first Director of National Intelligence, Negroonte will not just be in charge of one theater of terrorist operations. He'll have historically unprecedented powers to spread mischief and mayhem across not just one region, but across the globe. The bloodlust for brutal violent repression of political critics that he showed in Honduras doesn't bode well for our embattled democracy as he takes over the reigns of our foreign and domestic intelligence agencies. Suppressing reports won't erase the harm that this man, Bush's deadliest nominee to date, will cause.

