

War, Lies, and Videotape

A Viewer's Guide to *Fahrenheit 9/11*

Prepared by the Ethics and Public Policy Center

ETHICS
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Introduction

This is a viewer’s guide to Michael Moore’s film *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Its purpose is to help the viewer of the film sort through Moore’s many varied claims; to separate fact from fiction and true from false impression; to provide context when the film fails to do so; and to weigh Moore’s assertions, arguments, and narrative moves.

This assessment reveals that Moore’s film is profoundly dishonest and misleading on a scale that even the very skeptical viewer cannot begin to appreciate without a careful analysis of each of the individual pieces that make up the narrative. For the most part, the movie does not proceed by outright false assertions: Moore is careful—often through a lawyerly precision in word choice—to avoid the simplest lies and to steer barely clear of claims that are plainly libelous. Instead, he chops up the truth and rearranges the pieces to form a thoroughly false picture of reality that is composed of genuine video and audio clips that in reality often have little or nothing to do with the point being advanced in the film, and of facts out of context and figures misrepresented. This means that while Moore’s “facts” are not all false, essentially none of his “arguments” turns out to be true.

The film is a patchwork of vague allegations, insubstantial insinuations, unrelated events patched together, and outright non sequiturs. By throwing it all at us in a vivid and often entertaining way, Moore hopes we will not examine his suggestions and connections too closely, and that we will just submit to the general premise with which he seeks to flood our perception, which is that George W. Bush and those around him are profoundly wicked people, at once appallingly stupid and diabolically clever, simpleminded and cunning, arrogant and (above all else) singularly greedy and obsessed with amassing wealth by any means. The film suggests that American foreign policy under the Bush Administration has been driven by a desire to enrich certain well-connected corporations and to serve the needs of oil-fattened Saudis and their American partners, all of whom are united with Bush and his highest officials in a grand cabal of villainy and avarice for which they will sacrifice the nation at a whim. It is a cheap and thin paranoid conspiracy

theory, with all the familiar traditional symbols and ornaments of such tales, and no two parts of the story quite hold together.

The film literally closes its eyes to the attacks of September 11th, and then tries to describe what followed in all but the obvious and reasonable ways. It does its best to avoid the possibility that there really are dangers (except for American power), and there really sometimes are reasons to act in the world with real force. It couches its pacifism in a contrived righteous anger, revved up by a series of purported outrages, all of which totally collapse upon inspection.

The only way to truly appreciate the mastery of this deception is to examine the film move-by-move, claim-by-claim, and to follow up on the facts and trace the patterns of reasoning. This guide attempts to do just that, essentially narrating the reader through the film and taking up each claim. Wherever they are available, we have offered hyperlinks to news stories and other original sources that counter Moore's claims. When hyperlinks were unavailable, we have cited other transcripts and articles, generally obtained through the LexisNexis database.

We gratefully acknowledge the work of a number of other people who have undertaken attempts to fact-check portions of Moore's film and to offer context Moore intentionally left out. Especially useful in preparing this document have been the impressive work of Dave Kopel (<http://www.davekopel.com/Terror/Fiftysix-Deceits-in-Fahrenheit-911.htm>) and the "Fahrenheit Facts" blog (http://fahrenheit_fact.blogspot.com). We also welcome questions, comments, and corrections, which should be submitted by e-mail to fahrenheit911@eppc.org.

—The Ethics and Public Policy Center
October 5, 2004

I. The Election and Bush in Office Before September 11

Our claim-by-claim guide to *Fahrenheit 9/11* begins with the first scene. The film opens with an attempt to suggest that Al Gore actually won the 2000 presidential election, and with Michael Moore wondering if the past four years have only been a bad dream. It opens with footage of a Gore celebration in Florida, with Ben Affleck and other pop-culture stars on stage with Gore, and a sign saying “Florida Victory.” Moore arranges things to give the impression that this is a post-election celebration of a Gore victory that was then taken away. But in fact, this footage is from *before* the election, not after. It was a rally on the final day of the campaign, not a post-election rally after any votes had been cast or counted. (Here’s a story recounting the rally <http://www.evot.com/News/EV11072000E.html>.) Moore does not directly lie, but carefully and thoroughly gives a misleading impression—even in this opening scene.

The movie then shows selected scenes from television coverage on the night of the 2000 election, giving the impression that everything was heading in Gore’s direction, with state after state going for him until the end. But in fact, even leaving aside Florida, Bush won 29 states that night, and Gore won 20 states and the District of Columbia.

Moore then shows CBS calling Florida for Gore. He does not mention that this call was made by CBS and several other TV networks *before polls had actually closed* in the part of Florida that is in the Central time zone—the Western panhandle, which leans heavily Republican. Since 1980, the networks have all agreed not to call election results in any state before the polls close in that state, but in the case of Florida in 2000 they violated this agreement. The networks’ premature call—together with the fact that they repeatedly and wrongly announced during the final hour that the polls in Florida were closed—certainly cost Bush a good number of votes in that heavily Republican area. There is evidence from the 361 polling places in the Central time zone that voters didn’t show up as expected in the final hour, either because they were misled into believing the polls were already closed, or because they were convinced that their votes would not matter since Gore was already being reported as the winner in Florida. This depressed turnout very likely led to the close election result we’re all familiar with. One study (http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=276278) suggests the networks’ error cost Bush about 1,500 Florida votes, and another (http://www.senate.gov/~gov_affairs/050301_Perrin.htm) suggests it cost him 5,000. In either case, or any similar case, the tight race fiasco would not have happened without the TV news mistake, and Bush would have won Florida without dispute. This point is not raised in the film.

Moore then shows several networks calling the state for Gore, but then says that “something called the Fox News Channel called the election in favor of the other guy.” What really happened, however, is that the TV networks soon realized that Florida was too close to call, and never should have been put in the Gore category. So beginning with CNN at 9:55 p.m. EST, and quickly followed by CBS and the others, the TV news networks retracted their mistaken call for Gore. (For the CNN retraction: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/aponline/20001108/aponline183922_000.htm. For a useful timeline of election-night “calls” by the networks: <http://www.cbsnews.com/htdocs/c2k/pdf/REPFINAL.pdf>.) Fox News, like the

other networks, had wrongly called Florida for Gore even before the polls were closed. They did not call the state for Bush until after 2 a.m., four hours after CNN and CBS had led the way in retracting the call for Gore. Moore is correct to say that Fox was the first to actually announce a call for Bush at 2:16 a.m., but the other networks all followed within moments. Moore works hard to build the impression that everyone believed Gore had won until Fox said otherwise, which is blatantly false.

Moore then says that the man “in charge of the decision desk” at Fox News on election night was a cousin of Bush’s. Moore doesn’t actually follow this statement with any accusation of misconduct—but by putting things this way, he obviously wants us to assume that something wasn’t right. There has never been any suggestion of anything wrong with the qualifications or conduct of John Ellis, the Bush relative in question. He was, in any case, just following the data from the Voter News Service exit poll figures—information that all the networks used. Nothing Fox News did that night differed from what the other networks did (in fact, Fox originally made the same early and erroneous call for Gore that the other networks made) and nothing Ellis did has in any way been questioned—including by the two other Fox analysts, both Democrats, who manned the decision desk with him that night. Moore’s further preposterous suggestion, that “All of a sudden the other networks said ‘Hey, if Fox said it, it *must* be true,’” has no basis in fact whatsoever.

Having sought to convince us (without actually offering facts) that Florida was somehow taken from Gore, Moore says “How does someone like Bush get away with something like this?” and then suggests it is because his brother was Florida’s governor, and because Florida’s secretary of state (whom Moore calls “the vote counting woman”) was an elected Republican who was co-chair of Bush’s Florida campaign. He alleges no specific wrongdoing on either person’s part. The extent of his accusation against Bush’s brother is footage of Bush sitting with his brother before the election and saying he will win Florida (just as Al Gore said he would win Florida in the footage that opened the movie). In fact, Jeb Bush recused himself from everything having to do with the vote-count in Florida, to avoid any appearance of impropriety, so although he would normally have been the one in charge of the final post-election certification process, he remained completely out of it, and has never been accused by anyone of doing anything wrong (<http://www.cnn.com/2000/ALLPOLITICS/stories/11/08/election.president/>).

Katherine Harris, “the vote counting woman,” was the elected Secretary of State of Florida. She was not in charge of “vote counting,” which is overseen by county officials in each of Florida’s counties, and so was done by Democrats in each of the disputed counties in the 2000 election. Harris, as secretary of state and one of three members of the state’s Elections Canvassing Commission, was only in charge of certifying the vote-count after it was completed, which she did. In any case, she too is not accused in the movie or elsewhere of wrongdoing. The movie makes no charges, only insinuations, but suggests that Bush “got away” with something (it does not say what) because these people were in power. That certainly puts forward a grossly misleading impression at the very least.

Moore then says that a further element in “getting away” with “it” was to have the state of Florida “hire a company that’s gonna knock voters off the rolls who aren’t likely to vote for you. You can usually tell them by the color of their skin.” This is a reference to the fact that following

the fiasco of the 1998 mayoral election in Miami—which had to be decided by state courts after it became clear that convicted felons had been allowed to vote, in violation of Florida law—the state of Florida had hired a firm called Data Base Technologies (whose office Moore shows on the screen) to systematically remove convicted felons from the voter rolls. This process met with difficulties from the start, including issues relating to the fact that in some other states some convicted felons are allowed to vote, and Florida was not allowed to remove those people from its own voter rolls if they had moved to Florida after being released in another state. Florida’s counties were aware of difficulties in this process, and so at least 20 of the counties simply ignored the Data Base Technologies lists of felons to purge from their lists, which meant that felons were removed in some counties but not others. It is true that when they vote, convicted felons vote for Democrats more often than for Republicans (<http://www.scienceblog.com/community/article708.html>) but it is also clear from an analysis by members of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (http://www.manhattan-institute.org/final_dissent.pdf) that too many, not too few, convicted felons voted in the 2000 elections in Florida—that is, about 6,500 felons who were not legally allowed to vote did so anyway. So the result was likely many more (not fewer) votes for Gore. Finally, there is no evidence that any of this at any point had anything to do with race, despite Moore’s implication. An investigation by the *Palm Beach Post* (<http://www.commondreams.org/headlines01/0527-03.htm>) showed that the process used by Data Base Technologies at no point brought the race of individual convicted felons into the picture. Moore’s charge is baseless and false.

Moore then suggests the Bush team fought unethically in the post-election process in Florida, though he offers no specific charges, and only shows a snippet of a television interview with James Baker, Bush’s representative in the process, in which Baker says, “I think all this talk about ‘legitimacy’ is way overblown.” This implies that Baker was saying that the legitimacy of the election itself doesn’t matter. But that’s not what he was saying. The sound bite came from an interview with Baker on ABC’s *This Week* program on December 10, 2000. Baker was asked by Sam Donaldson whether he thought that having the Supreme Court decide the Florida recount question would take away from the legitimacy of whoever would be the winner. Baker answered:

Well, Sam, I think all this talk about legitimacy is way overblown. Whoever wins this election, and particularly if they should win it as a consequence of a decision of the highest court in the land, which everybody has said that they—that they intend to respect, I think that the country will come together behind that leader. Yes, we’ve lost 50 percent of the time normally reserved for transition. Yes, it’ll be harder than it normally is, but I don’t think that we will have questions of legitimacy about the president. Yes, there—there will be hard feelings regardless of which side wins and which side loses. But I think the country’s strong enough and our democracy’s strong enough we’ll over come that.

These are hardly the words of a heartless fiend, and Baker is not suggesting that the legitimacy of the election is irrelevant. He is, instead, arguing that the post-election process will produce a president that the American people will consider legitimate, no matter who wins. Moore’s careful cutting of this statement presents a totally misleading impression.

Moore then suggests that “numerous independent investigations prove that Gore got the most votes” in Florida. He puts what looks to be a newspaper article on the screen with the headline “Latest Florida Recount Shows Gore Won Election.” You can see on the screen that the headline is from a newspaper called *The Pantagraph* and the date is December 19, 2001. *The Pantagraph* is a local paper in Bloomington, Illinois. More importantly, the item Moore is showing was not a

newspaper article, but a letter to the editor which had that title headline. It was just a reader claiming Gore had won, but not referring to any latest recount or new information. What's more, the letter did not run on December 19, 2001, but on December 5, 2001. Here is what *The Pantagraph* had to say about it, following Moore's use of their letter in the movie: "If [Moore] wants to edit the *Pantagraph*," the paper told the Associated Press, "he should apply for a copy-editing job" (http://www.usatoday.com/life/people/2004-08-02-moore-apology_x.htm).

Why did Moore have to resort to a misdated and re-titled letter to the editor from a local paper in Illinois to back up his claim that independent recounts showed Gore had won? *Because the claim is false*. In fact, the independent recounts, conducted by several universities and media organizations, showed that in every recount scenario that had been requested by the Gore campaign, Bush actually won more votes than Gore did in Florida, and therefore won the election, regardless of any court intervention. There were two major media investigations of the Florida post-election process. The first, conducted by *USA Today*, *The Miami Herald* and Knight Ridder, showed that "George W. Bush would have won a hand count of Florida's disputed ballots if the standard advocated by Al Gore had been used" (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2001-04-03-floridamain.htm>). The second, conducted by the Associated Press, CNN, *The New York Times*, *The Palm Beach Post*, *The St. Petersburg Times*, Tribune Publishing, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*, likewise showed that by all the scenarios requested by the Gore campaign or suggested by the Florida Supreme Court, Bush would have won (<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/politics/recount/>). The only ways Gore might have squeezed out a win would have involved extremely contrived and unusual methods of counting ballots, which no one had suggested (<http://www.nytimes.com/images/2001/11/12/politics/recount/>) Moore's claim is misleading and his use of newspaper clippings is dishonest.

Moore then shows a quick clip from CNN in which legal pundit Jeffrey Toobin says, "If there was a statewide recount under every scenario, Gore won the election." This is again a profoundly dishonest use of a video snippet. The clip is from a CNN program on November 12, 2001 in which Jeffrey Toobin was interviewed by Paula Zahn about election reform and a book he had written on the 2000 election. They had the following exchange:

ZAHN: But Jeffrey, if Al Gore had gotten what he wanted, which was a statewide manual recount or a recount of those four specific counties, George Bush still would have won. So I wonder and I'm going to put up on the screen now a paragraph from your book where you once said the wrong man was inaugurated on January 20th, 2001 and this is no small thing in our nation's history. Do you still agree with what you wrote?

TOOBIN: Oh absolutely. I mean remember this is just about the under votes and over votes. There were thousands of votes that were clearly mistakenly passed. Democracy is about the intent of the voters. There are 3,400 votes in Palm Beach for Pat Buchanan. Obviously those people did not intend to vote for—did not intend to vote for Pat Buchanan. There were thousands of military absentee ballots that were not accurately counted or cast appropriately. There were 7,000 votes in Duval County in Jacksonville that were clearly intended for Al Gore. I mean you know the irony here is that the exit polls, the much-maligned exit polls, but—which really do manifest the intent of the voters—they were clearly correct that Al Gore won a very narrow vote.

ZAHN: Jeffrey, how can you say that? How can you say that given the conclusion of this analysis that Candy has set out in great detail that if Al Gore [had] gotten the manual recount with the standards that

everybody seemed to agree to in this analysis, that George Bush would have won and he would have won if he had done the manual recount of the four specific counties.

TOOBIN: That's not ...

(CROSSTALK)

TOOBIN: All right let's concentrate ...

(CROSSTALK)

TOOBIN: Let's concentrate on why we have elections, which is ...

ZAHN: No. No. No. You've got to answer my question Jeffrey.

TOOBIN: No, I'm answering your question. I mean the poll said if there was a statewide recount—if there was a statewide recount under every scenario Gore won the election.

In other words, Toobin is talking about the results of *exit polls*, not the result of an actual recount. He's trying to say he knows what people *intended* to do based on a poll, rather than what a recount of the real ballots would have shown. This is made clear in the same CNN program, when Candy Crowley, the CNN reporter referred to above, says:

If Al Gore had gotten what he asked for, the election would have been settled a lot quicker and Al Gore, our study suggests, still would have lost. The study, conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, was commissioned by CNN and seven other news organizations. Trained coders often operating in teams viewed, but did not touch disputed ballots and wrote down what they saw. While their findings point to a Bush victory under all options in play at the time, there are theoretical scenarios in which Gore might have won.

Moore's claim that Gore would have won by any recount scenario is flatly false, and his use of the CNN video is totally and abjectly dishonest. The facts are plain: Bush truly did win the 2000 election.

Moore then mocks the Supreme Court as mere friends of Bush's "daddy" and mocks the Democratic leaders who accepted the outcome and called on the country to accept the new president. Moore offers no facts or specific allegations to support his mockery of either group, and does not take up the actual reasoning of the Supreme Court decision (http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/supremecourt/00-949_dec12.fdf) or the question of why the Democratic leaders accepted the legitimacy of the decision.

The film then shows scenes from the congressional certification of the election results, in which a few members of the House of Representatives raised complaints about the Florida election results, but could not find a single member of the Senate to join them. Moore seems to imply that we should think the Senators were cowards for not joining the petitions of complaint, but in fact he offers no reasons why a Senator, or any responsible person, would have put their names on the petitions. He does not tell us what was in the complaints, nor whether the complaints were true and there was any reason to object to certifying the election results. In fact, the objections alleged all manner of voter intimidation, fraud, and disenfranchisement, none of which has since been proven correct and none of which were supported by any evidence that would have offered

any Senator a reason to support them. (The Congressional Record transcript of the session can be found at http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getpage.cgi?dbname=2001_record&page=H34&position=all.)

Moore then says that on inauguration day people pelted Bush's limo with eggs, and prevented the president from taking the usual walk outside his car that normally ends the inaugural procession. It is true, as this BBC story demonstrates (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/1127937.stm>), that "one protester threw an egg at the new president's motorcade." But as the same story also demonstrates, in the very next line, it is also true that "Mr Bush delighted supporters by getting out of his limousine and walked the last block of the parade, holding hands with his wife Laura." Moore also claims that "no president had ever witnessed such a thing on his inauguration day." Whether this refers to the true part (the egg) or the false part (no walk) of Moore's earlier claim, it is certainly not true that no such thing had been seen at past inaugurations. At Nixon's 1973 inaugural parade, for instance, protestors burned American flags, booed and cursed at the president and his wife, "and deluged their car with sticks, stones, beer cans, and bottles" (Randall Bennett Woods, *Fulbright: A Biography*, p. 501, <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0521482623>). According to a history of the U.S. Secret Service, Nixon kept his limousine's windows open during the parade even though protestors "opened up with a barrage of eggs and rotten fruit" (Philip H. Melanson and Peter F. Stevens, *The Secret Service: The Hidden History of an Enigmatic Agency*, p. 297, <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0786710845>).

Moore then asserts that "things didn't get any better" over the first eight months of the Bush presidency, and makes a series of false claims about those months. He claims President Bush "couldn't get his judges appointed," which is not true: Justice Department records show that judges nominated by Bush were getting Senate hearings and confirmations throughout the summer of 2001 (<http://www.usdoj.gov/olp/confirmed107.htm>).

Moore claims President Bush "had trouble getting his legislation passed," which is true insofar as any president has some trouble with Congress, but is not true if it aims to give the impression that President Bush was not having success getting major legislation through. In the period Moore talks about, the president got his very significant across-the-board tax cut through Congress, and began to get his "No Child Left Behind" education legislation through the process (it was passed in the House before September 11, and in the Senate shortly after). In both cases, President Bush got them through almost as he had wanted them, a feat that would please any president at any time.

Moore claims Bush "lost Republican control of the Senate," which is only true in the sense that Republicans lost control of the Senate after formerly Republican Senator Jim Jeffords of Vermont (shown briefly on-screen) became an independent in early 2001.

Moore claims Bush's "approval ratings in the polls began to sink" and shows a graph on the screen suggesting Bush's job approval rating was 45%. This is certainly a distortion. Bush's ratings in the first few months fluctuated up and down, as do those of most presidents in most times, but the 45% figure Moore shows was clearly an aberration. As this chart of approval ratings in various polls (<http://www.hist.umn.edu/~ruggles/Approval.htm>) shows, President

Bush's approval rating rose quite substantially in April (when he overcame his "trouble getting his legislation passed" and got the tax cut passed in Congress) and throughout the eight month period in question his approval rating was in the 50% to 60% range, as it had been when he took office.

Moore completes this parade of distortion by saying "he was already beginning to look like a lame-duck president" which of course is an absurd thing to suggest about a president in his first few months of office.

Moore then says that Bush responded to all this by going on vacation. He cites a *Washington Post* story (available here: <http://www.dke.org/haginranch.html>) that had noted that Bush spent 42 percent of his first seven months in office "at vacation spots or en route." Moore does not explain that this figure counts "full or partial days" as vacation days—so that, as one online critic put it, if President Bush "got up at six in the morning at Camp David, had a cup of java, then flew to the White House, that was counted as a day at Camp David" (<http://www.scoopy.com/fahrenheit911.htm>). Moore also does not note that the *Post* article also says that, "Many of those days are weekends, and the Camp David stays have included working visits with foreign leaders." If you exclude weekends from the *Post*'s calculation, Bush spent just 13 percent of his days "on vacation." And of course these weren't truly vacation days, either—in fact, one of the pictures Moore shows to back up his claim that Bush was loafing around ("relaxing at Camp David," as Moore puts it) is a picture of Bush meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Moore also shows Bush in a polo shirt answering a question about what he's doing that day, saying, "Uh, Karen Hughes is coming over we're workin' on some things—and uh, she'll be over here. We're workin' on some things. I'm working on some initiatives—we're uh—you'll see. I mean I've got—there'll be decisions that I'm going to make while I'm here and we'll be announcing them as time goes on." The viewer is supposed to get the impression that Bush is struggling to sound productive during a time when he is just goofing off. But Moore undoes his own design here by noting with a caption on the screen that this Q&A took place on August 8, 2001. This was one day before Bush announced his new policy governing funding of embryonic stem cell research, a major policy initiative, on which Bush and the White House staff had been working for weeks in Texas and Washington. Bush announced the policy, from Crawford, Texas on August 9, in his first nationally-televised primetime address (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/08/20010809-2.html>), and he had in fact been hard at work on the speech with Karen Hughes and others in Texas the day before. (To Moore's way of thinking, these all count as vacation days.)

Here is a sample of what Bush did on one particular week of his "vacation" in August of 2001, drawn from White House documents available online and collated by Scott Marquardt for Dave Kopel (<http://www.davekopel.com/Terror/Fiftysix-Deceits-in-Fahrenheit-911.htm>):

Monday, August 20

- Spoke concerning the budget while visiting a high school in Independence, Missouri.
- Spoke at the annual Veteran's of Foreign Wars convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- Signed six bills into law.

- Announced his nominees for Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Agriculture, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Financial Management, member of the Federal Housing Finance Board, Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disabled Employment Policy, U.S. Representative to the General Assembly of the U.N., and Assistant Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development for the Bureau of Humanitarian Response.
- Spoke with workers at the Harley Davidson factory.
- Dined with Kansas Governor Bill Graves, discussing politics.

Tuesday, August 21

- Took press questions at a Target store in Kansas City, Missouri.
- Spoke with Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien on the matter of free trade and tariffs on Canadian lumber.

Wednesday, August 22

- Met with Karen Hughes, Condi Rice, and Josh Bolten, and other staff (more than one meeting).
- Conferenced with Mexico's president for about 20 minutes on the phone. They discussed Argentina's economy and the International Monetary Fund's role in bringing sustainability to the region. They also talked about immigration and Fox's planned trip to Washington.
- Communicated with Margaret LaMontagne, who was heading up a series of immigration policy meetings.
- Released the Mid-Session Review, a summary of the economic outlook for the next decade, as well as of the contemporary economy and budget.
- Announced nomination and appointment intentions for Ambassador to Vietnam, two for the Commission on Fine Arts, six to serve on the Commission on the Future of the United States Aerospace Industry, three for the Advisory Committee to the Pension Benefits Guaranty Corporation, one to the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and one to the National Endowments for the Arts.
- Issued a Presidential Determination ordering a military drawdown for Tunisia.
- Issued a statement regarding the retirement of Jesse Helms.

Thursday, August 23

- Briefly speaks with the press.
- Visited Crawford Elementary School, fielded questions from students.

Friday, August 24

- Officials arrive from Washington at 10:00 a.m. Briefly after this at a press conference, Bush announced that General Richard B. Myers will be the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and General Pete Pac will serve as Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. He also announced 14 other appointments, and his intentions for the budget. At 11:30 a.m. these officials, as well as National Security Council experts, the Secretary of Defense, and others, met with Bush to continue the strategic review process for military transformation (previous meetings have been held at the Pentagon and the White House). The meeting ended at 5:15.
- Met with Andy Card and Karen Hughes, talking about communications issues.
- Issued a proclamation honoring Women's Equality Day.

Saturday, August 25

- Awoke at 5:45 a.m., read daily briefs.
- Had an hour-long CIA and national security briefing at 7:45.
- Gave his weekly radio address on the topic of The Budget.

Sunday, August 26

- Speaks at the Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.
- Speaks at the U.S. Steel Group Steelworkers Picnic at Mon Valley Works, southeast of Pittsburgh. He also visits some employees still working, not at the picnic.

Some vacation. But rather than tell us any of this, Moore then shows various images of Bush on vacation, talking about his dogs and the like, which of course can only leave us with the impression that if Michael Moore himself were followed around by cameras and asked questions constantly for months and years on end, the only thing he would ever talk about would be serious issues of the day.

Finally, we are told, Bush went to Florida on September 10 (though Moore suggests, falsely, that he went there straight after an extended vacation in Texas).

As the opening credits roll, we are treated to a series of images of Bush Administration officials preparing for interviews or speeches, having microphones attached, having their hair combed, and talking to people off camera. It is part of Moore's effort to make Bush and those around him seem somehow vaguely ridiculous—as if serious people would never behave this way before going on camera.

II. September 11th and the Saudis

Following the credits is certainly the most inadvertently telling directorial move in the film. The only way that Moore's absurd conspiracy theories could make sense is if we simply ignore the realities of the world that American leaders have to confront. We would have to close our eyes, for instance, to the attacks of September 11, 2001. And that is exactly what Moore does.

Although he shows much explicit and painful footage of human suffering from Iraq later in the film, he chooses to portray the terrorist attacks of September 11th with a black screen, and only sound. He literally closes his eyes, and ours, to those events, and expects us to understand what follows without having seen them. The horror and suffering of the attacks are not shown, lest they lead us to understand, even a little, why a response was required.

Moore then tells us that Bush was told of the attacks as he was starting an event with schoolchildren in Florida, and that he stayed in the classroom after being told of the second plane striking the World Trade Center. He does not explicitly criticize Bush for doing this, but he certainly wants to leave us with the impression that a more serious person would have gotten up and run out of the room. Moore says, "Not knowing what to do, with no one telling him what to do, and no Secret Service rushing in to take him to safety, Mr. Bush just sat there and continued to read *My Pet Goat* with the children." He does not tell us what Bush should have done, and he does not tell us, for instance, that "Gwendolyn Tose'-Rigell, the principal of Emma E. Booker Elementary School [where Bush was], praised Bush's action: 'I don't think anyone could have handled it better.... What would it have served if he had jumped out of his chair and ran out of the room?' ... She said the video doesn't convey all that was going on in the classroom, but Bush's presence had a calming effect and 'helped us get through a very difficult day'" (http://www.naplesnews.com/npdn/florida/article/0,2071,NPDN_14910_2985640,00.html). The Vice Chairman of the 9/11 Commission—Lee Hamilton, a Democrat—also praised Bush for what he did that morning, saying, "Bush made the right decision in remaining calm, in not rushing out of the classroom" (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,124079,00.html>).

Moore then speculates on what Bush must have been thinking at the school, suggesting maybe Bush wished he had “shown up to work more often” (a rehashing of the misrepresentation of Bush’s “vacations”) and implying that the administration had paid no attention to terrorism in the preceding months—a charge shown to be thoroughly false by the 9/11 Commission Report (see <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, pp. 203-209, a section which ends by suggesting that Bush was prepared to invade Afghanistan to get Bin Laden even had there not been an attack on September 11th).

“Or maybe Bush was wondering why he had cut terrorism funding from the FBI,” Moore says. But as the 9/11 Commission Report also shows, the Bush Administration actually *increased* funding for counterterrorism in the FBI in its first year in office (before September 11th). Indeed they asked Congress for, and received, “the largest proposed percentage increase in the FBI’s counterterrorism program since fiscal year 1997” (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 209). These amounts, of course, only increased further after the September 11th attacks.

But Moore is undaunted by these facts, and continues reading the President’s mind. “Or perhaps,” Moore says, “he should’ve just read the security briefing that was given to him on August 6, 2001, which said that Osama bin Laden was planning to attack America by hijacking airplanes.” Moore offers no evidence to suggest that Bush did not read this briefing, and in fact it is clear from the 9/11 Commission Report (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, page 260) that the president *did* read it. The briefing was not nearly as clear or unequivocal as Moore suggests, however. It was a historical survey of Bin Laden’s activities and of various past threats which had not materialized, and it said:

We have not been able to corroborate some of the more sensational threat reporting, such as that from a [deleted text] service in 1998 saying that Bin Ladin wanted to hijack a U.S. aircraft to gain the release of ‘Blind Shaykh’ ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Rahman and other U.S.-held extremists. Nevertheless, FBI information since that time indicates patterns of suspicious activity in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks, including recent surveillance of federal buildings in New York. (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, pp. 261-2)

The briefing also assured the president that “approximately 70 full field investigations” from the FBI were looking into these matters. The commission found that the briefing was too generous in describing these investigations (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 535), but not that the president’s reaction to the briefing was insufficient.

Moore then says “A report like that might make some men jump. But, as in days past, George W just went fishing.” Actually, as the 9/11 Commission Report makes clear, the Bush Administration had already been at work on plans to disrupt and destroy Al Qaeda, including a plan first circulated on June 7, 2001, whose goal, says the report,

was to “eliminate the al Qida network of terrorist groups as a threat to the United States and to friendly governments.” It called for a multiyear effort involving diplomacy, covert action, economic measures, law enforcement, public diplomacy, and if necessary military efforts. The State Department was to work with other governments to end all al Qaeda sanctuaries, and also to work with the Treasury Department to disrupt terrorist financing. The CIA was to develop an expanded covert action program including significant additional funding and aid to anti-Taliban groups. The draft also tasked OMB with

ensuring that sufficient funds to support this program were found in U.S. budgets from fiscal years 2002 to 2006. (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf> , pp. 204-5)

Still reading Bush's mind at the Florida school, Moore says, "As the minutes went by, George Bush continued to sit in the classroom, was he thinking, 'I've been hanging out with the wrong crowd. Which one of them screwed me? Was it the guy my Daddy's friends delivered a lot of weapons to? [Footage of Donald Rumsfeld meeting Saddam Hussein in 1984, as part of the Reagan Administration's effort to weaken the Iranian mullahs.] Was it that group of religious fundamentalists who visited my state when I was governor? [Footage of a Taliban delegation visiting Texas in 1998.] Or was it the Saudis? [Footage of Saudis.] Damn! It was them! I think I better blame it on this guy' [Footage of Saddam Hussein]." This approach epitomizes Moore's technique throughout. He shows random unconnected images and suggests that some dark but undescribed conspiracy connects them. He also suggests here that Bush "blamed" Iraq for September 11th, which is not true.

Moore then tells us that, "In the days following September 11th, all commercial and private air line traffic was grounded" but that a group of Saudis, including Bin Laden family members staying in America, was permitted to fly out of the country. He then implies that something was wrong with these flights, that the people who departed were not properly interviewed by the FBI, and that this happened because the Saudis used their influence with the White House. He even has a former FBI agent (whom he admits was no longer in the FBI by the time of the attacks and so would have no direct knowledge of what happened) say that these people should have been interviewed.

But Moore's assertions are all wrong. First of all, the flights carrying Bin Laden family members did not take place while other civilian flights were grounded, as Moore suggests. The one flight that actually carried Bin Laden family members took place on September 20, a week *after* flight restrictions had been lifted. Flights carrying other Saudis also occurred on or after September 13, when flying was no longer restricted. Also, all the Saudis who left the country on the flights Moore mentions were in fact thoroughly interviewed by the FBI before leaving. And finally, the flights were approved personally (and exclusively) by White House counterterrorism head Richard Clarke, whom Moore later cites with approval as an authority.

The 9/11 Commission Report makes short shrift of all of Moore's accusations, stating that the commission "found no evidence that any flights of Saudi nationals, domestic or international, took place before the reopening of national airspace on the morning of September 13, 2001. To the contrary, every flight we have identified occurred after national airspace reopened." It states further that there was "no evidence of political intervention" to permit the flights, and finally observes that, "the FBI interviewed all persons of interest on these flights prior to their departures. They concluded that none of the passengers was connected to the 9/11 attacks and have since found no evidence to change that conclusion. Our own independent review of the Saudi nationals involved confirms that no one with known links to terrorism departed on these flights" (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, pp. 329-30; also see pp. 556-558). In response to this, a spokeswoman for Moore told the *Washington Post* that "Moore did not intend to suggest that the Bin Ladens flew away while civilian flights were grounded"—which is preposterous given what is plainly said in the film, and also fails to address all of the

film's other false claims on this issue (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A10070-2004Jul23.html>).

The film next makes clear why Moore goes to these lengths to try to imply some wrongdoing with the flights of Saudis: he wants to suggest an improper relationship between the family of George W. Bush and the Saudis (or even specifically the Bin Laden family). Moore then proceeds to unroll a convoluted scheme by which he seeks to connect Bush and the Bin Ladens. He begins by telling us that in early 2004 he (Moore himself) had called Bush a deserter in a speech and that “in response” the White House released copies of Bush’s military service records. (The arrogant notion that these records were released in response to Moore’s particular charge is ludicrous; they were actually released in response to an Associated Press Freedom of Information Act lawsuit that had nothing to do with Moore’s remarks.) In any case, Moore argues that the records had a name blacked out which had not been blacked out in a copy of the same records he had obtained back in 2000. The name was that of James R. Bath. Moore asks: “Why didn’t Bush want the press and public to see Bath’s name on his military records? Perhaps he was worried that the American people would find out that at one time James R. Bath was the Texas money manager for the Bin Ladens.” Well, actually the reason Bath’s name was blacked out is that privacy laws prohibit the government from releasing the records—especially medical records, like the documents in question—of persons without their permission (<http://www.usdoj.gov/foia/privstat.htm>). Bush gave permission to have his records released, but Bath had not done so (and had not been asked to do so, since the Freedom of Information Act request had nothing to do with him), and so his name had to be removed from common records.

Moore then says, “Bush and Bath had become good friends when they both served in the Texas Air National Guard. After they were discharged, when Bush’s dad was head of the CIA, Bath opened up his own aviation business, after selling a plane to a man by the name of Salem Bin Laden, heir to the second-largest fortune in Saudi Arabia, the Saudi Binladin Group.” He next tells us that James Bath was hired to manage money for the Bin Laden family in Texas, and then that when Bush tried his hand at the oil business, he got an early investment from his friend James Bath. We are supposed to conclude, of course, that Bath invested the Bin Ladens’ money in Bush’s company. Moore never actually *says* so, but he *implies* so. He fails to mention that Bath himself has plainly said the money was his own and not the Bin Ladens’. In fact, Craig Unger, who is interviewed in the movie, and whose book *House of Bush, House of Saud* is the source for most of Moore’s absurd assertions in this part of the movie, himself doubts any connection here. Here is how *Newsweek* put it:

Leaving aside the fact that the bin Laden family, which runs one of Saudi Arabia’s biggest construction firms, has never been linked to terrorism, the movie—which relied heavily on Unger’s book—fails to note the author’s conclusion about what to make of the supposed Bin Laden-Bath-Bush nexus: that it may not mean anything. The “Bush-Bin Laden ‘relationships’ were indirect—two degrees of separation, perhaps—and at times have been overstated,” Unger writes in his book. While critics have charged that bin Laden money found its way into Arbusto [Bush’s company] through Bath, Unger notes that “no hard evidence has ever been found to back up that charge” and Bath himself has adamantly denied it. “One hundred percent of those funds (in Arbusto) were mine,” says Bath in a footnote on page 101 of Unger’s book. “It was a purely personal investment.” (<http://msnbc.msn.com/id/5335853/>)

But Moore just moves right along, leaving behind the Bin Ladens and pointing out that years later Bush was given a seat on the board of a company called Harken Energy, which had bought

one of Bush's oil companies. Harken also received some Saudi investments, and the film shows Unger saying: "Harken had one thing going for it, which is that George W. Bush was on its board of directors at a time when his father was President of the United States." No further proof is offered to suggest that this is why the company received Saudi money, or that any of this has anything to do with the Bin Laden family issues discussed just moments before.

Moore then shows a snippet from an interview with George W. Bush in 1992 in which he says, "When you're the President's son and you've got unlimited access combined with some credentials from a prior campaign, in Washington, D.C., people tend to respect that." The interview is from the *CBS Morning News* on August 21, 1992, from a story about George W. Bush's work assisting his father's 1992 reelection campaign. The interview is about Bush's work on the campaign, and has to do with campaign advice—it is completely unrelated to peddling influence or access for profit.

Then—without offering any evidence that Harken received investments because of Bush's connections, or that Bush ever used his influence in any untoward way—Moore moves on and says, "Yes, it helps to be the President's son. Especially when you're being investigated by the Securities and Exchange Commission." Moore then shows a television report from CBS reporter Bill Plante which says, "In 1990, when [George W.] Bush was a director of Harken Energy he received this memo from company lawyers warning directors not to sell stock if they had unfavorable information about the company. One week later he sold \$848,000 worth of Harken stock. Two months later, Harken announced losses of more than \$23 million." Moore fails to mention that Bush cleared his sale with those same "company lawyers" and that Bush was cleared of any wrongdoing in the matter (<http://www.nationalreview.com/york/york071002.asp>). Instead Moore tells us that Bush "beat the rap" with the help of a lawyer who was later named ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Again, no actual accusations are made, only unsupported insinuations (in this case, some kind of *quid pro quo*) with absolutely no foundation, and no attempt to provide one. Moore just throws out a few unconnected and misleading charges and hopes they add up in viewers' minds to some sort of impression.

Once again, without a logical transition, Moore moves on—this time, to talk about the Carlyle Group, on whose advisory board both George W. Bush and George H.W. Bush sat at different times. Moore tells us that members of the Bin Laden family were at one point among the investors in the Carlyle Group. We are told that the Carlyle Group was holding an investor conference in Washington, D.C. on September 11, in which the elder Bush participated, as did one of Osama bin Laden's many half-brothers. (To give a sense of the size of the Bin Laden family, the 9/11 Commission Report points out that Osama was "the seventeenth of 57 children" of the Bin Laden patriarch, <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 55.) Apparently the fact that Bush's father and a member of the Bin Laden family were together that day is expected to have a major effect on us, though no reasons are given for why it should. We are only told that the elder Bush has a lot of influence with his son ... so again, as we were told earlier in reverse, the influence of one George Bush upon the other is somehow sinister, and connected to evil Saudis. But how?

In this segment Moore also says that the Carlyle Group and their Bin Laden investors profited from September 11, by taking a subsidiary named United Defense public in October of 2001. It

is not made clear why the stock offering is related to the 9/11 attacks. Moore also fails to mention that United Defense actually *lost* about \$11 billion as the result of a decision by George W. Bush's administration to cancel the company's Crusader artillery system, one of the only defense programs the Bush Administration cut (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5251769/>). In addition, Moore fails to inform us that George Soros, the left-wing icon, is also a major investor in the Carlyle Group, and former Clinton chief of staff Mack McLarty is also a senior advisor—so the company is hardly a global conspiracy of right-wingers. Moore also suggests that “sadly, with so much attention focused on the Bin Laden family being important Carlyle investors, the Bin Ladens eventually had to withdraw,” implying that they withdrew after the IPO he has just described. In fact, they withdrew *before* it (<http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/004/278rxzvb.asp?pg=2>).

Where is all this going? Moore soon tells us, by unfurling one of his most absurd and insulting slurs. He asks:

Okay, so let's say one group of people, like the American people, pay you \$400,000 a year to be President of the United States. But then another group of people invest in you, your friends, and their related businesses \$1.4 billion dollars over a number of years. [Footage of former Secretary of State James A. Baker, III, and Vice President Dick Cheney.] Who you gonna like? Who's your daddy? Because that's how much the Saudi royals and their associates have given the Bush family, their friends, and their related businesses in the past three decades. [Footage of President Bush and Saudi Prince.] Is it rude to suggest that when the Bush family wakes up in the morning they might be thinking about what's best for the Saudis instead of what's best for you? Or me? 'Cuz \$1.4 billion just doesn't buy a lot of flights out of the country, it buys a lot of love.

This is accompanied by pictures of both Bushes—as well as James Baker, Colin Powell, and Donald Rumsfeld—shaking hands with various individuals in Arab dress. Here again Moore makes no specific allegation, but he suggests that both the current and former presidents and their Secretaries of State and Defense are simply for sale to the highest bidder. He conveniently ignores all the ways in which the Bush foreign policy is *opposed* by the Saudis (they objected, for instance, to the American invasion of Afghanistan, and to the newly assertive American role in the region more generally). And as ever, Moore's facts, let alone his implications, are completely wrong. As *Newsweek* put it:

Moore derives the \$1.4 billion figure from journalist Craig Unger's book, *House of Bush, House of Saud*. Nearly 90 percent of that amount, \$1.18 billion, comes from just one source: contracts in the early to mid-1990's that the Saudi Arabian government awarded to a U.S. defense contractor, BDM, for training the country's military and National Guard. What's the significance of BDM? The firm at the time was owned by the Carlyle Group, the powerhouse private-equity firm whose Asian-affiliate advisory board has included the president's father, George H.W. Bush. Leave aside the tenuous six-degrees-of-separation nature of this “connection.” The main problem with this figure, according to Carlyle spokesman Chris Ullman, is that former president Bush didn't join the Carlyle advisory board until April, 1998—five months after Carlyle had already sold BDM to another defense firm. True enough, the former president was paid for one speech to Carlyle and then made an overseas trip on the firm's behalf the previous fall, right around the time BDM was sold. But Ullman insists any link between the former president's relations with Carlyle and the Saudi contracts to BDM that were awarded years earlier is entirely bogus. “The figure is inaccurate and misleading,” said Ullman. “The movie clearly implies that the Saudis gave \$1.4 billion to the Bushes and their friends. But most of it went to a Carlyle Group company before Bush even joined the firm. Bush had nothing to do with BDM.” (<http://msnbc.msn.com/id/5335853/>)

Undaunted, Moore moves on to tell us that “sooner or later this special relationship with a regime that Amnesty International condemns as a widespread human rights violator would come back to haunt the Bushes. [Footage of a public beheading.] Now, after 9/11, it was an embarrassment and they preferred that no one ask any questions.” Moore then asserts that Bush tried to stop or impede investigations of September 11th, implying perhaps that this had something to do with his connection to the Saudis. Moore says, “First, Bush tried to stop Congress from setting up its own 9/11 investigation,” and he shows a television clip of Bush saying, “It’s important for us to not reveal how we collect information; that’s what the enemy wants. And we’re fighting an enemy.” This clip is from a statement Bush made to a pool of reporters when touring the headquarters of the National Security Agency in June 2002, and is taken from these remarks the president made, which have nothing to do with impeding a congressional investigation:

And one of my jobs is to remind those who sacrifice on behalf of our nation that we appreciate it a lot. And I’d rather have them sacrificing on behalf of our nation than, you know, endless hours of testimony on congressional hill. The appropriate place to do that, of course, is the intelligence committees. And, again, I repeat, the reason why that’s important is because we have got to guard the methodology—methodologies of our country, of how—it’s important for us to not reveal how we collect information. That’s what the enemy wants, and we’re fighting an enemy.
(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020604-16.html>)

Moore then tells us that Bush tried to stop the independent 9/11 Commission from being formed and would not cooperate with it. We see a clip of commission chairman Thomas Kean saying “We haven’t gotten the materials we needed, and we certainly haven’t gotten them in a timely fashion. The deadlines we set have passed,” and a clip of Bush on NBC’s *Meet the Press* which makes it seem like he would not meet with the commission, as had been requested. In truth, though, Bush *did* meet with the 9/11 Commission (on April 29, 2004: http://www.9-11commission.gov/press/pr_2004-04-29.pdf) as did every other administration official the commission requested to see, and the clip of Kean is deeply misleading. It attempts to suggest that Chairman Kean was saying the White House was not cooperating, but here is what he (and Vice Chairman Lee Hamilton) actually said in the statement from which this clip is cut, from a press conference in July of 2003:

QUESTION: —I’m with CBS News. Could you talk about what kind of cooperation you’re getting from the various executive branch agencies in terms of the report; getting the access to the witnesses you want and getting the documents you’ve requested in a timely manner?

MR. KEAN: Yeah, we’ve—if you look at the report that we issued yesterday, we go down agency by agency by agency, all through the administration. And in some of those agencies, the cooperation is quite good, and we got a number of things that we needed. In other agencies, where in some cases we’ve made massive requests, we’ve haven’t gotten the materials we needed, and we certainly haven’t gotten them in a timely fashion; the deadlines we’ve set have passed. We’ve got our own deadline; by statute, we’ve got to report by next May. So we can’t brook that kind of thing. We’ve got to get the information we need to do our work. So while I think the White House is cooperating, I think they’re trying to do their best to help us in a number of ways, some agencies, led at the moment by the Department of Defense, is not cooperating to the extent we need that cooperation. Now, it’s better than it was, and it’s moving in the right direction. But the next two or three weeks are going to be vital. Talk to me in another two or three weeks.

MR. HAMILTON: Let me just observe that we are, number one, asking for an enormous amount of material. We measure material not by pages, but by boxes. And we are getting and asking for not a few

pages, but hundreds of thousands of pages. So the request to the executive branch departments and agencies is very, very large. It is understandable to me that they can't handle it quickly or overnight. I'm not apologizing for them, I'm just saying that we're making a very large request. Now, secondly, the requests that we are making are, in some cases, not in all, relate to very sensitive material. And it is understandable by both the chairman and myself that it takes a little while for those kinds of requests to work their way through the bureaucracy. This is a difficult task for us, and as the chairman has said, we must have that information. We must have it if we're going to do our job. We're going to get it. We're impatient. We think a lot of it has been slow in coming, but we understand the reasons. There is a bureaucratic inertia. These people have things to do other than to answer our requests. There are national security concerns. There are conditions that attach to our requests that we have to work out that are complicated to work it out so that it's mutually agreed upon. Under what kind of circumstances can we see the material, particularly when it's the most sensitive material that the government possesses? I think we're making good progress. We've got a long way to go. We certainly need the very strong support from the White House to help us, and I was most pleased with the statement I read in the paper this morning from the White House that the president remains very committed to cooperating with the commission and helping us get the material we need.

Moore has chopped the clip to make it appear as though Kean was complaining about a lack of cooperation from the White House, but when seen in context it is clear that Kean and Hamilton said *exactly the opposite*. And Kean said at the conclusion of the commission's work that "we were able to see every single document we requested and every single document in the files" (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5488345/>).

Moore then shows a woman who lost her husband on 9/11 saying she wants some resolution, and he tells us that families of the victims sued the government of Saudi Arabia. The Saudis hired the mammoth law firm that also employs former Secretary of State James Baker. Again, no accusation of any kind is made about any of this, but we are left to draw our own conclusion.

Speaking of the Saudis, Moore now launches on yet another disconnected line of argument. Standing with Craig Unger in front of the Saudi Arabian embassy in Washington, Moore asks Unger how much money the Saudis have invested in the United States. Unger replies: "Uh, I've heard figures inside of \$860 billion dollars." Moore certainly could have looked up the real figure, rather than rely on what someone else has "heard." Unger offers no source, and his figure is not correct. Saudi investment in the U.S. is generally estimated at around \$450 billion (http://www.saudi-american-forum.org/Newsletters/SAF_Essay_22.htm). Moore then asks him what portion of the U.S. economy the \$860 billion would be, and Unger replies: "Well, in terms of investments on Wall Street, American equities, it's roughly 6 or 7 percent of America." This appears to be simple confusion. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, total foreign investment in the United States in 2003 was about \$9.7 trillion. Unger's (inflated) figure for Saudi investment would therefore be about 5 percent of that, i.e. 5 percent of *foreign* investment, not by any means 6 or 7 percent of the American economy—far from it (<http://washingtontimes.com/upi-breaking/20040709-033853-6363r.htm>).

Moore and Unger are then approached by Secret Service officers, and Moore suggests that it is strange (indeed sinister) that the Secret Service should be guarding a foreign embassy even though they are "nowhere near the White House." This is likely simple ignorance, or a misunderstanding of what the Secret Service officer in question told him. (The officer seems to say, mistakenly, that the Secret Service does "not usually" protect foreign embassies.) As Washingtonians know, and as the Secret Service website and the relevant laws state very clearly,

the secret service is in fact in charge of protecting foreign embassies in Washington (http://www.secretservice.gov/opportunities_ud.shtml). Moore then says: “It turns out that Saudi Prince Bandar is perhaps the best-protected ambassador in the U.S. The U.S. State Department provides him with a six-man security detail. Considering how he and his family, and the Saudi elite own 7 percent of America, it’s probably not a bad idea.” Again, the 7 percent figure is not correct, and as for being the “perhaps the best protected ambassador,” anyone who has ever been near the Israeli embassy in Washington will know that this assertion is way off the mark.

Moore then informs us that the Bush Administration and Prince Bandar are in fact on very good terms, and the Bushes even call the ambassador “Bandar Bush,” and then that the Saudi ambassador met with the president a few days after 9/11. Moore does not mention how close Bandar also was with the Clinton Administration (http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?030324fa_fact2) and indeed with all others in his multi-decade tenure in Washington, and Moore also does not lay out any specific allegation here—only that the president dared to meet with the Saudi ambassador a few days after an attack on the United States in which Saudi citizens participated.

Moore then raises two questions: “Why would Bandar’s government block American investigators from talking to the relatives of the fifteen hijackers? Why would Saudi Arabia become reluctant to freeze the hijackers’ assets?” But in fact American investigators *did* interview the families of all the hijackers, including the Saudi ones (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, see notes to Chapter 7, beginning with note 57 on page 521), and the Saudis *have* in fact frozen the hijackers’ assets, and those of others the United States has designated as involved in terrorism (<http://www.saudi-us-relations.org/newsletter2004/saudi-relations-interest-03-29c.html>). In any case, what is Moore’s larger point? Should Bush have refused to ever speak to Saudis again? Might he not have used the opportunity to push the Saudis for cooperation? Moore speculates that Bush might have told Bandar not to worry since “he already had a plan in motion.” And with no substantive claim even made, let alone supported, this serves as Moore’s transition to his first mention of Iraq.

With this illogical transition, the movie next shows a clip of Richard Clarke being interviewed by ABC’s Charles Gibson, saying that Bush pressured him “in a very intimidating way” to find some 9/11 link to Iraq very soon after the attacks. The movie does not mention that for years before the attacks, the United States had documented links between Iraq and Al Qaeda—with overtures from each side toward the other, including an Iraqi offer to allow Osama bin Laden to resettle in Iraq and establish his organization there (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 66). In fact, in 1999 when the Clinton Administration considered attacking Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, Richard Clarke was the person who argued against it, suggesting that Bin Laden might get warning and that, “Armed with that knowledge, old wily Usama will likely boogie to Baghdad” (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 134). So the connection between Iraq and Bin Laden was no fiction of Bush’s imagination, as Clarke himself knew.

Moreover, once it became apparent that Iraq was not directly involved in the attacks, Bush no longer focused on an Iraq-based response. When the Bush national security team met on September 15, 2001 to discuss response plans, the discussion about Iraq was confined to the

morning session, after which “the president sent a message to the group [his advisors with him at Camp David] that he had heard enough debate over Iraq” (Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*, p. 85, <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0743204735>). After that, the focus was simply on Afghanistan. As the 9/11 Commission Report put it:

Iraq was not even on the table during the September 15 afternoon session, which dealt solely with Afghanistan. Rice said that when President Bush called her on Sunday, September 16, he said the focus would be on Afghanistan, although he still wanted plans for Iraq should the country take some action or the administration eventually determine that it had been involved in the 9/11 attacks. (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 335)

The report also states:

On September 20, President Bush met with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and the two leaders discussed the global conflict ahead. When Blair asked about Iraq, the President replied that Iraq was not the immediate problem. Some members of his administration, he commented, had expressed a different view, but he was the one responsible for making the decisions. (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 336)

And further:

The CENTCOM commander [General Tommy Franks] told us he renewed his appeal for further military planning to respond to Iraqi moves shortly after 9/11, both because he personally felt that Iraq and al Qaeda might be engaged in some form of collusion and because he worried that Saddam might take advantage of the attacks to move against his internal enemies in the northern or southern parts of Iraq, where the United States was flying regular missions to enforce Iraqi no-fly zones. Franks said that President Bush again turned down the request. (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 336)

The record makes clear that the Bush Administration did not respond to 9/11 by simply turning to Iraq, but rather by turning first to those responsible for the attacks and invading Afghanistan (despite strong opposition from the Saudis, which Moore of course ignores since it would ruin his plot) and then seeking ways to counteract the larger causes of the Islamist terror threat, including action in Iraq. Moore’s use of the Clarke video is not itself dishonest, but it is certainly so incomplete as to give a thoroughly distorted picture.

III. Afghanistan and the Pipeline

Moore then runs a kind of western spoof with the music from the movie *The Magnificent Seven* and the heads of Bush Administration officials and Tony Blair on top of the bodies of *Bonanza* characters, and he tells us that the U.S. (he does not mention the dozens of allied nations involved) invaded Afghanistan “just four weeks after 9/11,” implying that they acted too quickly. But then he again shows a clip of Richard Clarke, this time saying that the U.S. acted too *slowly* and with insufficient force, and took too long to reach the area where Bin Laden was thought to be hiding.

Wondering why the U.S. might have taken too long to reach the area where Bin Laden had been, Moore then asks, without making any particular allegation of course, “Or was the war in

Afghanistan really about something else? Perhaps the answer was in Houston, Texas. In 1997, while George W. Bush was Governor of Texas, a delegation of Taliban leaders from Afghanistan flew to Houston to meet with Unocal executives to discuss the building of a pipeline through Afghanistan bringing natural gas from the Caspian Sea. And who got a Caspian Sea drilling contract the same day Unocal signed the pipeline deal? A company headed by a man named Dick Cheney: Halliburton.” And so we have come to Halliburton, the favorite target of all left-wing conspiracy theorists. Note the flimsy support for this change of subject: U.S. troops didn’t reach Bin Laden’s distant hideaway quickly enough, which means the war in Afghanistan was really about a pipeline that was discussed with a company in Texas while Bush was governor (no suggestion that Bush had anything to do with the talks, and indeed he did not) and at the same time Halliburton got a contract to dig in the Caspian Sea. What do these disparate claims have to do with one another?

In any case, *these claims aren’t even true*. The notion that the invasion of Afghanistan had anything to do with the Unocal pipeline idea is belied by the simple fact that efforts to create such a pipeline ended in 1998 (<http://www.unocal.com/uclnews/98news/082198.htm>) and have not been resumed (<http://www.unocal.com/uclnews/98news/centgas.htm>). In 2002, after the American overthrow of the Taliban, officials in the new Afghan government agreed with Turkmenistan and Pakistan to discuss a different pipeline (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2608713.stm) but this agreement had nothing to do with Unocal, Halliburton, or any other American company—or with anything that was at all related to the earlier pipeline possibility that Moore is talking about. Moreover, what does Bush’s having been governor of Texas in 1997 have to do with the pipeline discussions? The state government was not involved in the pipeline project or in the visit of the Taliban representatives, both of which were overseen by the Clinton Administration, and not in any way that favored the Taliban (see for instance the report of the 9/11 Commission, <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 111). The pipeline theory had been debunked long before Moore’s film, and his reference to it here is absurd. As Seth Stevenson, writing in *Slate* in 2001, put it, after thoroughly disproving the pipeline claims:

What’s absurd about the pipeline theory is how thoroughly it discounts the obvious reason the United States set the bombers loose on Afghanistan: Terrorists headquartered in Afghanistan attacked America’s financial and military centers, killing 4,000 people, and then took credit for it. Nope—must be the pipeline. (<http://slate.msn.com/id/2059487>)

Moore also offers no explanation of what Halliburton’s digging contracts had to do with any of this. These contracts were in no way connected to the pipeline. And Moore’s claim that these purportedly sinister deals were signed “on the same day” is a weak attempt to find conspiracy in coincidence. On October 27, 1997, Halliburton, which had already been working in Turkmenistan for five years, received another relatively minor (\$30 million) drilling contract in the Caspian (http://www.halliburton.com/news/archive/1997/hesnews_102797.jsp). Coincidentally, on October 27, 1997, Unocal helped to form a consortium with five other companies that would *explore* the possibility of developing the pipeline that was ultimately never built (<http://www.unocal.com/uclnews/97news/102797a.htm>); that consortium was formed at the behest of the government of Turkmenistan, it did not involve the Taliban, and it actually was begun before the supposedly suspicious Taliban-Unocal meeting in Texas. Indeed, what any these things have to do with one another—or what any of this pipeline story, which ended in

1998, has to do with the American invasion of Afghanistan in 2001—remains totally unexplained.

But Moore is not finished with the pipeline. “And who else stood to benefit from the pipeline?” he asks, “Bush’s number one campaign contributor, Kenneth Lay and the good people of Enron.” To repeat, all talk of a pipeline ended in 1998, and Moore has not yet offered any reason to believe that the Clinton Administration’s (possibly well-intentioned but ultimately unsuccessful) notion of a pipeline ever had anything to do with George W. Bush. Also, Enron and Kenneth Lay were not Bush’s top contributors, they ranked 12th in the 2000 campaign, (<http://www.opensecrets.org/2000elect/contrib/P00003335.htm>) and contributed to Democrats as well as Republicans (<http://www.usatoday.com/money/covers/2002-01-28-enron-states.htm>). And finally, it is not actually true that Enron stood to gain by this deal, since Enron was not one of the companies in the consortium trying to develop the pipeline (again, see the Unocal press release: <http://www.unocal.com/uclnews/97news/102797a.htm>). Enron was involved with power plants and pipelines in *India* which—if hundreds of miles of never-built additional pipelines were laid—could conceivably have been connected to the never-built pipeline that crossed Afghanistan. But none of this seems to have anything to do with America’s attack against Afghanistan. Moore is simply throwing everything at the wall to see if anything sticks. Upon examination, nothing does.

Almost as an aside, Moore then adds, “Only the British press covered this trip,” and shows a screen image of a BBC report about the Taliban visiting Texas (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/west_asia/36735.stm). It isn’t clear what Moore is trying to imply with this statement, but once again, his basic fact is wrong: a LexisNexis search shows that other press outlets—including two major international news wire services, the AP and the AFP—covered the Taliban-in-Texas story.

Without bothering to make any logical connections with the pipeline deal abandoned three years earlier, Moore then continues, “Then in 2001, just five-and-a-half months before 9/11, the Bush Administration welcomed a special Taliban envoy to tour the United States to help improve the image of the Taliban government.” Moore wonders, “Why on Earth did the Bush Administration allow a Taliban leader to visit the United States, knowing that the Taliban were harboring the man who bombed the *USS Cole* and our African embassies?” But as the 9/11 Commission Report demonstrates, these contacts with the Taliban were part of an effort by the United States to aggressively push the Taliban to turn over Osama bin Laden, which went on at the same time as planning to remove the Taliban from power if they did not cooperate—planning, again, which occurred *before* and not just after the attacks (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 205). And in any case, even by Moore’s most outlandish theory, what would this have had to do with a pipeline deal that fell through in 1998?

To hint slyly at an answer, Moore tells us that after overthrowing the Taliban in Afghanistan, “we installed its new president, Hamid Karzai. Who was Hamid Karzai? He was a former advisor to Unocal. Bush also appointed as his envoy to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad who was also a former Unocal advisor.” Here we have both deception and distortion. Hamid Karzai was *never* a consultant to Unocal, and Zalmay Khalilzad could be considered one only indirectly (<http://emperors-clothes.com/interviews/lane.htm>). Moreover, it is absurd to describe either of

these men by their connection (even if it was true) to some energy company. Karzai was a leading figure in the Afghan resistance against the Soviets and was the foreign minister of the Afghan government-in-exile and later deputy foreign minister of the government of Afghanistan before the Taliban takeover. After the takeover, he worked in Afghanistan and from Pakistan to loosen the grip of the Taliban and free the Afghan people. He was named to lead the country because he was a very prominent figure in the fight to free it (http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org/main/bios/karzai_bio.cfm). Meanwhile Zalmay Khalizad, who was named U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, had been in charge of the Afghan desk at the National Security Council, Special Assistant to the President, and Senior Director for Islamic Outreach and Southwest Asia Initiatives at the National Security Council—and before that, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Southwest Asia, Near East, and North African Affairs at the National Security Council. He had also headed the Defense Department task force of the Bush-Cheney transition in 2000. He had also founded RAND's Center for Middle Eastern Studies, and was a professor of political science at Columbia University (<http://usembassy.state.gov/afghanistan/www/bio/zal.html>). These impressive qualifications put the lie to the notion that either man was chosen for some connection to an energy company.

But having told us all he thinks we need to know about these two men, Moore concludes: “I guess you can probably see where this is leading. Faster than you can say ‘Black Gold, Texas Tea,’ Afghanistan signed an agreement with her neighboring countries to build a pipeline through Afghanistan carrying natural gas from the Caspian Sea.” But again, this agreement has nothing to do with the pipeline project Moore had mentioned earlier, has nothing to do with Unocal, has nothing to do with Halliburton, has nothing to do with Enron, and has nothing to do with George W. Bush (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2608713.stm). Moore offers no backing whatsoever to the notion that the war in Afghanistan was somehow about an oil pipe.

Having finished talking about pipelines, Moore then says, “Oh, and the Taliban? Uh, they mostly got away. As did Osama bin Laden and most of al Qaeda.” This is nonsense. The Taliban were overthrown and then their leadership and foot soldiers were killed, captured, or dispersed into the countryside. It would obviously have been better to kill or capture those that were dispersed (including the top leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar) but the notion that these people simply “got away” ignores the fact that they have been deposed from power, their regime dismantled, and a free government burgeoning toward democratic elections put in its place. (Some of the accomplishments of the coalition in Afghanistan are listed here: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/afghanistan/>). As for “most of Al Qaeda” getting away, over two thirds of the organization's leadership has been captured or killed since the 9/11 attacks (http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2004/07/24/cia_official_says_agents_h_ave_infiltrated_al_qaeda/).

Moore then implicitly criticizes the Bush Administration for not yet capturing Osama bin Laden, showing a video clip of Bush saying “Terror is bigger than one person. And he's just—he's—he's a—he's a person who's now been marginalized, so, I—I don't know where he is, nor—and I just don't spend that much time on it, Kelly, to be honest with ya.” This is a clever bit of editing, designed to chop Bush's statement to pieces to make it seem senseless. The clip is from a presidential news conference on March 13, 2002, and the exchange which Moore cut up was this (with the sentences Moore included marked in italics):

Kelly Wallace, CNN: Mr. President, in your speeches now you rarely talk or mention Osama bin Laden. Why is that? Also, can you tell the American people if you have any more information, if you know if he is dead or alive? Final part—deep in your heart, don't you truly believe that until you find out if he is dead or alive, you won't really eliminate the threat of—.

President George W. Bush: Deep in my heart I know the man is on the run, if he's alive at all. Who knows if he's hiding in some cave or not; we haven't heard from him in a long time. And the idea of focusing on one person is—really indicates to me people don't understand the scope of the mission. *Terror is bigger than one person. And he's just—he's a person who's now been marginalized.* His network, his host government has been destroyed. He's the ultimate parasite who found weakness, exploited it, and met his match. He is—as I mentioned in my speech, I do mention the fact that this is a fellow who is willing to commit youngsters to their death and he, himself, tries to hide—if, in fact, he's hiding at all. *So I don't know where he is. You know, I just don't spend that much time on him, Kelly, to be honest with you.* I'm more worried about making sure that our soldiers are well-supplied; that the strategy is clear; that the coalition is strong; that when we find enemy bunched up like we did in Shahikot Mountains, that the military has all the support it needs to go in and do the job, which they did. And there will be other battles in Afghanistan. There's going to be other struggles like Shahikot, and I'm just as confident about the outcome of those future battles as I was about Shahikot, where our soldiers are performing brilliantly. We're tough, we're strong, they're well-equipped. We have a good strategy. We are showing the world we know how to fight a guerrilla war with conventional means.

Kelly Wallace: But don't you believe that the threat that bin Laden posed won't truly be eliminated until he is found either dead or alive?

President Bush: Well, as I say, we haven't heard much from him. And I wouldn't necessarily say he's at the center of any command structure. And, again, I don't know where he is. I—I'll repeat what I said. I truly am not that concerned about him. I know he is on the run. I was concerned about him, when he had taken over a country. I was concerned about the fact that he was basically running Afghanistan and calling the shots for the Taliban. But once we set out the policy and started executing the plan, he became—we shoved him out more and more on the margins. He has no place to train his al Qaeda killers anymore. And if we—excuse me for a minute—and if we find a training camp, we'll take care of it. Either we will or our friends will. That's one of the things—part of the new phase that's becoming apparent to the American people is that we're working closely with other governments to deny sanctuary, or training, or a place to hide, or a place to raise money. And we've got more work to do. See, that's the thing the American people have got to understand, that we've only been at this six months. This is going to be a long struggle. I keep saying that; I don't know whether you all believe me or not. But time will show you that it's going to take a long time to achieve this objective. And I can assure you, I am not going to blink. And I'm not going to get tired. Because I know what is at stake. And history has called us to action, and I am going to seize this moment for the good of the world, for peace in the world and for freedom.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020313-8.html>

It is certainly not too much to say that Moore, by his editing, has stretched the truth beyond all recognition.

But Moore is trying to imply that Bush did not care about Osama bin Laden. “What kind of president *was* he?” Moore asks sarcastically, and then shows Bush saying “I'm a war president. I make decisions here in the Oval Office, in foreign policy matters with war on my mind.” The clip is from a *Meet the Press* interview with Bush in February of 2004, and the segment quoted was one in which Bush said: “I'm a war president. I make decisions here in the Oval Office in foreign-policy matters with war on my mind. Again, I wish it wasn't true, but it is true. And the American people need to know they got a president who sees the world the way it is. And I see dangers that exist, and it's important for us to deal with them.” The point for Moore, though, is

that Bush just wants to make war. And he tells us, “With the war in Afghanistan over and Bin Laden forgotten, the war president had a new target—the American people.” Never mind that the operation in Afghanistan is *not* over, and that Bin Laden, to be sure, has *not* been forgotten. War on the American people? This is what passes for Moore’s segue to a discussion of terror alerts at home and the USA PATRIOT Act.

IV. Terrorism and the Patriot Act

Moore shows a few clips of television footage talking about terror attack warnings, including a warning about pen guns which, although Moore does not tell us this, followed the discovery of a number of such guns in the hands of Islamist extremists in different parts of the world (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,113259,00.html>); model planes packed with explosives (<http://www.securitymanagement.com/library/001324.html>); and other genuine FBI warnings to the public. He then implies that this is all a mind-game the Bush Administration plays on the public, and has Rep. Jim McDermott back him up. “Fear does work, yes. You could make people do anything if they’re afraid,” McDermott says. Moore identifies McDermott as a “Psychiatrist and Member of Congress”—but does not tell us that McDermott (an ultra-liberal Democrat from Seattle) was one of the few members of Congress openly supportive of Saddam Hussein’s regime before the war (he even said before the war that he would believe Saddam Hussein over George W. Bush: <http://www.townhall.com/columnists/michaelbarone/mb20040705.shtml>), that McDermott argued that the capture of Saddam Hussein had been staged (<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20031216-113956-7240r.htm>), and that records discovered in Baghdad after the war showed that McDermott had even received donations to his legal defense fund from money that originated in Iraq’s corruption of the UN oil-for-food program during Saddam’s reign (http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/localnews/2001905911_mcdermott17m.html). Moreover, neither Moore nor McDermott offers any evidence that the warnings and threats they refer to were not real. “They played us like an organ,” McDermott says, “They raised the le—, the orange and up to red and then they dropped it back to orange. I mean, they, they give these mixed messages which were crazy-making.” Actually, the threat alert level has never been raised to red. But McDermott continues trying to argue that by constantly sending mixed messages, the Administration intentionally sought to terrify the public.

To support this point, Moore shows clips of administration officials giving warnings about dangers, and intersperses them with clips from a speech in which Bush says things like “fly and enjoy America’s great destination spots,” and “take your families and enjoy life” and “get down to Disney World in Florida.” These statements are from remarks Bush made at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport to airline industry employees on September 27, 2001. He was not offering advice, but describing a *goal* of the war on terror:

And one of the great goals of this nation’s war is to restore public confidence in the airline industry. It’s to tell the traveling public: Get on board. Do your business around the country. Fly and enjoy America’s great destination spots. Get down to Disney World in Florida. Take your families and enjoy life, the way we want it to be enjoyed. And we’ve got a role, the government’s got a role. Not only do you have a role to play, which you’re playing in such fine fashion, but the government has a role to play, as well.

We've got a significant responsibility to deal with this emergency in a strong and bold way. And we are doing so. (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010927-1.html>)

In any case, is Moore suggesting that the appropriate response to the dangers of terrorism to bring life to a halt, and stop all travel?

But Moore and McDermott insist that the contradictions—surely contradictions that define the nation's life just now—are part of a government conspiracy to ... well, to whatever. McDermott says, "It's like training a dog. You tell him to sit down or you tell him to roll over at the same time, the dog doesn't know what to do. Well the American people are being treated like that. It was really very, very skillfully and, and ugly in what they did." What may be the *aim* of these "ugly" efforts—to what end this "skill" is employed—is never stated.

Moore then shows a clip of Bush on a golf course, taking a break to answer reporters' questions. Bush says, "We must stop the terror. I call upon all nations to do everything they can to stop these terrorist killers. Thank you. Now watch this drive." And then he swings the golf club. Moore wants to leave us with the impression that Bush is talking about terrorist threats to the United States, and that making such a statement and following it with a golf swing is a profound show of unseriousness. Actually, Bush's statement, made on August 5, 2002, was about a suicide bombing in Israel (<http://usembassy-australia.state.gov/hyper/2002/0805/epf102.htm>), and he made the statement between golf swings because he was *asked* about it on the golf course. (Indeed, when President Clinton learned of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, he played some golf as well, <http://www.jewishsiliconvalley.org/clinton.html>.) Why this should mean that Bush was not serious is not apparent.

McDermott then concludes his paranoid rant, saying, "They will continue, in my view, as long as this administration is in charge, of every once in a while steeling everybody to be afraid, just in case you forgot. It's not gonna go down to green or blue. It's never gonna get there. There clearly is no way that anyone can live constantly on edge like that." He again offers no proof that terror alerts have not been based on facts.

Next, Moore offers a few clips showing various commercial security products—a "safe room," a skyscraper escape parachute, and the like. He shows news clips of worried Michiganders, and residents of a small town in Virginia that had been mistaken by the FBI for a different town against which a terrorist threat had been perceived. This is all apparently intended to paint the threat of terrorism as silly and comical, and the attempts to predict and prepare for terrorist attacks as a kind of deception. Why we should think the threat is comical is not made clear.

Moore seems wholly oblivious to the hypocrisy of criticizing the Bush Administration for being too lax on terrorism before the 9/11 attacks, and then criticizing the administration for making too much of the threat afterwards. He introduces us to Attorney General John Ashcroft, whom we see singing a patriotic song he has written. Moore tells us that, "in 2000, he was running for reelection as Senator from Missouri against a man who died the month before the election. The voters preferred the dead guy. So George W. Bush made him his attorney general." In fact, "the dead guy" was late Missouri governor Mel Carnahan, and after his death, the new governor announced he would appoint Carnahan's wife, Jean, to take the seat if Carnahan won the election—so while a dead man was technically on the ballot, the voters understood that a

Carnahan victory would put the widow in office. The death naturally caused Ashcroft to strictly curtail his campaigning, and in the end Carnahan's widow won the race by just under one percent—after a state court allowed polling stations in heavily Democratic St. Louis to remain open an hour beyond the legally allotted time (<http://www.mdn.org/2000/STORIES/SENSWRAP.HTM>). (Despite those irregularities, Ashcroft gracefully declined to contest the election.) Jean Carnahan was appointed in her husband's place and served an abbreviated two-year term before being defeated by Republican James Talent in 2002.

More importantly, Moore tells us that “during the summer before 9/11, Ashcroft told acting FBI director Thomas Pickard that he didn't want to hear anything more about terrorist threats.” We then see a brief clip from the 9/11 Commission hearings, in which commission member Richard Ben-Veniste and former Acting Director of the FBI Thomas Pickard have the following exchange:

RICHARD BEN-VENISTE: Mr. Watson had come to you and said that the CIA was very concerned that there would be an attack. You said that you told the attorney general this fact repeatedly in these meetings. Is that correct?

THOMAS PICKARD: Yes, I told him on at least two occasions.

RICHARD BEN-VENISTE: And you told the staff, according to this statement, that Mr. Ashcroft told you that he did not want to hear about this any more. Is that correct?

THOMAS PICKARD: That is correct.

(http://www.9-11commission.gov/archive/hearing10/9-11Commission_Hearing_2004-04-13.htm)

What Moore does not tell us is that later at the same 9/11 Commission hearing (April 13, 2004), commission member James R. Thompson and John Ashcroft had this exchange:

MR. THOMPSON: Acting Director Pickard testified this afternoon that he briefed you twice on al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, and when he sought to do so again, you told him you didn't need to hear from him again. Can you comment on that, please?

ATTY GEN. ASHCROFT: First of all, Acting Director Pickard and I had more than two meetings. We had regular meetings. Secondly, I did never speak to him saying that I did not want to hear about terrorism. I care greatly about the safety and security of the American people and was very interested in terrorism, and specifically interrogated him about threats to the American people, and domestic threats in particular. One of the first items which came to my attention, which I mentioned in my opening remarks, was the question of whether we wanted to capture or find and kill bin Laden. I carried that immediately to the national security adviser and expressed myself in that matter. Together with the Vice President of the United States, we got a briefing at FBI headquarters regarding terrorism, and I asked the question, “Why can't we arrest these people?” because I believe an aggressive arrest and prosecution model is the way to disrupt terrorism. These are things about which I care deeply. When the Senate Appropriations Committee met on May the 9th in the summer of 2001, I told the committee that my number-one priority was the attack against terror; that we would protect Americans from terror; and I wrote later to them a confirming letter saying that we had no higher priority. These are the kinds of things that I did in order to communicate very clearly my interest in making sure that we would be prepared against terrors. In addition, when we went for the largest increase in counterterrorism budgeting before 9/11, in the last five years, that signaled a priority in that respect. And when we, for the next year, had a 13-percent higher counterterrorism budget than was provided in the last year of the

Clinton Administration, it was also a signal that counterterrorism was a matter of great concern to us and that we would treat it seriously.

(http://www.9-11commission.gov/archive/hearing10/9-11Commission_Hearing_2004-04-13.htm)

In its final report, the 9/11 Commission said it could not decisively settle this dispute about what was said, but noted that no one else present at the meetings between Pickard and Ashcroft had any recollection of Ashcroft ever telling Pickard he did not want to hear any more about terrorism (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 536, note 52). The report also notes that in the months before 9/11, Pickard met with Ashcroft several times to present terrorism information (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 265). But Moore ignores this, claiming instead that “Ashcroft’s Justice Department turned a blind eye and a deaf ear” to terrorism information.

All this turns out to be an extended introduction to a section of the film that purports to discuss the Patriot Act. After telling us Ashcroft didn’t care about terrorism before the September 11th attacks, Moore says: “But after 9/11, John Ashcroft had some brilliant ideas for how to protect America,” and we then see what seems to be a local television news report about the Patriot Act. The reporter says, “The USA PATRIOT Act, adopted by Congress and signed by Bush six weeks after the attacks, has changed the way the government does business. The USA PATRIOT Act allows for searches of medical and financial records, computer and telephone conversations, and even for the books you take out of the library.”

What the report does not mention, and Moore doesn’t choose to add, is that these powers can only be used with a court order (read the law here: http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=107_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ056.107.pdf). Nor does Moore mention that the government *already had* these powers, and commonly used them in cases related to organized crime and drugs—and the Patriot Act just explicitly permits these powers in terrorism cases. The act itself says nothing specifically about library records, which for some reason have become the focus of criticism of the law. It simply extended the government’s longstanding power to examine public records of individual transactions (which could, in principle, include public library records) if such an examination is deemed by a judge to be relevant and important to a terrorism investigation.

Moreover, a report to Congress on September 13, 2004 from the Justice Department’s Inspector General found *no Patriot Act abuses* (<http://www.justice.gov/oig/special/0409/index.htm>). And, at least as recently as September of 2003, the Justice Department reported that the power to examine public records (including possibly library records) has not even been used (<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/08/19/national/main569135.shtml>). Congressional testimony from the Deputy Attorney General on September 22, 2004 describes several instances when the powers provided by the Patriot Act have proven useful to investigators (http://judiciary.senate.gov/testimony.cfm?id=1312&wit_id=3279).

Moore then proceeds to tell the story of a local activist group called Peace Fresno (<http://www.peacefresno.org/>), about which he says, “Unlike the rest of us, they’ve received an early lesson in what the Patriot Act is all about.” He tells us that the group had been infiltrated and monitored by a member of the Fresno County Sheriff’s Department in 2003. Such a step certainly seems excessive and unwarranted (although Moore does not quite give us an accurate

impression of this very-active protest group, which among other things has suggested that the Bush Administration staged the September 11th attacks: http://www.indybay.org/uploads/550_the_march_begins.jpg) but Moore never explains how any of this is related to the Patriot Act. And indeed, it has *nothing to do with the Patriot Act*. The infiltration he describes was clearly undertaken by a local sheriff's department, not any arm of the federal government, and the Patriot Act does not permit the federal government to engage in any similar activity. As the Justice Department points out (http://www.lifeandliberty.gov/subs/u_myths.htm), the language of the act limits the definition of "domestic terrorism" in ways that would never permit a group that does not violate the law and endanger others to be considered a terrorist or terrorism-related group. The language of the act is clear on this point (http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=107_cong_public_laws&docid=f:pub1056.107.pdf) and Moore makes no effort whatsoever to provide any connection between the Peace Fresno story and the Patriot Act.

Moore then moves on to another story which also has no link to the Patriot Act. He tells us about Barry Reingold, who told some people at his gym that he thought George W. Bush was worse than Osama bin Laden. The people who heard him apparently reported him as a suspicious person to the FBI, and FBI agents then came to his home to interview him. Moore offers no explanation of what this might have to do with the Patriot Act, and no sense of what the FBI *should* do when people report someone as suspicious, even if the report seems weak and misguided. There is no indication that Reingold's rights were in any way violated, and although Moore does not make it clear, when Reingold told the FBI agents he did not wish to speak to them, they left and took no further action (<http://www.progressive.org/webex/wxmc1219a01.html>).

But as ever, Moore just moves right on. He next shows us an interview with Rep. Porter Goss, who defends the Patriot Act, saying it offers full transparency and that there's nothing in the act that he is ashamed of in any way. Goss then says "I have a 1-800 number. Call me. I'm the guy you call if there's a violation or an abuse. If you've got a poster child on this, I want to see it. That's what I do. I'm hired by the people of the United States to provide oversight, I provide oversight," but as he speaks about the 800 number, Moore flashes text on the screen saying "he's lying" and claiming Goss does not actually have an 800 number, giving his normal office number. But Goss (who was then a Member of Congress, and is now Director of Central Intelligence) *actually did have an 800 number*: Anyone wishing to call his office, or any other congressional office, could reach the congressional switchboard at 800-839-5276. What's more, the committee Goss chaired—the intelligence committee—*also* has a toll-free number: 877-858-9040 (<http://intelligence.house.gov/ContactUS.aspx>). So anyone wishing to make a toll-free phone call to report a Patriot Act abuse could easily do so, but none of the supposed abuses reported so far has panned out (<http://www.justice.gov/oig/special/0409/index.htm>).

We then return to Rep. Jim McDermott, who says, "Trent Lott said, the day the bill was introduced, 'Maybe now we can do things we've wanted to do for the last ten years.'" It would certainly have been nice if the government had had a greater capacity to prevent terrorism over the past ten years, and this statement from McDermott offers no argument against any element of the Patriot Act, but the suggestion is that September 11th offered an excuse for the administration (and apparently for 98 Senators and 357 members of the House:

http://www.lifeandliberty.gov/subs/p_congress.htm) to put into effect some despotic plan they had long held in reserve.

To support his point, Moore then shows a clip of the President joking: “a dictatorship would be a heck of lot easier, there’s no question about it.” The clip is from July 26, 2001, from this exchange between a reporter and the President:

Reporter: The Alamo up on the wall is not an indication of how you feel in the White House right now, is it?

President Bush: I feel great. Listen, I think we’ve had one of the most constructive first six months of any presidency. And we’re making great progress on a lot of issues. No, I’ve always—a dictatorship would be a heck of a lot easier, there’s no question about it. But dealing with Congress is a matter of give and take. The President doesn’t get everything he wants, the Congress doesn’t get everything they want. But we’re finding good common ground.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/07/20010726-3.html>)

We then return to McDermott, who says, “I mean—they, they, they had all this on the shelf somewhere. Ideas of things they would like to do. And they got 9/11 and they said, ‘It’s our chance, go for it!’” Again, he offers no argument as to why having ideas about how to improve counterterrorism should be a bad thing, and no specific argument about the Patriot Act.

Then we are shown Rep. John Conyers, a Michigan Democrat, who says: “There was an immediate assumption, on the part of the administration, that there had to be a surrender of certain of our rights.” Neither Conyers nor Moore offers any explanation of what rights they believe have been surrendered, and indeed no reading of the Patriot Act would suggest any either (http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=107_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ056.107.pdf).

Next we see Rep. Tammy Baldwin, a Wisconsin Democrat, who *does* offer a specific criticism of the Patriot Act, saying, “There are several definitions in the bill that are quite troubling. First of all, the definition of ‘terrorist’ and, and, it’s so expansive that it could include people um, who,” at which point Moore interjects, “like me” and Baldwin laughs. The Patriot Act (in Section 802, page 376, http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=107_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ056.107.pdf) explicitly defines a terrorist as a person involved in acts which are dangerous to human life, that violate federal or state criminal law, and that appear intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, influence government policy by intimidation or coercion, or affect government conduct by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping. If Moore believes this description applies to him, so be it—but it is hard to see how Baldwin takes it to be too broad.

We then return to McDermott who asserts that “no one” in Congress read the Patriot Act before voting on it. He is then confirmed by Rep. Conyers, who adds that “We don’t read most of the bills” passed in Congress. So Moore determines to read the act to the Members of Congress, and we then see him riding around Capitol Hill in an ice cream truck, apparently reading the act aloud. Oddly, Moore does not actually let us hear him read any of the sections of the act that he takes to be so egregious—likely because actually hearing or reading the act would not confirm

any of what he has told us about it (http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=107_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ056.107.pdf).

But Moore moves on. He shows us a clip of President Bush at a restaurant, apparently taking orders and talking about eating ribs. It is not clear what purpose this clip serves. In what passes for a transition, Moore then says: “We all know you can’t secure the homeland on an empty stomach. And in order to remain secure, everyone needs to sacrifice ... especially little Patrick Hambleton.”

Moore then tells us the story of Patrick and his mother Susan, who was made to drink two ounces of her own bottled breast milk at an airport, to prove that she was not carrying a dangerous substance. This is an amusing story about an unfortunate and ridiculous excess in airport security—one that a few nursing mothers went through in 2002—but again, what does it have to do with the Patriot Act? And what, for that matter, is its larger implication in general?

Moore wants to make the point that the security steps taken after September 11th are just diversions, and not really about our security. For proof he argues that certain obvious security steps, like keeping matches and lighters off of planes, were not taken. This has some truth to it. The Transportation Security Administration does allow certain kinds of matches and lighters to be taken on airplanes, while others are banned (http://www.tsa.dot.gov/public/interapp/editorial/editorial_multi_image_with_table_0099.xml) which does seem a very odd policy. In late September 2004, a Senate Committee voted to ban these items, though the bill has, at the time of this writing, not yet made it to the Senate floor (<http://dorgan.senate.gov/newsroom/record.cfm?id=226556>).

Moore then says, “Okay, let me see if I got this straight. Old guys in the gym—bad. Peace groups in Fresno—bad. Breast milk—really bad. But matches and lighters on a plane—hey, no problem.” But of course, this list of items he has chosen to highlight does not constitute a list of any official government policies. There are no rules that say breast milk is not allowed on planes, and there is nothing in present anti-terror laws that had anything to do with the questioning of “old guys in the gym” or peace groups in Fresno. He has taken his own list of unconnected examples and drawn a conclusion from it. And what is his conclusion? He says, “Was this really about our safety? Or was something else going on?” Like what? Moore offers no specific answer, of course.

Instead, he moves on to another unrelated example. Showing us a lovely coastal scene, Moore says, “This is where the Pacific coastline meets the shores of Oregon. Over one hundred miles of beautiful, open coastline on our border. And, thanks to the budget cutbacks, the total number of state police protecting it? One. Part-time.” What budget cutbacks? Certainly not any federal budget cutbacks. As Moore has shown, the federal government now devotes a great deal of energy and resources to anti-terror activities. Rather than explain, Moore shows us interviews with two Oregon state troopers, who say that their patrol office has very few officers, and there are times when no one is on patrol in their area. To examine these assertions, one blogger interviewed Lt. Glenn Chastain of the Oregon State Troopers, and asked him about Moore’s claims (<http://recoveringcynic.blogspot.com/2004/07/my-interview-with-lt-chastain.html>). Chastain notes that the relatively small number of officers in that area of Oregon has to do not

with any *federal* funding, but with cutbacks in *state* funds over the past 30 years. He also points out that state troopers in Oregon are not responsible for protection of the coast against terrorism, but for traffic and safety issues—while the coast is protected by the United States Coast Guard.

In the end, it is unclear what point Moore thinks he can make by showing these state troopers. Moore shows one trooper saying the federal government has offered them no guidance on how to deal with terrorist threats, but in the interview noted above, Lt. Chastain says that the Department of Homeland Security actually *has* done so (<http://recoveringcynic.blogspot.com/2004/07/my-interview-with-lt-chastain.html>). But Moore just goes on, saying, “Of course, the Bush Administration didn’t hand out a manual on how to deal with the terrorist threat because the terrorist threat wasn’t what this was all about. They just wanted us to be fearful enough so that we’d get behind what their real plan was.”

And what was the real plan? This is Moore’s transition to Iraq. Apparently, the lack of funding from the Oregon state government for Oregon state troopers is supposed to prove that terrorism is not a real threat, and that Iraq is the only reason the Bush Administration has pushed for any homeland security legislation.

V. The War in Iraq

After showing us footage of armaments cut together with footage of President Bush preparing for a speech, Moore makes one of the most outrageous and despicable moves of the entire film—second only to his decision not to show the attacks of September 11th. For his depiction of Iraq under the rule of Saddam Hussein, Moore does not show poison gas attacks against civilians, aggression against neighbors, atrocious human rights violations on a scale barely conceivable (see, for instance, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/tales.html>, and http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2003-04-13-saddam-secrets-usat_x.htm), he does not show Saddam’s palaces, or his son’s perverted torture chambers. He makes no mention of political oppression, or of a regime that funded suicide bombers and offered shelter to terrorists who had murdered Americans, or even just of Saddam Hussein’s violation of his international agreements or the sanctions regimes. Instead, amazingly, Moore shows us happy scenes of children at play, families celebrating weddings, busy restaurants—as if to say there was nothing wrong with Iraq until we, for no apparent reason, started bombing it. As we watch a child flying a kite, we hear President Bush say, “At this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger. On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein’s ability to wage war.” We then see rockets launching, and explosions over Baghdad, as if the children flying kites and playing on a slide were the targets of the bombs rather than (as is actually the case in the footage he shows) Saddam Hussein’s defense ministry.

In his own voice, Moore describes the beginning of the Iraq war this way: “On March 19, 2003, George W. Bush and the United States military invaded the sovereign nation of Iraq. A nation that had never attacked the United States. A nation that had never threatened to attack the United States. A nation that had never murdered a single American citizen.” Absurd. He does not

mention that Iraq had been in violation of its agreements from the conclusion of the 1991 Gulf War. He does not mention that Iraq had been in a state of fairly open conflict with the United States for over a decade, including on numerous occasions attacking American aircraft patrolling the UN-imposed “no fly zones” (to which Saddam Hussein expressly agreed in the 1991 surrender). He does not mention that Iraq undertook to assassinate former President George H.W. Bush and, on a separate occasion, the American ambassador to the Philippines. He does not mention the violation of more than a dozen UN resolutions requiring disarmament and reporting of weapons programs. He does not mention that Iraq paid the families of suicide bombers who killed Israelis and on several occasions killed Americans in Israel (<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/04/03/world/main505316.shtml>). He does not mention that Iraq sheltered Abdul Rahman Yasin, a leader of the group that bombed the World Trade Center in 1993 (http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2003-09-17-iraq-wtc_x.htm). He does not mention that Iraq sheltered the ruthless Palestinian terrorist Abu Abbas (<http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/04/15/sprj.irq.abbas.arrested/>) and the notorious Palestinian terrorist Abu Nidal (<http://www.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/08/19/mideast.nidal/>).

And of course Moore does not mention, as the 9/11 Commission made clear, that Iraq also made an offer of shelter to Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda organization (<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 66).

Saddam’s regime also *routinely* threatened the United States and called for attacks against it (see, for instance, <http://www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd20/20iraq.htm>).

Moreover, the description of the Iraqi regime as an innocent victim of American aggression belies mountains of evidence of that regime’s abuses of human rights; its scorn for international norms and laws; its belligerence toward its neighbors; and its decades of mass torture and despotism. Moore offers no description or rebuttal of the actual American case for the war in any of its elements, he simply asserts there was no reason at all to engage in it.

Having asserted the war had no reason except Bush’s villainy, Moore then proceeds to show scenes of civilian casualties in the war. Having refrained from showing us any of the thousands of civilians killed *intentionally* on September 11th, he shows footage of some of those innocent Iraqi civilians killed *inadvertently* in the invasion of Iraq, when even the herculean efforts taken to use only precision bombing based upon reliable intelligence proved imperfect. Moore does not describe those efforts, of course. He also offers no evidence that the scenes we are witnessing are the result of American actions, and not those of errant Iraqi anti-aircraft artillery (<http://www.opinionjournal.com/la/?id=110005402>). It seems reasonably likely that the scenes are indeed the result of American actions, and there is no question that civilian casualties occurred as the result of the American invasion. But Moore distorts the truth by not balancing these pictures against the lengths to which the U.S. went to avoid civilian casualties (<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/23/weekinreview/23JDAO.html?ex=1091678400&en=d3f4215ca4abe605&ei=5070>), or the good done by the American invasion (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/100days/100days.pdf>). There is no denying the reality of what is being depicted, but it is clear that Moore has put these scenes in an intentionally distorted and inaccurate context.

Moore then seeks to depict American soldiers in Iraq as heartless animals, psyching themselves up to kill by listening to violent music. He shows a soldier saying, "It's the ultimate rush cuz you're going into the fight to begin with, and then you got a good song playing in the background and uh, that gets you real fired up. Ready to do the job." And he has soldiers explain that they can pipe music through the tank's internal communications. By putting this scene immediately before and after scenes of civilian casualties in Iraq, Moore makes it look like the Americans are savaging the innocent to the tune of classic rock. But the footage of these soldiers, which was taken from an Australian documentary called "Soundtrack to War" (<http://www.soundtracktowar.com/>), is taken out of context. The maker of that film, Australian documentary artist George Gittoes, told an Australian television network, "I was concerned of course for my soldiers because their interviews were taken out of context," and that Moore "got access to my stuff and assumed that I would be happy for it to be in 9/11. I would actually have been quite happy for it not to be in 9/11" (<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/07/27/1090693936198.html?oneclick=true>).

Moore shows several other soldiers talking about the heat of battle, and the costs in civilian lives, without giving any further context, without telling us what the soldiers were asked, and without offering any better understanding of the reasons and circumstances of the Iraq war. Then, with footage of an injured child, he plays a clip of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld saying, "The targeting capabilities and the care that goes into targeting is as impressive as anything anyone could see. The care that goes into it, the humanity that goes into it." Rumsfeld is correct (<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/23/weekinreview/23JDAO.html?ex=1091678400&en=d3f4215ca4abe605&ei=5070>), but Moore puts his statement in the context of some of the civilian casualties and suffering that did occur, in an effort to make Rumsfeld look ridiculous without directly asserting that he is wrong.

Moore then shows more footage of civilian casualties and a woman telling a reporter that her uncle's house has been attacked, and venting her sorrow and suffering, calling for God. It is a moving scene, offered, again, with no context or balance of any kind. Rather than offer such context or balance, Moore jumps to a statement by singer Britney Spears, chewing gum and saying, "Honestly, I think we should just trust our president in every decision that he makes and we should just support that. You know? And, um, be faithful in what happens." She is asked by a reporter (Tucker Carlson of CNN), "Do you trust this President?" and answers, "Yes, I do." Moore of course does not offer any images of celebrities expressing the opposite sentiment. Does the fact that Britney Spears trusts George W. Bush have more bearing on anything than the fact that Barbara Streisand does not trust him?

But Moore's point is that all of us have been stupid, like Britney Spears. "Britney Spears was not alone," Moore tells us, "The majority of the American people trusted the President. And why shouldn't they? He'd spent the better part of the last year giving them every reason why we should invade Iraq." He then shows clips of President Bush and Secretary of State Powell discussing Saddam Hussein's weapons programs before the war. Bush says, "Saddam Hussein has gone to elaborate lengths, spent enormous sums, taken great risks to build and keep weapons of mass destruction," which was certainly true. Powell says "Saddam Hussein is determined to get his hands on a nuclear bomb," which was also true (see, for instance, the British review of

prewar intelligence, the so-called “Butler Report,” <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Politics/documents/2004/07/14/butler.pdf>).

Moore then says: “Huh, that’s weird. Because that’s not what Bush’s people said when he first took office,” and shows a clip (with the subtitle February 2001) of Secretary Powell saying that Saddam Hussein “has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction; he is unable to project conventional power against his neighbors,” and then a clip (with the subtitle July 2001) of Condoleezza Rice saying that “we are able to keep arms from him. His military forces have not been rebuilt.” The Powell quote is from a press conference with the foreign minister of Egypt, in which Powell was asked whether the U.S. would consider removing the sanctions against Iraq. He answered that the U.S. did not intend to free Iraq from sanctions, since Iraq was in violation of its commitments, and then said the sanctions had been working (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2001/933.htm>). In a CNN interview in September of 2003, Powell was asked about these remarks:

JUDY WOODRUFF: But you did say, though, you said, quote, "He threatens not the United States. He has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction." It wasn't just you. It was Dr. Rice, later in 2001. Vice President Cheney, who said Saddam is bottled up. I guess my question is, how did something that happened here in the United States, al Qaeda behind it, affect what was going on on the ground in Iraq?

POWELL: Because it focused the president’s attention, all of our attention, on the fact that if there were nations in the world that were continuing to hold or develop weapons of mass destruction, in the aftermath of 9/11, when we saw the kinds of terrorist organizations that were out there that would stop at nothing to strike us or other civilized nations, then a nexus existed between the possibility of such terrorists getting access to these kinds of weapons. And, also, the reality of it was that Saddam Hussein did have these weapons. The previous administration acknowledged it. The previous administration went to a mini-war in late-1998 and bombed Saddam Hussein’s facilities for four days. And here it was five years later, in 2003, the president made a decision based on this continued violation of U.N. resolutions for all these years, after taking the case to the U.N., that the world in this post-9/11 environment could no longer tolerate that kind of activity by a regime as irresponsible as Saddam Hussein’s. (<http://cnnstudentnews.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0309/28/le.00.html>)

In other words, what had changed was September 11th, but Moore—having closed our eyes to September 11—suggests that we should have gone on operating as we did before those attacks.

Meanwhile, the Condoleezza Rice quote is used in a way that distorts her meaning. The quote is from an interview by CNN’s John King on July 29, 2001. She was asked about efforts by the U.S. to impose tighter sanctions on Iraq, which at that point had been held up at the UN because China and Russia did not approve. Her answer was:

Well, in fact, John, we have made progress on the sanctions. We, in fact, had four of the five, of the permanent five, ready to go along with smart sanctions. We’ll work with the Russians. I’m sure that we’ll come to some resolution there, because it is important to restructure these sanctions to something that work. But in terms of Saddam Hussein being there, let’s remember that his country is divided, in effect. He does not control the northern part of his country. We are able to keep arms from him. His military forces have not been rebuilt. This has been a successful period, but obviously we would like to increase pressure on him, and we’re going to go about doing that. (<http://www.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0107/29/le.00.html>)

So Rice was not arguing, as Moore's snippet implies, that further pressure on Saddam would be unnecessary. Rather the reverse: She argued that the U.S. hoped to "increase pressure" on Saddam. Indeed, just before asking that question, CNN's John King showed a clip of Bush saying, "Well, we're going to keep the pressure on Iraq, the no-fly zone strategy is still in place. There's no question that Saddam Hussein is still a menace and a problem, and the United States and our allies must put the pressure on him." Moore's suggestion that the incoming Bush Administration did not believe Saddam Hussein was a problem is just false—and in any case, how does it jive with his conspiracy theory that Bush was planning to attack Iraq all along?

But Moore quickly abandons the notion that Bush had not believed Iraq was a threat, and instead goes back to showing administration officials before the war talking about the threat of Iraq, this time as it is related to Al Qaeda. Moore shows clips of officials talking about connections between Iraq and Al Qaeda, and Iraq and terrorism—claims which have since been confirmed by the 9/11 Commission and others. He also shows footage of Rumsfeld saying, "It is only a matter of time before terrorist states armed with weapons of mass destruction develop the capability to deliver those weapons to U.S. cities" (which is correct), Powell saying his statements are based on solid intelligence (which seemed correct at the time), and Bush talking about Saddam's attitude toward America and his attempt to assassinate the first President Bush (correct).

Then Moore shows Jim McDermott again, saying, "They simply got people to believe that there was a real threat out there, when in fact there wasn't one." Moore and McDermott offer no evidence that "there wasn't one" and just make the assertion without even a pretense of support.

We then see Donald Rumsfeld saying: "You get told things every day that don't happen. It doesn't seem to bother people"—meant to suggest that Rumsfeld is telling reporters that they should get used to being lied to. This Rumsfeld quote is used completely out of context. It is from a Pentagon press briefing on February 28, 2003, from the following exchange about a program of anti-terrorist cooperation between the U.S. and the Philippines:

Q: We had been told last week that the Philippine activity or whatever—the upcoming program had been agreed upon and was beginning—would be beginning soon. So has the start of it been delayed by this disagreement over semantics, or—

RUMSFELD: Well, I don't know that it's just semantics. It is trying to find a formula where we can provide the maximum help in a manner that's consistent with their constitution.

Q: But again, we were told that that was agreed upon.

RUMSFELD: You weren't told by me.

Q: Well—

RUMSFELD: I mean, you're going to be told lots of things. You get told things every day that don't happen. It doesn't seem to bother people. They don't—it's printed in the press. The world thinks all these things happen. They never happened. It's—everyone's so eager to get the story before, in fact, the story's there that the world is constantly being fed things that haven't happened. All I can tell you is, it hasn't happened, it's going to happen, and we're worrying through those issues in a very constructive, friendly, positive way.

(http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/t02282003_t0228sd.html)

In other words, Rumsfeld is criticizing the *press* for inaccurate reporting, not saying that the government lies. In cutting and misrepresenting the quote, Moore is of course guilty of precisely what Rumsfeld is complaining about.

But Moore moves on. He accuses the Democrats of failing to keep the authority to invade Iraq from the president (showing a clip of Tom Daschle saying he will support the authority, as most Democrats did). Moore again fails to offer actual reasons why the Democrats should have withheld their support.

He next proceeds to make fun of the nations working with the United States in Iraq and in the larger war on terror. He shows clips of Powell and Bush making reference to the “coalition of the willing” and then tells us that this coalition consists of nations which he does not think worthy of being taken seriously. A voiceover says, “The Coalition of the Willing roll call: The Republic of Palau. The Republic of Costa Rica. The Republic of Iceland.” Then, showing us clips of people dancing and pounding rocks and riding donkeys, Moore says, “Of course none of these countries has an army or, for that matter, weapons.” He has indeed picked those three out of the 30-nation coalition which do not have regular military forces, and whose support for the coalition consisted of civilian medical and humanitarian assistance. Such assistance is hardly irrelevant, and these countries should not simply be treated as laughingstocks.

But the “roll call” continues, naming Romania and showing a picture of a vampire. Morocco is mentioned next (although Morocco is actually not on the U.S. list of coalition members), and Moore says, “Morocco wasn’t officially a member of the coalition, but according to one report, they did offer to send 2,000 monkeys to help detonate landmines.” It is true that there was a report of a group in Morocco accusing the government of having made such an offer (<http://www.upi.com/view.cfm?StoryID=20030324-064259-1443r>), but it isn’t clear that such an offer was ever really made.

Moore next mentions the Netherlands, and shows an image of a drug user, rather than an image of the 1,100 brave Dutch soldiers sent to serve in Iraq (http://216.239.41.104/search?q=cache:2-aov4yi54YJ:www.government.nl/actueel/dossieroverzicht/42_18993.jsp+&hl=en). Next he notes that Afghanistan is playing a role in Iraq through its new government, but he asserts that Afghanistan couldn’t play a role since it has no army (like the nations mentioned above, it is participating in a small and non-military way). Moore of course leaves out the major contributors to the coalition, including England, Italy, Australia, Poland, and originally also Spain—who together have contributed tens of thousands of soldiers to the effort to liberate Iraq and establish a secure democracy there. When asked about this in a press interview, Moore said only that his film was not supposed to tell the full truth:

Q: You mock the “coalition of the willing” by only showing the tiny countries that have voiced support. But you leave out England, Spain, Italy and Poland. Why?

Moore: This film exists as a counterbalance to what you see on cable news about the coalition. I’m trying to counter the Orwellian nature of the Big Lie, as if when you hear that term, the ‘coalition,’ that the whole world is behind us.

(http://moorelies.com/news/specials/latimes_moore.cfm)

So his defense is that obscuring the truth is the appropriate way to tell the truth. Orwellian indeed. Incidentally, the following 31 countries currently (as of October 5, 2004) have troops in the American-led coalition in Iraq (and several other nations, including those Moore mentioned, have non-military civilian workers participating in the coalition and aiding the new Iraqi government): Britain, Italy, Poland, Ukraine, Netherlands, Romania, South Korea, Japan, Denmark, Bulgaria, Thailand, El Salvador, Hungary, Australia, Georgia, Norway, Azerbaijan, Mongolia, Portugal, Latvia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Slovakia, Albania, New Zealand, Estonia, Tonga, Singapore, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, and Moldova (http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/iraq_orbat_coalition.htm).

Moore simply asserts there was no real coalition, and then blames the major media for not telling us so. He proceeds into a bizarre accusation that the networks were somehow in favor of the war, and hyped it up for the American people. He shows clips of reporters and anchors saying things like, “The rallying around the president, around the flag, and around the troops clearly has begun,” and “The pictures you’re seeing are absolutely phenomenal”—none of which has anything to do with the coalition and none of which amount to advocacy for the war. He shows Dan Rather “admitting” that as an American he wants his country to win when it is at war, and shows Peter Jennings announcing that “Iraqi opposition has faded in the face of American power” (which was of course true). But anyone watching the news at the time of the Iraq invasion would find simply ridiculous the notion that reporters were cheerleaders for the war (<http://www.mediaresearch.org/projects/gulfwar/welcome.asp>).

Having asserted it, however, he moves on and criticizes the press for not covering the stories of individual soldiers killed in the war, and the government for not allowing pictures to be taken of coffins of fallen soldiers arriving home. There were certainly a great many stories about individual soldiers killed in Iraq, but Moore is correct on the latter point—though he does not point out that barring photos of arriving coffins has been the policy of the United States for thirteen years, through Republican and Democratic administrations, and was adopted to protect the privacy of the soldiers involved. The policy was also reaffirmed by the Senate in a 54-39 vote in June 2004 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/22/politics/22cong.html>).

During this section, Moore shows footage of a military funeral of a soldier killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom and buried at Arlington National Cemetery. This footage is of the funeral of Major Gregory Stone, who was not killed in combat, but rather was murdered by a fellow soldier who threw a grenade into Stone’s tent in March 2003. It is worth noting that Stone’s family never gave permission for this footage to be used in the film, and was outraged to discover that Moore had used the footage without asking for permission. Stone’s aunt told reporters, “There was no permission for it. Greg’s dead, he can’t defend himself or say what he really thinks. There’s no way he would ever let himself be affiliated with Michael Moore” (http://www.kbcitv.com/x5154.xml?ParentPageID=x5157&ContentID=x55058&Layout=KBCI_xsl&AdGroupID=x5154&NewsSection). Stone’s mother referred to Moore as “a maggot that eats off the dead” for using the footage (<http://washingtontimes.com/national/20040712-101816-2160r.htm>).

Moore continues: “That kind of story [of wounded or killed troops] is a downer, especially when you’re getting ready for a party on a boat.” This is Moore’s idea of a transition to talking about

Bush's now famous "Mission Accomplished" speech—so called because it took place on an American aircraft carrier heading home from Iraq on which was displayed a banner reading "Mission Accomplished." Moore seeks to advance the notion that Bush said the war in Iraq was simply over, and that no more trouble should be expected. Panning up to the "Mission Accomplished" banner, Moore shows us Bush saying, "My fellow Americans, major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed." This is followed by footage of American soldiers under attack and wounded, and then by television reporters listing the mounting casualties in Iraq. Moore's clear implication is that President Bush prematurely claimed that our work in Iraq was finished.

Moore does not mention that President Bush, in the same speech, also said, "We have difficult work to do in Iraq. We're bringing order to parts of that country that remain dangerous. We're pursuing and finding leaders of the old regime, who will be held to account for their crimes." Or that Bush told those sailors, "The transition from dictatorship to democracy will take time, but it is worth every effort. Our coalition will stay until our work is done. Then we will leave, and we will leave behind a free Iraq" (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/text/20030501-15.html>). Far from implying that the work in Iraq was done, President Bush clearly stated that hard work and great risk remained ahead.

As General Tommy Franks, who commanded the U.S. Military's Central Command during the invasion of Iraq, has since made clear, the aim of the speech was not to simplistically suggest that our work in Iraq was finished:

"Mr. Secretary," I said to Donald Rumsfeld ... "We've been talking about the timing of Phase IV. The British are going to hold a victory parade when their first combat units return from the Gulf. But our soldiers aren't going home yet. I'd like to figure out a way to acknowledge their sacrifice and service. There's a lot of work to be done over here, but major combat operations are over." I wanted the Secretary—or the President—to publicly acknowledge this fact for the troops.

And there was another reason to make a public statement about the end of Phase III. There were Coalition members who didn't want to participate in combat, but had said they would help once that phase was over. "I'd like to see some of them start bringing in their reconstruction and humanitarian assistance troops," I told Rumsfeld.

"What do you have in mind, Tom?"

"It would be good if the President could acknowledge the success of major combat operations, Mr. Secretary." I tried to find the right words. "The troops have accomplished every mission we gave them. There's never been a combat operation as successful as Iraqi Freedom." (Tommy Franks, *American Soldier*, pp. 523-4, <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0060731583>)

Thus, the purpose of the "Mission Accomplished" speech was not to declare victory, but rather to honor our troops and to satisfy the demands of countries that had signaled a willingness to assist in rebuilding Iraq once "major combat operations" were over.

Moore then shows Bush saying, "There are some who feel that the conditions are such that they can attack us there. My answer is: Bring 'em on," and then shows us footage of contractors murdered and gruesomely mutilated in Fallujah on March 31, 2004. The Bush "Bring 'em on"

statement is from an exchange with reporters more than eight months earlier, on July 7, 2003. Bush was asked if he thought the U.S. should plead with other nations to join the Americans in securing Iraq, and responded:

Well, first of all, we'll put together a force structure who meets the threats on the ground. And we've got a lot of forces there, ourselves. And as I said yesterday, anybody who wants to harm American troops will be found and brought to justice. There are some who feel like that if they attack us that we may decide to leave prematurely. They don't understand what they're talking about, if that's the case. Let me finish. There are some who feel like—that the conditions are such that they can attack us there. My answer is, bring them on. We've got the force necessary to deal with the security situation. Of course we want other countries to help us—Great Britain is there, Poland is there, Ukraine is there, you mentioned. Anybody who wants to help, we'll welcome the help. But we've got plenty tough force there right now to make sure the situation is secure. We always welcome help. We're always glad to include others in. But make no mistake about it—and the enemy shouldn't make any mistake about it—we will deal with them harshly if they continue to try to bring harm to the Iraqi people. I also said yesterday an important point, that those who blow up the electricity lines really aren't hurting America, they're hurting the Iraq citizens; their own fellow citizens are being hurt. But we will deal with them harshly, as well. (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/07/20030702-3.html>)

The attackers of course *have* been dealt with harshly. But Moore is trying to suggest that Bush declared victory and showed overconfidence in the face of the challenges in Iraq—ignoring what Bush has done in the year since.

Moore then shows footage of Dan Rather saying, “The renewed battle for control of Iraq raged for a fourth day today with street clashes in nearly every corner of the country. Iraq could become, quote, another Vietnam.” Moore apparently sees no contradiction between such an outrageously exaggerated negative statement and the film’s earlier attempt to paint Rather and the press as Bush stooges. We hear a reporter saying, “Officials say they see evidence that Sunni and Shiite extremists might be joining forces”—but viewers are never told that such a joining of forces *never occurred*.

Moore then shows footage of Bush saying: “They’re not happy they’re occupied. I wouldn’t be happy if I were occupied either.” Moore clearly wants us to believe that Bush is talking about the insurgents, and essentially justifying their actions—making Bush seem ridiculous. But the clip, from a White House news conference on April 13, 2004, is actually of Bush answering a question about the Iraqi people in general and their desire for protection from the insurgents, rather than the motives of the insurgents. Here is what Bush said:

Finally, the attitude of the Iraqis toward the American people—it’s an interesting question. They’re really pleased we got rid of Saddam Hussein. And you can understand why. This is a guy who was a torturer, a killer, a maimer; there’s mass graves. I mean, he was a horrible individual that really shocked the country in many ways, shocked it into a kind of—a fear of making decisions toward liberty. That’s what we’ve seen recently. Some citizens are fearful of stepping up. And they were happy—they’re not happy they’re occupied. I wouldn’t be happy if I were occupied either. They do want us there to help with security, and that’s why this transfer of sovereignty is an important signal to send, and it’s why it’s also important for them to hear we will stand with them until they become a free country. (<http://usembassy.state.gov/posts/in3/wwwwhwashnews1592.html>)

Moore has again edited a clip and used it out of context. Having done so, he just shows more footage of insurgent attacks, perhaps wanting us to believe that Bush has done nothing about

these attacks, which is simply false. Moore also does not tell us that he himself has cheered on the insurgents, as when he noted on his website in April 2004 (while making this movie) that:

The Iraqis who have risen up against the occupation are not “insurgents” or “terrorists” or “The Enemy.” They are the REVOLUTION, the Minutemen, and their numbers will grow—and they will win. (<http://www.michaelmoore.com/words/message/index.php?messageDate=2004-04-14>)

But rather than put off his audience by explicitly stating in this film that his sympathies lie with the people who are killing American troops, Moore moves on to the question of retention and recruitment in the military.

VI. The Military

Moore plays a clip of a reporter saying troops would be kept on duty beyond their original tour, and shows a soldier saying, “I know our numbers in the military have gone down. They talk about retention.” Moore offers no further evidence to support this assertion, because there is none, since retention figures have actually been quite high. As one report put it in April 2004,

Despite a rising tide of combat deaths and the prospect of deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan for years to come, the armed services are meeting their recruiting goals and seeing record re-enlistment. The services say a combination of patriotism and the economy is driving people to the military and keeping them there. “The war is not only not having a negative effect, but it is helping to reinforce the number of people who want to join,” said Cmdr. John Kirby of the Navy’s Bureau of Personnel. The Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard all met or exceeded their recruiting goals for fiscal year 2003, which ended Sept. 30, and the figures held strong in the first half of fiscal 2004. The Navy, in fact, has done so well that it has cut the desired number of recruits to the lowest level in 30 years, said Lt. Bill Davis with the Navy Personnel Command in Millington, Tenn. Navy re-enlistment rates are at an all-time high, ranging from 62.3 percent of first-term sailors to 88.7 percent of those with 10 to 14 years of service. The Air Force reported that 98 percent of its career enlisted re-upped. And the Army National Guard boasted first-term re-enlistments of 141 percent—meaning members re-enlisted early, usually to take advantage of bonuses. The Coast Guard, which traditionally loses 7 to 8 percent of its force each year through attrition, last year lost just 2.68 percent, said Chief Petty Officer Paul Rhynarb, at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington. (<http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/world/8407076.htm>)

Recruitment for the infantry units that see the most action in Iraq and Afghanistan has also been quite high (<http://www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=23664>). But rather than confront these facts, Moore shows a few more soldiers saying things like, “You never really expect to be deployed this long. I don’t think anybody did”; “I don’t have any clue as to why we’re still in Iraq”; and “If Donald Rumsfeld was here, I’d ask him for his resignation.” We have no way of knowing how badly these sentiments are taken out of context. These soldiers were interviewed by Moore’s crew, but were not told that they were being interviewed for a Michael Moore film. As Moore put it in an interview with *The Guardian*, “we were able to get film crews embedded with American troops without them knowing that it was Michael Moore. They are totally f***ed” (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uselections2004/story/0,13918,1218376,00.html>).

Having used these soldiers, Moore then moves on to imply that they joined the army purely out of economic necessity, and to discuss more generally the military’s recruiting practices. He starts

by repeating the false claim that there is a shortage of troops, and saying, “With the war not going as planned, and the military in need of many more troops, where would they find the new recruits?” We then hear a voice say, “Military experts say three times the 120,000 U.S. troops now deployed would be needed to pacify and rebuild the country.” The voice belongs to CBS reporter Bill Plante, in an April 7, 2004 report in which he cited only one military expert, from more than a year earlier. Here’s the transcript:

PLANTE: But some outside military experts say three times the 120,000 U.S. troops now deployed would be needed to pacify and rebuild the country. It’s an argument that began before the war.

General ERIC SHINSEKI (Former Army Chief of Staff): [In a clip from February 25, 2003, before the war began.] I’m saying on the order of several hundred thousand soldiers, you know, a figure that would be required.

General Shinseki put forward his estimate of “several hundred thousand soldiers” needed for postwar Iraq in early 2003, and it upset civilian leaders in the Pentagon who believed, as Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz put it, that “we have no idea what we will need until we get there on the ground”

(<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/attack/consequences/2003/0228pentagoncontra.htm>). In any case, General Shinseki’s 2003 guesstimates are not relevant in 2004, and the best-informed “military experts” are the commanders in the field, who have not expressed anything like this sense of the number of soldiers required.

Having asked where the supposedly newly-needed troops will come from, Moore then answers his own question: “They would find them all across America in the places that had been destroyed by the economy. Places where one of the only jobs available was to join the Army. Places like my hometown of Flint, Michigan.” Flint is not actually Moore’s hometown, he was born and grew up in the wealthier suburb of Davison, Michigan (http://www.usatoday.com/life/movies/news/2004-06-20-moore_x.htm, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/07/09/1089000339554.html?oneclick=true>). More importantly, Moore’s assertion that the military seeks out soldiers mostly in poor communities, or that most members of the military are poor is just not true. In fact, the socioeconomic status of people in the military is only slightly lower than that of Americans in general, and recruits actually have a higher level of education than the general population (<http://www.dod.mil/prhome/poprep99/html/chapter7/c7-perspective.htm>). But as in his previous film, *Roger and Me*, Moore wants to show us that Flint is poor—which it genuinely is—and so to imply that the military chiefly recruits from poor areas. He shows us one resident saying that parts of Flint look like a war zone, and another talking about all the abandoned buildings in his neighborhood.

We then meet Lila Lipscomb, introduced to us as a woman who works at an employment agency in Flint. She tells us that, “At the end of January of ’04 the unemployment rate in Flint was actually 17%. But you have to take into consideration as well that when your unemployment runs out you’re no longer counted. I would say that we’re probably close to at least 50%.” She is right about the unemployment rate in January 2004 (though it later dipped down to 13.4% in April and stood at 14.2% in August, <http://www.michlmi.org/LMI/lmadata/laus/lausdocs/0491f04.htm>) but she is wrong in suggesting that the unemployment rate does not count people whose benefits

have run out. The rate *does* in fact include those people (<http://stats.bls.gov/bls/glossary.htm#U>). Lipscomb then tells us that she recommended the military as an option for her children, since it offered a way to afford college.

Moore then asks people gathered in Flint how many of them have relatives in the military or in Iraq, and many of them raise their hands. We then see a computer-generated commercial for the Air National Guard and students in Flint talking about military recruiters, and we see a pair of Marine recruiters seeking after candidates at a local shopping mall. Moore again suggests and implies that they seek out only the poor.

Without further comment, Moore cuts back to soldiers in Iraq. We see a scene filmed around Christmastime of soldiers forcefully entering a house to seize a wanted man. It is not clear why he is wanted nor what the circumstances are. No one is harmed in the house and the individual is taken away, though his family claims adamantly that he has done nothing wrong. Moore then cuts to a soldier in a different circumstance saying, “As you go back to the old saying, win the hearts and minds of the people. That’s our job. We have to, we have to bring the ideal of democracy and freedom to the country, and show them that the American people are not here to rule Iraq.” The aim of course is to cause us to dismiss this soldier’s comment because of what we have just seen. Moore expects the soldier, expressing the ideal of our desire to bring and secure democracy in Iraq, to sound like a hypocrite when his statement is juxtaposed with the messiness of hunting down individuals wanted for involvement in the insurgency. But the two of course serve the same aim. Moore’s juxtaposition suggests that without purity of means there can be no legitimate action. People who live in the real world should know better.

We then see a little more of the Christmas scene, and Moore cuts back to Lila Lipscomb in Michigan. She tells us that her daughter served in the military in the first Gulf War, and that she’s proud of the United States and puts a flag out every day. Moore draws her out about her son being in the military—she expresses great pride about that—and she says she used to think ill of anti-war protestors. “It was just like they were dishonoring my son,” she says, “and I burned in my soul to tell them, ‘You don’t understand, they’re not there because they want to be there.’ But then I came to understand that they weren’t protesting the men and the women that were there, they were protesting the concept of the war.” Moore is slowly building a picture of the troops as victims. He wants us to believe that they have all enlisted only because they are poor and have no other way to advance in society, and he wants us to believe that they are simply in a desperate situation in Iraq: accomplishing nothing and constantly in danger for no reason. He shows us a few soldiers talking about the risks in a mission they’re about to embark on, and one soldier suggests that young Iraqi men are beginning to band together against the Americans. There is here no sense that the vast majority of the Iraqi population is tremendously grateful to have been liberated from the Saddam Hussein regime, and while (as President Bush put it in a clip mentioned above) they would certainly rather not be occupied, they are on the whole strongly opposed to the violence that kills many more Iraqis than Americans, and are hopeful that the experiment in democracy will succeed. (See, for instance, the Iraqi polling data described here: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A3433-2004Jun24.html>.) And the morale of American troops in Iraq is by no means as Moore’s few clips suggest—it is, as is to be expected, mixed (<http://www.stripes.com/morale/day1.pdf>).

But Moore will not be distracted from his assertion that the troops are victims, and he now argues further that they are victims also of the president's motives—presumably those Moore ascribed to Bush earlier. He says, “Immoral behavior breeds immoral behavior. When a president commits the immoral act of sending otherwise good kids to war based on a lie, this is what you get.” Rather than tell us what lie he has in mind (since his earlier efforts in this direction were, as already seen, thoroughly dishonest) Moore then shows a scene of soldiers apparently tickling a prisoner, and making fun of another individual, saying, “That one still has a hard-on.” The scene is designed to suggest to us that the soldiers are abusing a prisoner, or perhaps even a corpse. But Moore himself has admitted that this is not the case. As the Canadian newspaper *Globe and Mail* has put it:

[Moore] revealed that a scene in which American soldiers appear to be desecrating a corpse beneath a blanket may be misleading. In fact, the soldiers had picked up an old man who had passed out drunk and they poked at his visible erection, covered by a blanket.
(<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/ArticleNews/TPStory/LAC/20040518/CANNES18/TPEntertainment/Film>)

Making fun of a drunk is certainly immature, but it is hardly a war crime, and the way Moore has set up the scene makes it seem far more serious than it is. Moore then shows us soldiers taking a picture with what appears to be a hooded prisoner, though he offers no details.

We next hear a soldier expressing frustration, saying, “To have these people shoot at us, kill us, blow us up, whatever means they can, and I don't understand it. We're trying to help these people and it seems they don't want our help—‘Get out of here’—but the minute something goes wrong with them—‘Oh why weren't you here?’ ‘Why didn't you do this?’ You know it's—I hate this country [Iraq].” This is a profound description of the situation, perhaps more honest than Moore realizes, or else he would not have left it in the film. It may be that Moore is trying to make this soldier sound ridiculous, it is hard to be sure, but the soldier has expressed a deep truth, and he is right: He and other brave men and women like him are truly doing a good and noble deed, and are too rarely appreciated by those they are helping. Moore follows this up with another useful insight into the tremendously difficult burden borne by these soldiers, as a soldier says, “You know, you, you—I feel that a part of your soul is destroyed in taking another life. And yeah that statement is very true; you cannot kill someone without killing a part of yourself.” But rather than reflect upon these thoughts, or hint at the good which these soldiers are serving, Moore cuts back to the United States, to a soldier he has found who has been to Iraq and is unwilling to return.

Moore is speaking to a man in front of the U.S. Capitol, identified on screen as “Cpl. Abdul Henderson USMC, Served in Iraq,” who tells him that if he's called up to return to Iraq, he will refuse. “I will not let anyone send me back over there to kill other poor people. Especially when they pose no threat to me and my country. I won't do it.” Though Moore makes it look like Henderson is a full-time Marine, he is actually a reservist in an Air Naval Gunfire Liaison company which had seen action in Iraq (<http://www.wltx.com/fyi/fyi.asp?storyid=20006>). For now, Moore tells us nothing more about him and, again, the notion that Iraq was never any threat to the United States is simply asserted without argument.

Moore then moves on to a clip of President Bush, in a tuxedo at what is clearly a very fancy occasion, saying, “This is an impressive crowd—the haves and the have-mores. Some people call you the elite. I call you my base.” Moore wants it to appear as though this is some kind of ultra-expensive Republican fundraiser and Bush is openly asserting that he serves the rich, perhaps bolstering Moore’s earlier confused pile of barely-connected allegations about the Iraq war having been begun at the behest of big business. But in fact the context of the clip makes it very clear that Bush is *ridiculing* precisely the attitude that Moore here exemplifies, and is making fun of the notion that he serves the rich. The clip is from the October 19, 2000 Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation Dinner, an annual event in New York at which leading politicians lampoon themselves and each other, all in an effort to raise money for a Catholic charity that offers medical services to the poor. The event took place *before* the 2000 election, and George W. Bush and Al Gore both made light of the way they had been represented in the press. Here is how one newspaper described the event:

The Vice President [Gore], who spoke first, started right off making fun of his tendency to exaggerate and his boast that he invented the Internet. “The Al Smith Dinner represents a hallowed and important tradition, which I actually did invent,” he deadpanned. Joking about his oft-repeated debate promise to keep Social Security in a “locked box,” he said if he’s elected he’ll put “Medicare in a walk-in closet,” NASA funding in a “hermetically sealed Ziploc bag” and will “always keep lettuce in the crisper.” Bush, whose proposals have been criticized by opponents as benefits for a small percentage of the rich, said as his opening remark he was glad to join those on the “distinguished dais, better known as the top one percent.” “This is an impressive crowd of the haves and have mores,” he said. “Some people call you the elite, I call you my base.” He also made light of his reputation as a non-intellectual perennial frat-boy, saying he noticed that fellow Yale man William F. Buckley Jr., the author, was on the dais. “We have a lot in common,” he said. “Bill wrote a book at Yale, I read one. He started the Conservative Party, I started a few parties myself.” (<http://cny.org/archive/ld/ld102600.htm>)

So rather than prove Moore’s point, Bush was in fact making fun of it. Moore also does not mention that the event the clip is drawn from raised \$1.6 million for that very good cause (<http://cny.org/archive/ld/ld102600.htm>).

Rather than trouble himself with these facts, Moore reasserts his deception and piles on several more. He says, “While Bush was busy taking care of his base and professing his love for our troops, he proposed cutting combat soldiers’ pay by 33% and assistance to their families by 60%. He opposed giving veterans a billion dollars more in health care benefits, and he supported closing veteran hospitals. He tried to double the prescription drug costs for veterans and opposed full benefits for part-time reservists.”

These charges are all either deeply misleading or false. The “cutting combat soldiers’ pay by 33%” charge refers to so called “imminent danger” bonuses, which are bonuses of \$150 a month given to soldiers serving in certain areas, including combat zones. In 2003, Congress and the Bush Administration increased imminent danger bonuses by \$75 to \$225 a month. In its 2004 budget, the Bush Administration at first proposed not to extend this increase, and so to bring the bonuses back to \$150. This is what Moore calls a 33% cut in pay, but in fact it’s not a cut in the basic pay but in the bonus. In any case, the administration eventually reversed itself and this cut never actually took place at all.

The reference to cutting “assistance to their families by 60%” is equally distorted. Congress had passed a one-time increase in the “family separation allowance” given to soldiers with assignments on which their families cannot join them, from \$100 per month to \$250 per month. Again, the Bush Administration’s budget for 2004 had originally proposed returning these to their original levels, and Moore describes this as a 60% cut. But the administration changed its position, and no “cut” was ever instituted. Neither of these would have counted as cuts in pay, they applied to *bonuses* which are a very small portion of a soldier’s pay—and in any case, neither actually occurred (<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/chronicle/archive/2003/08/15/PAY.TMP>), and on pay levels in the military see <http://usmilitary.about.com/cs/joiningup/a/recruiter5.htm>).

While in the movie, Moore says that Bush “opposed giving veterans a billion dollars more in health care benefits,” on his website Moore phrases the claim differently, saying Bush “proposed cutting \$1.3 billion in veterans’ health care” (<http://www.michaelmoore.com/warroom/f911notes/index.php?id=21>). The version in the movie is closer to the truth. During the debates about appropriating \$87 billion of supplemental funding for the war in Iraq—the bill that Senator Kerry famously voted for before he voted against—legislators made dozens of changes. One of the changes made to the bill would have added \$1.3 billion for veterans medical care, but the administration wanted to keep the bill focused on Iraq, so it opposed that addition (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,100777,00.html>). Congress eventually took the \$1.3 billion out of the bill. The version on Moore’s website, saying Bush “proposed cutting” money from veterans’ health care, is a complete fabrication. But even the version in the movie is a distortion, for while the White House opposed one particular increase at one particular time, the overall trend has been to make vast increases in veterans’ care (<http://www.factcheck.org/article.aspx?docID=144>).

As for the charge that Bush supported closing veterans’ hospitals, this is a reference to a recommendation by the Department of Veterans Affairs, following the recommendation of the Independent Commission on Veterans’ Hospitals, that seven specific hospitals in areas with sharply declining populations of veterans be closed because they had become so underutilized that veterans in those areas would be better served in other nearby veterans’ hospitals. The department simultaneously proposed building new veterans’ hospitals in other areas where the veteran population had grown, and building a series of new rehabilitation centers. The total number of veterans’ hospitals would *grow*, not decline, under this plan, and the system would adjust itself to meet particular needs in particular areas (<http://www1.va.gov/cares/>).

The claim that Bush “tried to double the prescription drug costs for veterans” refers to a Bush Administration proposal to increase the co-pay for prescription drugs from \$7 to \$15, for veterans who earn over \$24,000 a year. Technically, Moore is correct—it is more than an increase of 100 percent—but in real dollars the accusation comes to seem ludicrous. In any case, the increase never took place (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A26166-2003Jul21>).

As for giving full-time benefits to part-timers, it is true that such a proposal was made as an amendment to the \$87 billion supplementary authorization for Iraq war costs, and the administration did *originally* oppose it (<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,100777,00.html>). But Congress left the benefits in the bill, and the president ultimately approved them—and even

signed them into law on November 6, 2003 (http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ106.108).

Most importantly, this litany of distortions leaves the viewer with the impression that veterans and soldiers have somehow been worse off under the Bush Administration than before. But that notion is simply ridiculous, and belied by the most obvious facts. In 2003, the Bush Administration pushed through Congress a pay increase for all active-duty military personnel of 3.7%, with an additional increase for non-commissioned officers as well as increased bonuses (http://www.dod.gov/news/Dec2003/n12092003_200312083.html). The Bush Administration has also increased funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs by a whopping 27% in its first three years, and if the administration's 2005 budget passes, it will have increased spending on veterans by 37.6% (<http://www.factcheck.org/article.aspx?docID=144>). This utterly dwarfs the sorts of \$8 increases in drug costs that Moore points to. Moore's assertions are desperate attempts to distort figures to give an appearance that is simply the opposite of the truth.

Moore then mentions that “when Staff Sergeant Brett Petriken from Flint was killed in Iraq on May 26th, the Army sent his last paycheck to his family, but they docked him for the last five days of the month that he didn't work because he was dead.” This story could not be readily confirmed but it is certainly plausible—it sounds like the sort of tragic bureaucratic error that can so hurt the family of a fallen soldier. But there is no reason to believe (and Moore in no way claims) that this has anything to do with Bush Administration policy in any way. What this story is doing in the film is not clear, although it does stand out as being a plausible and likely true part of an otherwise concocted list of grievances.

Moore does not stop to let us judge his distorted claims, but rather brings back Rep. McDermott to say, “They say they're not gonna leave any veteran behind, but they're leaving all kinds of veterans behind,” without explaining what he has in mind. Rather than explain, Moore cuts to a scene at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, to give the impression that the veterans there have been “left behind.” He shows soldiers saying that not enough attention has been paid to the injured by the public and the press—which certainly seems a valid point—and he shows an interview with a soldier who has lost parts of both arms speaking about his therapy and recuperation. This interview, as it turns out, was done by NBC and aired on an NBC News program. Moore reused the footage without asking the consent of the soldier being shown, Army reservist Peter Damon. Damon and his wife were surprised to learn that the footage appeared in the film, and a family friend told a Boston newspaper, “I was shocked. I would have expected if Peter was in the movie that someone would have at least talked to him about it, which I thought was kind of unfair. ... I think for Michael Moore to portray Peter in there without any knowledge is terrible” (<http://enterprise.southofboston.com/articles/2004/07/15/news/news/news02.txt>). Moore then shows several other recovering injured soldiers, including one who says he used to be a Republican but now, “I'm gonna definitely do my best to insure that the Democrats win control.” Moore offers no context for these soldiers' remarks, and no further evidence that the injured have been “forgotten.” Counter-evidence, of course, abounds. (Moore might, for instance, have told this story: <http://www.techcentralstation.com/071504C.html>, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/04/images/20040414-7_a5bu9736-677v.html.)

From here, Moore jumps back to Lila Lipscomb, this time with her husband, Howard Lipscomb, and other family members. We learn the tragic news that their son, Sgt. Michael Pederson, was killed in Iraq on April 2, 2003. Pederson (Moore does not tell us) had enlisted in 1996, and was 26 years old when he died. Lipscomb tells the painful story of speaking with her son before he left, as he shared his concerns and fears, and of later learning that his helicopter had gone down and that he had been lost. Her pain is profound and moving. She tells of screaming, “Why does it have to be Michael? Why did you have to take my son? Why is it my son that you had to take? He didn’t do anything. He wasn’t a bad guy. He was a good guy, why did you have to take my son?” Moore then cuts to a clip of Bush saying, “I can’t imagine what it must be like to lose a son or a daughter, or a husband or wife for that matter. And I—it pains me.” The clip is from an interview Bush did with Diane Sawyer of ABC in December 2003. In response to a question about whether the casualties in Iraq were too high a price, Bush said:

My job is to do everything I can to protect America and Americans. We are at war. And the war on terror is, is the challenge of the 21st century. And we must win the war. And there are different fronts on the war on terror. And I will continue to do what I think is necessary to win that war. I—and the key for me is to remind the loved ones that their troops are getting what is necessary to achieve the objective, that this government’s supporting them. And that we honor their memories, and we will not stop short of the objective until we have achieved the objective. The way to dishonor a memory of a fallen soldier is to quit too early, is to not to see that America is a more secure country and the world is a more peaceful place.

DIANE SAWYER: I guess for the family, how, maybe the question they would ask is, “How much do you suffer with each death?”

BUSH: I can’t imagine what it would be like to lose a son or a daughter or a husband, and, or a wife, for that matter. And I, it pains me.

(http://abcnews.go.com/sections/primetime/US/bush_sawyer_excerpts_1_031216.html)

Moore, of course, included only the last part—preferring to look at only the sacrifices of the war out of context.

We then see Lipscomb read from the last letter she got from her son, written before the war began, in which among other things he criticizes George W. Bush, saying, “We are just out here in the sand and windstorms waiting. What in the world is wrong with George ‘Trying-To-Be-Like-His-Dad’ Bush? He got us out here for nothing whatsoever. I’m so furious right now, mama. I really hope they do not re-elect that fool, honestly.” Lipscomb mentions that the letter was mailed on March 16, 2003, but Moore does not explain that that was *three days before the Iraq invasion began*—so Pederson’s frustration at being “out in the sand and the windstorms waiting” sounds like the wholly understandable frustration of a soldier impatient with the slow build-up to the invasion.

Nor does Moore mention that Pederson later apologized for these remarks about Bush (http://www.freep.com/entertainment/movies/moore29_20040529.htm). Moore of course offers no other perspectives, no families of lost soldiers who feel differently about the war or about Bush, or even members of this same family who feel differently—like Pederson’s widow, who disagrees with her mother-in-law and says that “hating President Bush is not going to bring Michael back” (http://www.freep.com/entertainment/movies/moore29_20040529.htm). It is impossible to blame Lipscomb for her feelings or her views. But it is quite possible, and

appropriate, to blame Moore for the way he presents the plight of the families of lost soldiers here, and for what he leaves out. For him, it is all a way to get back to his corporate conspiracies. He ends this scene by showing Howard Lipscomb saying, “I really feel sorry for the other families that is losing their kids as we speak. And for what? I don’t—that’s the, I guess, the sickening part. For what?” and then jumping to a clip from a Halliburton commercial.

The ad describes some of what Halliburton does in Iraq, and ends with the company’s CEO saying, “We’re serving the troops because of what we know, not who we know.” (The ad is the second one on this page: http://www6.halliburton.com/frontline/mm_video.asp.) As if to beat us over the head, Moore then cuts to a clip of Dick Cheney saying, “I’m very proud of what I did at Halliburton and the people of Halliburton are very proud of what they’ve accomplished. And I frankly don’t feel any need to apologize for the way I’ve spent my time over the past five years as the CEO and chairman of a major American corporation.” Again, by juxtaposition, Moore wants to suggest that something is improper about Halliburton’s involvement in Iraq, but he makes no specific accusation.

Instead, Moore cuts to a corporate conference about rebuilding Iraq, to which, he tells us, Halliburton was invited. It is not clear why it makes sense to focus on Halliburton when discussing this conference, but Moore needs a transition. The conference, held in Arlington, Virginia in December 2003, aimed to bring together representatives of Iraq’s Governing Council with companies hoping to do business in Iraq (<http://www.new-fields.com/iraq2/pr1204.htm>). He shows us a number of speakers, from companies and government, talking about business opportunities in Iraq, and attempting to appeal to investors. His implication is certainly that there is something unseemly about companies offering services in Iraq, or services to the military, and that making money in this arena is improper. He does not offer any argument to suggest that these companies are somehow *the reason* the United States went to war in Iraq. And indeed, it would very likely have been more profitable for these companies to deal with the regime of Saddam Hussein than to be part of a complex reconstruction and democratization effort. But Moore just wants us to see that someone is doing business in Iraq and making money. He thinks that should be enough to sour us on the war and the Bush Administration.

Moore then shows us a clip from another Halliburton commercial (the third ad on this page: http://www6.halliburton.com/frontline/mm_video.asp) which ends with an announcer saying, “Halliburton. Proud to serve our troops.” Then, in one of his most peculiar directorial decisions, he cuts to a scene of several elderly women in what appears to be a nursing home, talking about the war. One woman says, “I just read in the paper Halliburton got another contract. Halliburton got another contract which is not being contested at all.” Strange sourcing, an old woman and what she has read in the newspaper. Moore does not explain what he has in mind, but presumably this is a reference to the canard regarding improprieties in a number of “no bid” Halliburton contracts, a charge long ago examined and dismissed (<http://www.nationalreview.com/york/york070903.asp>).

But old women can’t be wrong, and Moore proves it by cutting to a scene of an American armored car in Iraq, and a reporter’s voice saying, “The United States is now a major player in the Iraqi oil business. American troops guard the oil fields as Texas oil workers assess their potential.” Moore does not mention that all of Iraq’s oil resources have been turned over to the

new Iraqi government, and that the new government has looked to several countries, not just the U.S., for training and resources (for instance, <http://www.crosswalk.com/news/1276082.html>). Instead, he shows us oil workers saying they feel safe, and a soldier saying the civilian contractors get paid more than soldiers do. Both are likely true, but it is far from clear how they make whatever point Moore is seeking to get across here. Finally he cuts back to the conference in Virginia, and again shows various executives and officials talking about the potential business opportunities in the new Iraq. The snippets he patches together are, it seems, aimed at making us see these people as war profiteers, and in no way as investors in a burgeoning democracy. They're simply the villains.

We are then taken back to the nursing home, where the same elderly woman again expounds upon the passing scene, saying, "Today on the news, Rumsfeld was saying and, uh, wol—, wolf—, Wolfowitz was saying, 'Oh, the Iraqi people are much, much better off. Isn't it better that we got rid of Saddam and now the Iraqi people can do what they want to do and really be free?' Will they ever be free? No they'll not be free. And where are the, are the weapons of mass destruction? It was an—we were duped. We were really duped. And these poor people—the young men and women who are being killed there—it's unnecessary." Again Moore offers no evidence beyond this woman's understanding of the news. He offers no evidence to challenge the proposition that the Iraqi people are better off than they were under the regime of a vicious tyrant who starved and tortured them while diverting precious funds to military uses and to his own enjoyment. The fact that a plurality of Iraqis thinks that even now, in the uncertain transition period, they are better off, and that 63% believe that five years from now, when that period has passed, they will be better off than they were under Saddam Hussein's regime (while only 10% expect to be worse off) is also not mentioned (<http://i.a.cnn.net/cnn/2004/WORLD/meast/04/28/iraq.poll/iraq.poll.4.28.pdf>). All we get is this old woman's opinion that everything is rotten and nothing will ever work out.

Moore then cuts to a scene of President Bush saying, "They died in a just cause, for defending freedom, and they will not have died in vain." We are to presume that this is a remark about soldiers giving their lives in Iraq, and of course given what the elderly woman just told us, we are apparently supposed to see the president's comment as ridiculous. But Bush's remarks are neither about Iraq (though they certainly would also apply to American soldiers in Iraq), nor are they ridiculous. They are from a speech given at the Special Forces training center in Fayetteville, North Carolina, in March 2002 (a year before the war in Iraq had even begun), and they honor the sacrifices of Special Forces soldiers in Afghanistan. Bush said:

Our Special Operations forces know the danger that awaits them. This is a dangerous battle that we face, a dangerous war. And I'm proud of the courage, not only of the soldiers who volunteer for battle, but for the loved ones who remain behind. Not only am I proud of our soldiers, I am proud of the wives and husbands and sons and daughters and moms and dads. And, on behalf of a grateful nation, we thank you, as well. (Applause.) We appreciate your courage and your sacrifice. Two young men from the Special Forces were recently laid to rest, Chief Warrant Officer Stanley Harriman and Air Force Tech Sergeant John Chapman. I want their families to know that we pray with them, that we honor them, and they died in a just cause, for defending freedom, and they will not have died in vain. (Applause.) Because of such soldiers, a vicious regime has been toppled in Afghanistan, and an entire people have been liberated from oppression. Because of American soldiers and our brave allies and friends who have fought beside them, the Taliban is out of business. (Applause.) (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/03/20020315.html>)

Given this context, it is hard to see what Moore's point is meant to be. But he hardly worries about it.

Instead, he cuts to a scene in Washington, D.C., where Lila Lipscomb has come for a conference, and where we see her take some time to visit the park across the street from the White House. We see her speak with one of the ever-present tented protestors near the White House (the group that called for nuclear freeze decades ago, and is still there, 24 hours a day, protesting whatever happens to be going on at the time). Lipscomb mentions her son to the woman (who seems barely sane and says "Bush is a terrorist") and then another woman passing by enters the scene and says "this is staged," trying to disrupt the filming of what she seems to think is a staged conversation. She challenges Lipscomb about the story of her son's death, but backs off when Lipscomb offers details. It is a tense and interesting scene, but Moore does not tell us that immediately afterwards the woman apologized to Lipscomb, and the two hugged (<http://myroomtowrite.blogspot.com/2004/07/alice-in-wonderland.html>).

This is followed by footage of the grieving mother, one of the most grippingly emotional moments of the film. It is worth remembering, during this scene, that Moore has not always been so concerned for families of American soldiers. Indeed, in April 2004—around the same time he was filming these scenes, and very likely after filming the scene with Lipscomb by the White House—Moore wrote on his website, "I'm sorry, but the majority of Americans supported this war once it began and, sadly, that majority must now sacrifice their children until enough blood has been let that maybe—just maybe—God and the Iraqi people will forgive us in the end" (<http://www.michaelmoore.com/words/message/index.php?messageDate=2004-04-14>). A very different sentiment indeed.

The film then cuts to a scene of Moore walking around the Capitol with Cpl. Abdul Henderson (who appeared earlier) and we hear Moore say, "I guess I was tired of seeing people like Lila Lipscomb suffer, especially when, out of the 535 members of Congress, only one had an enlisted son in Iraq. I asked Corporal Henderson of the United States Marine Corps to join me on Capitol Hill to see how many members of Congress we could convince to enlist their children to go to Iraq." In fact, there are at least two children of Members of Congress fighting in Iraq: Brooks Johnson, son of Senator Tim Johnson (<http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/ssistory.mpl/special/iraq/1830586>), and Duncan Hunter, Jr., son of Rep. Duncan Hunter (http://www.hillnews.com/news/052003/ss_hunter.aspx). And those are just in Iraq. At least seven members of Congress have been confirmed to have children in the military (<http://web.naplesnews.com/03/04/naples/d930340a.htm>) and of course they do not have control over whether their children are deployed in Iraq or not. Moore also does not tell us how many members of Congress actually have children, and children of military age, and how many perhaps have older children who formerly served in the military or younger children too young to serve in Iraq now.

What's more, the fact that two Members of Congress have children serving in Iraq means that a Member of Congress is actually *more likely* than the average American to have a child serving in Iraq, according to calculations from Dave Kopel (<http://www.davekopel.com/Terror/Fiftysix-Deceits-in-Fahrenheit-911.htm>).

Moore also does not mention that many Members of Congress are already intimately acquainted with the difficulty of asking troops to fight and die, since 156 members of Congress have themselves served in the military (see <http://veterans.house.gov/vetlink/memberstats.htm> for statistics on House members, and <http://veterans.house.gov/vetlink/seanatestats.htm> for statistics on Senators).

In any case, Moore has now set out to get members of Congress to enlist their children. We first see him approaching Rep. John Tanner, who says he doesn't disagree with Moore's desire to have more children of members of Congress join the military, and who takes a brochure along with him when he leaves. Next, Moore approaches Rep. Mark Kennedy. We see Moore tell Kennedy what he's doing, Kennedy looks at him, and then the scene changes. But this is not what happened. After Rep. Kennedy complained to a newspaper, Moore was forced to release the transcript of his actual exchange with Kennedy, which was left out of the movie:

CONGRESSMAN KENNEDY How are you doing?

MM: I'm trying to get Members of Congress to get their kids to enlist in the Army and go over to Iraq. Is there any way you could help me with that?

CONGRESSMAN KENNEDY: How would I help you?

MM: Pass it out to other Members of Congress.

CONGRESSMAN KENNEDY: I'd be happy to. Especially those who voted for the war. I have a nephew on his way to Afghanistan.

MM: Because there is only one member who has a kid over there in Iraq. This is Corporal Henderson, he is helping me out here.

CONGRESSMAN KENNEDY: How are you, good to see you.

MM: There it is, it's just a basic recruitment thing. Encourage especially those who were in favor of the war to send their kids. I appreciate it.

CONGRESSMAN KENNEDY: Okay, bye.

(<http://www.michaelmoore.com/warroom/smackdown/index.php?id=12>)

This could potentially have made Kennedy look better than Moore would want him to, and would also have reminded viewers that Members of Congress have family members other than children in the military, and that there are people in the military serving in places other than Iraq.

Moore continues to accost Members of Congress—including some who are busy speaking on cell phones, such as Rep. Michael Castle, who walks by. Moore does not mention that Castle does not even have children (<http://www.house.gov/castle/bio.html>).

Moore then tells us, "Of course, not a single Member of Congress wanted to sacrifice their child for the war in Iraq. And who could blame them? Who would want to give up their child? Would you? Would he? [Footage of President Bush with his two daughters]." These are strange claims. Obviously, no parent wants to "sacrifice" their child anywhere, and in any case no parent forces their child to serve or not serve in the military: we have a volunteer force, and soldiers

themselves decide whether to join. And it is odd to suggest that “not a single Member of Congress” wanted to have a child serve in Iraq, since Moore himself just noted that at least one (in fact two) members actually do have children serving there, and (as Moore did not note) others have children in the military serving elsewhere.

But no matter. Moore continues, “I’ve always been amazed that the very people forced to live in the worst parts of town, go to the worst schools, and who have it the hardest are always the first to step up, to defend us. They serve so that we don’t have to. They offer to give up their lives so that we can be free. It is, remarkably, their gift to us. And all they ask for in return is that we never send them into harm’s way unless it’s absolutely necessary. Will they ever trust us again?” Thus Moore once again implies, without strictly asserting, that most people who join the military are poor, which is not true (<http://www.dod.mil/prhome/poprep99/html/chapter7/c7-perspective.htm>), and that the war in Iraq was not necessary.

VII. Conclusion

To bolster his claim that the administration cannot be trusted, Moore shows a few clips. We see President Bush saying “he has used weapons”—referring presumably to Saddam Hussein, who of course *has* used weapons of mass destruction against his own people and his neighbors. We then see Donald Rumsfeld saying, “We know where they are, they’re in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad and, and, east, west, south, and north.” This is presumably aimed to make Rumsfeld look silly, since the U.S. has not actually found stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. That clip is from an interview Rumsfeld did with George Stephanopoulos on ABC’s *This Week* on March 30, 2003. Here is the exchange:

MR. STEPHANOPOULOS: Finally, weapons of mass destruction. Key goal of the military campaign is finding those weapons of mass destruction. None have been found yet. There was a raid on the Ansar Al-Islam Camp up in the north last night. A lot of people expected to find ricin there. None was found. How big of a problem is that? And is it curious to you that given how much control U.S. and coalition forces now have in the country, they haven’t found any weapons of mass destruction?

SEC. RUMSFELD: Not at all. If you think—let me take that, both pieces—the area in the south and the west and the north that coalition forces control is substantial. It happens not to be the area where weapons of mass destruction were dispersed. We know where they are. They’re in the area around Tikrit and Baghdad and east, west, south and north somewhat.
(http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/t03302003_t0330sdabcsteph.html)

Three and a half months later, on July 13, 2003, on the same TV show, Secretary Rumsfeld was asked to clarify his March 30 comment about knowing where the WMDs were:

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS: On the broader subject of weapons of mass destruction, the last time you appeared on the show I think was March 30th. We you talked about why no weapons had been found yet, it was about three weeks into the war. And here’s what you said. I want you to take a look at it.... [plays Rumsfeld clip from March 30] ... You said “we know where they are.” Have those sites where you thought the weapons of mass destruction were, have those been inspected now?

DONALD RUMSFELD: I probably should have said we know where they were instead of we know where they are. At that moment the intelligence community said these are X number of suspect sites, meaning we have reason to believe that they might be in these various locations, numbers of hundreds.

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS: But at that time on March 30th, you believed the weapons were there?

DONALD RUMSFELD: Exactly. We did believe that. And, and they may have been there. We have been out looking at those sites and some of those sites and have gone through some fraction of them. It takes a long time. It is an enormously big country and, and, as, as you'll recall, the one individual came in and took the investigators into his backyard near a rose bush, dug down and found things that had been buried there for years with respect to the Iraqi nuclear program. And, and you can imagine how would anyone have known that except for the person who buried them coming in and saying, here they are. So what the Iraqi survey group is now doing is they are instead of running around to all of these suspect sites that, that we had where we believed they were, they are instead going through the interrogation process with these people and trying to find people who can tell us where they are. (<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030713-secdef0384.html>)

Put simply, Rumsfeld was relaying the sincere view of the intelligence community about the location of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Moore offers no reason to believe the administration was lying about these matters, or could no longer be trusted. The aim, of course, is to make these officials look duplicitous by taking short clips out of context.

In serving that aim, Moore now thoroughly outdoes himself. We see a clip of Condoleezza Rice saying, "There is a tie between Iraq and what happened on 9/11." The idea here is of course to get us to think that Rice is arguing that Saddam Hussein and his regime were somehow directly involved in 9/11, and so not telling the truth. But the clip is from CBS's *Early Show* on November 28, 2003, and here is what Rice said:

Oh, indeed there is a tie between Iraq and what happened on 9/11. It's not that Saddam Hussein was somehow himself and his regime involved in 9/11, but, if you think about what caused 9/11, it is the rise of ideologies of hatred that lead people to drive airplanes into buildings in New York. This is a great terrorist—international terrorist network that is determined to defeat freedom. It has perverted Islam to—from a peaceful religion into one in which they—they call on it for violence. And they're all linked. And Iraq is a central front because, if and when, and we will, we change the nature of Iraq to a place that is peaceful and democratic and prosperous in the heart of the Middle East, you will begin to change the Middle East. And the Middle East is, after all, a place that is increasingly without hope and without prosperity, where these ideologies of hatred are being born. So there's a very, very close connection. Saddam Hussein, of course, had been a supporter of all kinds of terrorist organizations, but it's really the broader point that, as the president said in his speech at Whitehall in London, we have got to take this on, the war on terrorism, as an opportunity to change the very nature of the Middle East, and partnership with those in the Middle East who want a different Middle East. And then you're going to see that the terrorists will have been very much wounded because their myth that Islam and the rest of the world cannot live together in harmony, and democracy will have been exploded.

This is, in fact, a succinct and serious argument about the place of the Iraq war in the larger war on terrorism, and the reason why opening up a democratic alternative to fundamentalism is crucial in a region where one way or another an alternative to the status quo will be wanted. It is the case for the Bush foreign policy, the case Moore has thoroughly ignored throughout the film, and now hides from his viewers, by showing only a snippet which purports to show Rice saying something which she immediately thereafter explains she is not saying. This moment is really the

epitome of Moore's technique throughout the film: he uses real information to create an impression that is the opposite of reality.

Moore continues, now showing a clip of Dick Cheney saying, "The struggle can only end with their complete and permanent destruction." Here again, it is worth looking to the source, because just as with Rice's statement above, Moore—in the process of masking the truth—has also pointed us toward it, if we will only peek behind the shallow veneer he has painted. He wants to make the statement seem bellicose and crazy. But if he cut this clip himself, then he must have heard Cheney's full statement, must have been exposed to what is really there, and chosen to run from it, and to keep it from us. Cheney's remark was made at a charity dinner just a month after September 11th. He said:

We cannot deal with terror. It will not end in a treaty. There will be no peaceful coexistence, no negotiations, no summit, no joint communiqué with the terrorists. The struggle can only end with their complete and permanent destruction—(applause)—and in victory for the United States and the cause of freedom. (Applause.) America has always stood for human freedom. Never has this cause had more friends in every culture and on every continent. Our enemies direct their rage at us not because of what we do but because of who we are. Tonight, ladies and gentlemen, we know who we are. We are freedom's home and defender. We are a faithful friend to allies and a strong, permanent presence in the affairs of the world. We love our country only more when she is threatened. We did not ask for this trial, but it has come, and we will see it through to victory.

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/vicepresident/news-speeches/speeches/vp20011018.html>)

These are the words of a man with a heavy burden on his shoulders. But Moore can only treat it lightly, and so he must pick one snippet and make us think the rest simply is not there. To make the truth seem like a lie, he paints a canvas full of contradictions, and then throws the truth in too, so that it might be mistaken for what surrounds it.

This is the only way to understand why Moore now lets us hear President Bush say, "We wage a war to save civilization itself. We did not seek it. But we will fight it. And we will prevail." And he is right. The clip is from a speech Bush made to a national television audience about homeland security, just two months after September 11th (which again makes clear that Moore's target here is not the war in Iraq so much as the larger struggle with radical Islam). Bush said that night:

This new enemy seeks to destroy our freedom and impose its views. We value life; the terrorists ruthlessly destroy it. We value education; the terrorists do not believe women should be educated or should have health care or should leave their homes. We value the right to speak our minds; for the terrorists, free expression can be grounds for execution. We respect people of all faiths and welcome the free practice of religion. Our enemy wants to dictate how to think and how to worship, even to their fellow Muslims. This enemy tries to hide behind a peaceful faith. But those who celebrate the murder of innocent men, women and children, have no religion, have no conscience, and have no mercy. We wage a war to save civilization itself. We did not seek it, but we will fight it, and we will prevail. This is a different war from any other nation has ever faced—a war on many fronts, against terrorists who operate in more than 60 different countries. And this is a war that must be fought not only overseas, but also here at home. (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/text/20011108-13.html>)

Moore has so thoroughly built up his lie that he feels comfortable now exposing us to the truth, certain that we will not recognize it, and hopeful that we will only laugh at it, as he does.

And then he quotes the one man who would have best seen through what he has sought to do. Moore says, “George Orwell once wrote, that it’s not a matter of ‘if the war is not real, or if it is. Victory is not possible. The war is not meant to be won, but it is meant to be continuous. A hierarchical society is only possible on the basis of poverty and ignorance, this new version is the past and no different past can ever have existed. In principle the war effort is always planned to keep society on the brink of starvation. The war is waged by the ruling group against its own subjects and its object is not the victory over either Eurasia or East Asia but to keep the very structure of society intact.’” It is a perfect ending, because in fact Orwell did not write this text. Moore wants us to think these lines come from Orwell’s book *1984* (<http://www.online-literature.com/orwell/1984/>), and indeed bits and pieces of this statement, in a different order, do appear that book. But the quotation Moore reads actually comes from a movie version of *1984*, and was not written by Orwell.

But perhaps it is not a matter of whether the quote is not real, or if it is. Honesty is impossible. The film *Fahrenheit 9/11* is not meant to be real, but it is meant to be an overwhelming illusion, in the wake of which nothing is real. The anger it seeks to manufacture is only possible on the basis of deception and ignorance. The film produces a new version of the past and hopes that by insisting it is the truth it might become the truth so thoroughly that no other version can ever have existed.

Moore’s project aims to make the whole world look ridiculous, but especially to make responsibility look ridiculous: to make the complexity of governing and making choices seem a wicked combination of arrogance and greed, to make those who are charged with seriously exercising power look at once both stupid and cunning, both too dumb to be trusted and too clever to be trusted.

The film moves by a peculiar mix of elitism and populism, and of burning the flag while wrapping itself in it. It seeks to hide from certain truths: that living in the world is hard, that power can and at times must be righteously exercised, that sometimes we really must confront threats that cannot be appeased by paperwork. The fear that this may be so, and the narrowing array of alternative explanations, drives Moore deeper into paranoia and further into the thickets of ever more complicated and decreasingly plausible conspiracy theories. By piling them on one after another in quick succession, with snippets and clips all patched together and no real concern about contradictions and gaps, Moore has made a world for himself where he almost feels comfortable—where all politics is oppression; where all war is absurd; where America is ignorant and obnoxious and guilty. Most fundamentally, it is a place where the exercise of power is tainted and impure, and where the many are the victims of the few and need to be fought for by those who have found out the truth. It is a sad delusion, and this film shows the true enormity and depravity of the vision. In the end, what it lacks is a sense of responsibility, of what it really means to be answerable, to be charged with the nation’s affairs, and to make decisions with limited information when all your decisions matter terribly. The movie is an expression of a deep desire for a world where no responsibility is necessary and no hard choices exist. It is a very old fantasy, and this most recent version of it wants us to believe that such a world is well within our grasp, if only we could get Bush out of the way. The movie tries hard to so arrange our understanding that we might be fooled into agreeing.

But by giving us glimpses of the truth, particularly toward the end, it undoes itself without knowing it. And the movie finally ends with Bush saying, in his ineloquent but crystal clear way, that we will not be fooled. Neither should viewers of *Fahrenheit 9/11*.

Appendix 1. Corrections and Updates to This Document

As of this writing, there have been no updates or corrections.

Appendix 2. Other Resources

Those interested in further investigation might find useful the following resources, which are not affiliated with the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

- Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (popularly known as “The 9/11 Commission Report”)
<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/index.htm>
- Dave Kopel, “Fifty-nine Deceits in *Fahrenheit 9/11*”
<http://www.davekopel.com/Terror/Fiftysix-Deceits-in-Fahrenheit-911.htm>
- “Fahrenheit Fact”
http://fahrenheit_fact.blogspot.com/
- “Moore Lies”
<http://www.moorelies.com/>
- “MooreWatch”
<http://moorewatch.com/>
- Richard Bushnell, “Bowling for Truth”
<http://www.bowlingfortruth.com/>
- Christopher Hitchens, “Unfairness 9/11,” *Slate*, June 21, 2004
<http://slate.msn.com/id/2102723/>
- Brendan Nyhan, “Fahrenheit 9/11: The Temperature at Which Michael Moore’s Pants Burn,” *Spinsanity*, July 2, 2004
<http://www.spinsanity.org/columns/20040702.html>
- *Fahrenhype 9/11*
<http://www.fahrenhype911.com/>
- *Celsius 41.11*
<http://www.citizensunited-interactive.org/c41.11/>
- *Michael Moore Hates America*
<http://www.michaelmoorehatesamerica.com/>