

# National News

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## Kerry Compares Bush To Herbert Hoover

Speaking in Washington on Aug. 4, to the minority journalists' convention, Democratic Presidential hopeful John Kerry compared Bush to Herbert Hoover, who denied the existence of the Great Depression.

Kerry said, "Just saying that you've turned a corner doesn't make it so. Just like saying there are weapons of mass destruction [in Iraq] doesn't make it so. Just like saying you can fight a war on the cheap doesn't make it so. Just like saying 'mission accomplished' doesn't make it so."

"The last President who used that slogan, who told us that prosperity was just around the corner, was Herbert Hoover during the Great Depression." (Hoover was defeated by FDR in 1932.)

Kerry also hit Bush on 9/11: "Had I been reading to children, and had my top aide whispered in my ear that America is under attack, I would have told those kids very nicely and politely that the President of the United States has something that he needs to attend to."

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## Terror Alert Called Over Ridge's Objection?

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge was opposed to announcing the Aug. 1 terrorism alert and to putting out a specific list of buildings, but was overruled by Attorney General John Ashcroft, the pro-Republican website Capitol Hill Blue reported in early August. "This kind of gamesmanship is the primary reason Secretary Ridge is planning to leave his job," said an unnamed senior Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official.

The website also reported Aug. 3, that intelligence professionals regard the alert as more geared to the Bush-Cheney re-election effort than to any actual threat, especially in light of the fact that the information is at least three years old.

"The only real 'increased chatter' we're seeing lately is between the White House

and the Bush campaign headquarters in Arlington," said one DHS operative. "There's no greater threat today than there was six months ago."

Sources close to the Bush-Cheney campaign say that the alert was discussed more than two weeks before the announcement, and that it was timed for release right after the conclusion of the Democratic Convention in Boston.

Coherent with this report, are the more broadly circulated rumors that Ridge intends to leave the Administration after the election, even if President Bush is re-elected.

Meanwhile, certain Democrats are also making known their distrust of the terror alert. Rep. William Pascrell (D-N.J.) is among those who are questioning the timing of the alert. Pascrell said he was angry that Administration officials did not disclose the fact that the information was years old, and that it pertained to surveillance, not to operational planning.

"Why didn't they tell us in the beginning?" he asked. "Look at the timing, look at the situation that exists, and you have to wonder."

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## 130 Legal Specialists Condemn Torture Memos

A terse two-page de facto indictment has been issued by 130 specialists, of the Bush Administration lawyers who condoned and provided faulty legal justification for the torture of prisoners of war and enemy combatants. The signers include 12 former judges, 7 past presidents of the American Bar Association, and a former FBI director. The statement charges that senior lawyers at the Department of Justice, Department of Defense, White House, "and the Vice President's office . . . sought to justify actions that violate the most basic rights of all human beings." All of the memoranda "ignore and misinterpret the U.S. Constitution and laws, international treaties and rules of international law. The lawyers who approved and signed these . . . have not met their high obligation to defend the Constitution."

The statement also singles out Attorney General Ashcroft for his flagrant disre-

gard for the laws of the United States and the Geneva Convention. By his own admission, the statement points out, Ashcroft said that the purpose of claiming an exemption from the Geneva Convention was to provide a "defense to charges" that may arise from detention or interrogation of detainees.

The document also ridicules the "belated repudiation" of the August 2002 memo signed by the DOJ's Office of Legal Counsel then-Assistant Attorney General Jay Bybee. The repudiation "is welcome," but it does not undo the "abuses the memo sanctioned or encouraged. . . ." In fact, "The subsequent repudiation, coming after public outcry, confirms its original lawless character." It concludes that these government lawyers "have counseled individuals to ignore the law and offered arguments to minimize their exposure to sanction or liability for doing so."

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## Layoffs Are Highest Since the 1980s

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported Aug. 2 that layoffs are the highest since the 1980s. Of all U.S. adult jobholders, 8.2% or 11.4 million people were permanently dismissed from their jobs during the first three years of the Bush Administration, the BLS reported on July 30. The current level of layoffs is reported to rank second only to the 9% rate during the 1981-83 period, since the 1930s Depression.

Of 5.3 million persons who had worked for at least three years at time of their layoffs, 20% were still unemployed.

James Glassman, economist for J.P. Morgan Chase, had this to say: "No one should be surprised by the increasing frequency of layoffs. It is the echo of globalization. Companies are shifting production around more frequently to take advantage of low-cost centers."

Of those the BLS polled who said they found new jobs, 56.9% said they are now paid less than in their former jobs, compared with 46.6% in 1991-93 ("recession") and 42.2% in 1997-99 ("boom"). One-third of these re-employed had earnings losses of 20% or more.