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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 08, 2004

Bush MIA in National Guard -- More Proof

by Michael in New York on 9/08/2004 01:48:00 AM

Bush is under fire for the first time in his life -- not during battle, as John Kerry was, but for avoiding battle by hiding in the National Guard. The guns are finally blazing away on this one, with New York Times columnist **Nicholas D. Kristof** devoting a column to it where he quotes men who served in Alabama who insist they would have seen Bush if he'd ever shown up more than once.

Bush was clearly derelict -- pilot after pilot says remaining ready to fly was a point of honor for them, even though some, like Bush, were trained on planes that would never see combat in Vietnam. The records clearly show he was absent for months at a time and the ONLY person who would claim to have seen Bush in Alabama more than once unfortunately for Bush insisted he saw the future Prez there even when Bush admits he wasn't.

Plenty of other officers have said they also don't recall that Mr. Bush ever showed up for drills at the base. What's different about Mr. Mintz is that he remembers actively looking for Mr. Bush and never finding him.

Mr. Mintz says he had heard that Mr. Bush - described as a young Texas pilot with political influence - had transferred to the base. He heard that Mr. Bush was also a bachelor, so he was looking forward to partying together. He's confident that he'd remember if Mr. Bush had shown up.

"I'm sure I would have seen him," Mr. Mintz said yesterday. "It's a small unit, and you couldn't go in or out without being seen. It was too close a space." There were only 25 to 30 pilots there, and Mr. Bush - a U.N. ambassador's son who had dated Tricia Nixon - would have been particularly memorable.

This issue can and should speak to Bush's integrity and presumably will play a lot more poorly for him than debating how serious John Kerry's wounds were while serving in 'Nam. It also ties in with his possible drug use, that new Kitty Kelley book and the confession by the politico who got Bush into the Guard and now regrets it.

If the media can stay focused for more than one news cycle on this (remember Abu Ghraib, remember Afghanistan for god's sake?) then this could start to build up the negatives for Bush.



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