

**THE BLOG**

# Hey! Watch the Birdie!

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**By Marty Kaplan**

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Every professional magician knows that key to deception is misdirection — distracting the audience’s attention. At Camp David this weekend, Bush and his crack team of as-yet unindicted co-conspirators are cooking up a doozie of a week for us. Naming his sloppy-seconds replacement for Sandra Day O’Connor, someone he’s already admitted will have to be less qualified than Harriet Miers, will send the press herd stampeding in a new direction, away from the lying rationale for the Iraq war. And now that red alerts have lost their power to distract (watch out, there’s a Commie — I mean, a terrorist — under your bed!), Bush will enflame our fears under the guise of preparing us for a bird flu pandemic. Influenza is the new Islamofascism.

The thing to remember — the way to ward off misdirection — is that this Administration thinks of the public in the same way they think of reporters. They believe we’re easy marks for spin and propaganda. Thanks to Pat Fitzgerald and a handful of enterprise journalists who haven’t sold their souls, we now know chapter and verse of how they conspired to plant and spread stories, how they lied about aluminum tubes and yellowcake, how they changed the subject from bogus evidence to Joe Wilson’s motives and exploited the media echo chamber to their own advantage. The ultimate consumers of these lies, the target of their misdirection, is of course the American people. We’ve just had a national lesson in how this crowd works its sleight-of-hand. It’s a teachable moment. Even if the press succumbs to its usual pack mentality, does the public really have to be the manipulable mob Karl Rove is still counting on?

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