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Barack Obama Is a Traitor



By Marty Kaplan

Barack Obama is a traitor.

That's what Dick Cheney said. Too bad Tiger Woods stepped on the story.

The decision to try Khalid Shaikh Mohammed in New York, Cheney said on the eve of Obama's speech on Afghanistan, is "likely to give encouragement — aid and comfort — to the enemy."

Cheney got more attention for shooting his friend in the face than for stabbing our president in the back.

Article Three, Section 3, of the Constitution defines "Treason against the United States" as consisting "only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort."

Cheney knew what he was doing. The most recent vice president — the most powerful vice president in history, perhaps even more powerful than the president he served — was deliberately, explicitly accusing the sitting president of the United States of committing treason against his country.

Imagine Al Gore doing the same thing to George W. Bush. Imagine another two-term former vice president accusing the new president of abetting the enemy.

After all, in August 2001, the vacationing Bush was warned: "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in U.S." Bush's response to his CIA briefer: "All right. You've covered your ass, now." What if Gore had charged that Bush had given aid and comfort to Al-Qaeda?

Surely there would have been a firestorm that no state dinner crashers could have eclipsed. The Sunday shows would have been apoplectic with patriotic outrage. Trent Lott and Dick Armey would be introducing resolutions of Congressional censure. The *Washington Post* would be denouncing Gore's breach of historic precedent and separating him from the political herd. Rush Limbaugh would be demanding that Bill Clinton repudiate Al Gore. The

Drudge Report would be flashing three-alarm sirens, and Fox News would be Photoshopping Gore's head onto Benedict Arnold's body.

But what reaction greeted Cheney's despicable accusation? Next to *nada*. Aside from some tough words on MSNBC and some anger in the lefty blogosphere, Cheney's charge barely registered.

Why is that?

Maybe we'd been so desensitized by the slurs against Obama that we've been hearing, ever since Sarah Palin's poisonous claim that he was "pallin' around with terrorists," that by the time Cheney got around to saying it, it just wasn't news anymore.

Or maybe we've become so accustomed to hearing him slander Obama for endangering our troops, weakening our security and making America less safe that Cheney's act has come to seem more Chicken Little than Doctor Evil.

Or maybe there's a double standard. A man who manipulated intelligence to justify a misbegotten war; who authorized torture; who ordered illegal wiretapping of Americans; who outed and endangered a covert CIA agent in order to punish a whistleblower; who directed billions in no-bid contracts to the company he ran and retains a substantial financial interest in. Maybe the media were tougher on a Democratic president who was impeached for lying about fellatio than they ever were on a de facto Republican president who should arguably have been impeached for high crimes and misdemeanors.

Or maybe we're just so busy amusing ourselves to death with balloon boys, vampire boys, Playgirl boys, Guido boys and philandering boys that we've lost our faculty for distinguishing what's interesting from what's important, what's catnip for our attention from what's corrosive to our democracy.

Liz Cheney said that by putting terrorists on trial in New York, Obama is "going to give them a public platform where they can spew venom, where they can preach jihad, where they can reach out and recruit other terrorists... from which they can mock the victims of these attacks, and from which they can really put the U.S. government on trial."

Like her father, she seems to have forgotten what Rudy Giuliani said: The conviction in a New York federal court of Omar Abdel-Rahman, the mastermind of the first World Trade Center bombing, demonstrated "that we can give people a fair trial, that we are exactly what we say we are.... I think he's going to be a symbol of American justice."

There are no television cameras in federal courtrooms. Federal judges can instantly quash incendiary speeches by defendants. Do the Cheneys want to preemptively accuse the judge in the Khalid Shaikh Mohammed trial of treason, too?

As respected terrorism expert Steven Simon wrote in the *New York Times*, "Instead of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed making his case, we will see the full measure of the horror of 9/11 outlined to the world in a way that only methodical trials can accomplish.... [T]he alternatives — indefinite incarceration without trial, or a military tribunal closed to the public followed by execution — are far more likely to inspire militant recruits."

The Allies didn't fear the Nazi defendants at Nuremberg. The Eichmann trial wasn't a megaphone for genocide.

But then again, Hannah Arendt didn't have to compete with *Dancing with the Stars*.

This is my column from The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles. You can read more of my columns here, and e-mail me there if you'd like.