

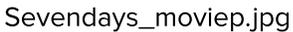
**THE BLOG****Seven Days in May December**

By Marty Kaplan

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So maybe it's the Generals who'll save us from the POTUS. Who would have thunk it?

The idea that military brass would step up to the challenge of rescuing us from a crackpot Commander-in-Chief undermining our national security was first played out in the JFK-era thriller "Seven Days in May," by Fletcher Knebel and Charles W. Bailey. The heart-thumping novel — written for the screen, appropriately enough, by "Twilight Zone"-creator and paranoia master Rod Serling, and directed by John Frankenheimer — told the story of the Joint Chiefs of Staff plotting a coup to stop the President from signing what to them was a fatally naive nuclear disarmament pact with the Soviets.

When "Seven Days in May" came out, it wasn't hard to side with the idealistic President,  whose plan turns out to have prefigured Ronald Reagan's trust-but-verify strategy. What's so stunning today, as Pentagon vs. Bush plays out, is the way that our rooting interests have switched sides.

Our current President — the one who just told us in his press conference to go shopping more — is hell-bent on a policy that only his boss, the Vice President, supports. The Congress, the country, the bipartisan commission: everyone else thinks the course he's on is nuts. Yet for W, it's full speed ahead.

He's still talking about victory in Iraq. He's even leaning toward a "surge" of troops in Baghdad that no one but the loopyest neocon ideologues is for, and that deserves its scare quotes; it would actually be yet another extension of duty tours for our courageous but vulnerable and war-weary soldiers. And not only has he rejected the bipartisan Iraq Study Group's proposal to talk with Iran and Syria; he's even ordered a Navy battle group into the Persian Gulf. Hey, Mahmoud, look how big my stick is!

What's striking is that each of these blunders by our civilian leadership has sharply opposed by our military commanders, past and present. While media sycophants fawned over the Daddy Party's unspooked-by-Vietnamishness, it was our Four Star Generals who gave John Murtha the goods he needed to decry the tragic haplessness of American policy in Iraq. It was Generals Shinseki and Zinni and Batiste who have told the nation the truth, despite Rummy's fangs. Today, not one of the Joint Chiefs wants more troops in Iraq. Nor do Generals Abizaid and Casey, our top brass in Baghdad, want to sacrifice more soldiers for a failed policy. Nor would it surprise me if the

Navy quietly believes that W's gunboat diplomacy toward Iran is batshit insane. Even Colin Powell has found his spine again.

Now the Los Angeles Times is reporting that General Abizaid is going to retire in March, and that General Casey will likely be replaced. Clearly the President's war policy is to listen to his commanders on the ground, unless they disagree with him, in which case he gets rid of them.

Is it too fanciful to hope that a handful of Generals who are citizens of the Republic, not citizens of Bush's state of denial, are secretly planning an intervention? Not an actual coup; that's too Hollywood (unless you count the de facto coup that the right wing effected during the era bracketed by Katherine Harris's rise and Katherine Harris's fall). Wouldn't it be sweet if the Texas Air National Guard's delinquent, the smirker in Top Gun codpiece beneath the "Mission Accomplished" sign, plus the six-deferment VPOTUS who had other priorities than war, were given a good, or-else, ultimatum-laced tongue-lashing by the adults on the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

The movie poster for "Seven Days in May" had this chilling come-on: "THE ASTOUNDING STORY OF AN ASTOUNDING MILITARY PLOT TO TAKE OVER THE UNITED STATES! THE TIME IS 1970 OR 1980 OR, POSSIBLY, TOMORROW." In 2006 or 2007 or, possibly, tomorrow, it's hard to imagine something more heartening than an astounding military plot to take over Iraq policy from the bizarro-world bubble boys currently running it.

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