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EDITORIAL

Bush's attempt at WMD humor is disrespectful to U.S. soldiers

When the United States invaded Iraq on March 19, 2003, President Bush and other administration officials touted weapons of mass destruction as the focal point of war. Intelligence showed Iraq was in possession of WMDs, and without U.S. intervention, Bush argued, who could say what a madman like Saddam Hussein would do?

A year later, no WMDs have been found. The justification for going to war hasn't been justified. In fact, 585 U.S. soldiers have died in Iraq and almost 3,000 U.S. soldiers have been wounded in action on this wild goose chase.

As the kids on the Internet would say: LMAO! That's some funny stuff, huh?

Well, President Bush seems to think it's a laughing matter. During a recent speech given by Bush at the annual Radio and Television News Correspondents Association dinner, Bush joked about the country's lack of success in the matter.

While displaying several photos of the president in unflattering positions in the White House, Bush told the audience, "Those weapons of mass destruction have got to be somewhere... nope, no weapons over there... maybe under here?"

That's freaking hilarious. Americans are dying in Iraq looking for weapons Bush said existed, and no weapons have been found, so let's laugh about it.

Bush's brain has got to be somewhere... nope, no brain over there... maybe under here? Nope, no sign of intelligence.

While it is true that presidents often poke fun at serious issues at the annual dinner, the Bush administration should have seen very real links between WMDs and death. Death is not a laughing matter.

Sure, those in attendance at the dinner got a kick out of his comment. Hell, just about anything that comes out of Bush's mouth is funny; he can't pronounce many words, he fumbles just about anything and he gives that look after everything he says — you know the one, the I-just-farted-and-I-can't-wait-until-Laura-smells-it look.

In retrospect, however, it isn't funny. Never was. Partisan lines don't need to dictate humor here. Making fun of death isn't humorous, and it doesn't take a Republican or a Democrat to figure it out. Bush just needs to admit he made a grave mistake by trivializing the deaths of Americans — men and women whom he essentially sent to die.

The disrespect he paid to America's servicemen and women cannot be understated. Bush would never make such statements, even in jest, during an overseas visit to the Middle East. But apparently it's acceptable for the president to make fun of others, especially when they aren't around to defend themselves.

Bush crossed the line, no matter whether he was trying to be humorous or not. Bush is the commander and chief of the U.S. military, yet he speaks of its unsuccessful efforts to find WMDs as if it were an episode of South Park.

So it seems only appropriate to end with dialogue from an episode of South Park, titled "A ladder to heaven," which comes from The South Park Scriptorium.

Bush: Ladies and gentlemen of the UN, we have evidence that Saddam Hussein is up there building weapons of mass destruction. (Shows a picture of the ladder and another one of the clouds. Both pictures have areas circled in.) We have tried to communicate with Saddam through a psychic to ask him to let us see his warehouses in heaven. But he has not responded.

Indian Ambassador: Of course he has not responded, because he's DEAD!

Bush: Right. Dead, and in heaven.

Another Ambassador: This is preposterous! Even if there was a heaven, what makes you think Saddam Hussein's soul would be sent there?

Bush: Our intelligence tells us that when Saddam was originally killed, his soul actually went to hell. But while in hell he began a homosexual relationship with Satan, the Prince of Darkness. Satan, however, decided he didn't want to be with Hussein anymore and broke up with him about August. (The French Ambassador has tuned out.) When Saddam became jealous and tried to kill Satan's new lover, Chris, Satan had Saddam sent to heaven to live with Mormons as a punishment. (The assembly is overcome with silence.) Question? (More silence. An ambassador raises his hand.) Yes?

Another Ambassador: Are you high, or just incredibly stupid?

Bush: I assure you, I am not high.

No, just incredibly stupid.

No, that's something to laugh about.



Eric Layton Illustrator

Not-so-friendly skies

It's time we took back the skies, my friends. Anyone who traveled this spring break had a fresh reminder of what a hassle and annoyance flying is these days. Ever since Sept. 11, just getting onto an airplane requires walking around without your shoes on and being patted down by a security guard who suspects you might have tweezers in your pocket.

While taking off your shoes is almost a given these days, that can be about the worst that you go through, unless your belt sets off the metal detector. In that case, you're corralled off to the side for a special search, while your shoes and bag go elsewhere. Ironically, the only time your bag is out of your sight is when you are at security.

This spring break I was able to test security procedures in international waters. What I found in France was the same basic, ridiculous airport security process. At baggage check-in, my hand was slapped when I tried to slide something into the side pocket of my suitcase before I put it onto the conveyer belt. Silly me, I should have known better than to try to open my own bag.

At the security check point, my purse was searched despite a clean run through the X-ray machine. The best part is that the electronics, such as my CD player and camera, were completely overlooked in the examination. Instead, I watched as the guard thumbed through my wallet. Next, she pulled out a plastic bag, which I had placed in a side pocket of my purse. After she looked at it suspiciously, she returned both items, and I was free to go.

Now tell me, what's the point of all of that?

In Paris, they randomly searched people walking down the ramp before boarding

the plane. Luckily my friend and I weren't chosen for the surprise safety search, but they did catch a grandma who looked rather sketchy. I mean, give me a break. I can understand stopping a senior citizen woman if she fits the profile for a terrorist, but I don't remember hearing any stories about old women making shoe bombs.

The hassle I faced in France is the same



Marissa Jones
 Cry me a river

annoyance I've faced in the United States. Our new and improved airport security is invasive and makes a passenger feel like he or she has done something wrong. The security failures of Sept. 11 are not combated by the new procedures. Airport workers still have the ability to hide box cutters on planes for terrorists, who can potentially board with legitimate visas and tickets. But if the scenario occurs again, passengers will not stay in their seats. These days it would take a lot more than an eyelash curler to take over a whole plane.

So give us back what was taken away. I want to cut my questionable airplane meat with a real knife. Air France was brave enough to distribute metal knives to everyone, and surprisingly enough everyone was mature enough to handle metal flatware. A

terrorist could hold a flight attendant hostage with a belt or shoelace around his or her neck just as easily as with a knife, so why not give us all knives again?

I want my friends and family to meet me at the gate. All of the romance of traveling has been taken out of our culture. I sat on a train in France and watched as an old woman hugged her daughter goodbye. She boarded the train as the pair continued crying and waving. The closest situation we have in the United States is saying goodbye at an airport. With new security measures, you get dropped off at the curb while some security guard yells at your driver to get back in the car and keep moving. Very personal.

I want to go back to the way it was, because the way it is now isn't better. I want to be treated like a citizen, not a criminal.

It is time to re-examine our homeland security issues and realize what is effective and what is not. The United States must accept that, as a country based on individual freedom, we will always be susceptible to terrorism no matter how many grandmas we search. Instead of hassling everyone, we should step up immigration laws and seek out responsible parties. Let U.S. citizens return to flying the friendly skies, experience the joy of walking off a plane to be embraced and travel without being accosted by security for no reason.

It's time to take back the skies, and if there is some way to get peanuts back on flights, that would be an added bonus.

Contact the columnist at marissajones@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

ONLINE POLL

Each week, the Emerald runs an online poll and publishes the results and next week's question in this space.

Visit <http://www.dailyemerald.com> to vote.

Last question: Do you support the legalization of same-sex marriage?

Results: 185 votes

Yes - Marriage is about love, not sexual orientation: 24.3 percent or 45 votes.

Yes - It's an equal-rights issue: 41.6 percent or 77 votes.

No - I support civil unions but not marriage: 20 percent or 37 votes.

No - Homosexuality is abnormal: 14.1

percent or 26 votes.

This week: What was your reaction to President Bush's humorous references to the hunt for weapons of mass destruction?

Choices: I was offended, it isn't a joking matter; I don't care, it was politics as usual; I thought it was funny.