



Hillary's Outraged Media Supporters Don't Extend the Same Rules of Civility to Conservative Leaders

Cole-Call Outrage vs. Beirut Tragedy Milking

Media shock at the rough New York GOP phone calls which linked Hillary Clinton's Hamas-boosting supporters with the terrorist attack on the U.S.S. Cole is one-sided. Is it beyond the pale to link terrorist bombings to the political record of our leaders? The surprise bombing of Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 was a tragedy media people easily exploited in an attempt to sully Ronald Reagan's reputation:

■ "In this hall tonight you'll hear nothing of Iran/Contra, or Meese, or Deaver, or Nofziger, or **the tragedy in Beirut.**" — NBC anchorman Tom Brokaw, beginning a night of 1988 GOP convention coverage.

■ "The Reagan years had their accomplishments, especially abroad. But by many measures, the Reagan Administration was a failure. It left us with a huge debt and an unfocused domestic policy. It got us in a moral mess with Irangate and **a military disaster in Lebanon.**" — NBC News President Michael Gartner on Lou Cannon's book *President Reagan: Role of a Lifetime* in *The Washington Post*, April 21, 1991.

■ "[Reagan's] good-natured pre- and post-surgical quips so endeared him to the nation that practically nothing, **including the deaths of 241 U.S. Marines in a Beirut barracks,** stuck to the Reagan presidency. As a result, the nation smiled benignly when...he burdened the working poor and middle class by raising Social Security taxes while calling for cuts in the capital gains tax. Such policies widened the gap between rich and poor and contributed to the psychological chasm between haves and have-nots. In this atmosphere, Wall Street stock manipulator Michael Milken earned \$550 million in 1987, and ghetto teens unable to find jobs joined gangs instead." — *Houston Chronicle* reporter Steven Reed, August 16, 1992 news story during the GOP convention.

■ "America is cheering [for *Forrest Gump*]. Much as it cheered Ronald Reagan, who more than Schweik or

Candide, is the real proto-Gump. Reagan too was relentlessly upbeat. Reagan too was extraordinarily lucky. And his luck, like Gump's, was often built on the backs of people who suffered off-screen. Forrest had bankrupt shrimpers, martyred Vietnam buddies, and his wife, whose death was remarkably demure, considering her ailment. Reagan scored points off America's poor; somehow managed to cloak himself in heroism while **apologizing for**

a needless screw-up that killed 241 servicemen in Beirut..."

— Essay by *Time* Associate Editor David Van Biema, August 29, 1994.

■ Thomas Friedman, *New York Times* reporter and columnist: "Governor, I'm kind of a foreign policy wonk, and it scares the

bejesus out of me to have someone as President of the United States, Commander-in-Chief, and finger on the nuclear button who is such an outsider to Washington and American foreign policy."

Lamar Alexander: "Did Ronald Reagan scare you, Tom?"

Friedman: "He sure did."

Alexander: "Did he? He didn't scare me. I thought he was the best national defense and Commander-in-Chief and foreign policy President we've had since Eisenhower."

Friedman: "**Ask 245 Marines in Beirut about that.**"

— Exchange on CBS's *Face the Nation*, March 5, 1995.

Media people no doubt think it uncivil to link President Clinton's defense policies to the Cole tragedy. But political junkies ought to have an axiom: however mean you think a candidate can get, the media will feel free to be meaner, and often at the same time they decry the tone of the candidates. — *Tim Graham*

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