



Every election cycle brings with it the loonies, the flakes, the also-rans. This is no exception. It makes life easier for us who comment, as they tend to cast light on the inconvenient truths that leading candidates would prefer be left covered up.

A recent example is Ron Paul, perennial candidate, Republican congressman from Texas. As has been widely reported, he provided much fodder when, during the second Republican Presidential debate, he commented of Al Qaeda that "They attack us because we've been over there; we've been bombing Iraq for 10 years... We need to look at what we do from the perspective of what would happen if somebody else did it to us,"

While he may have been slightly off the mark he was close: al Qaeda was more upset about our permanent placement of military bases in Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi government's choice to rely on the US for protection instead of hiring al Qaeda themselves. Of course, Rudy flew into a rage and excoriated Paul for his temerity to suggest that there might be a cause. We don't know how Rudy explains it happening, unless he just buys wholesale W's contention of unrelenting evil.

An interesting side effect of the whole affair has been the spectacle of seasoned political and foreign affairs punditry being forced to grudgingly admit that Paul is closer to the truth than Rudy. Now we have Ron Paul coming back to take another crack at the media circus brass ring with a press conference at which he proposed a reading list for Rudy G. Alongside him the former CIA al Qaeda desk chief, Michael Sheuer. Here is Paul's reading list (as per *The Times*):

• "Blowback" by Chalmers Johnston

• "Dying to Win" by Robert A. Pape

• "Imperial Hubris" by Michael Sheuer

The 9/11 Commission Report

Rudy's team responded with a classic non-response, "Mayor Giuliani said it best" — it is extraordinary and reckless to claim that the United States invited the attacks on September 11th... And to further declare Rudy Giuliani needs to be educated on September 11th when millions of people around the world saw him dealing with these terrorist attacks firsthand is just as absurd."

This is like the kid caught in a fight on a playground; "And why did Tommy hit you?" "I dunno." "Did you provoke him?" "No, Ma'm. I wasn't doin' nothin' I was just sittin' there. Honest I was." Even worse, the second part, that he was in New York so he doesn't need to be educated — is just patently absurd. Just because he handled the aftermath of the attacks doesn't make him a specialist on why they happened in the first place.

But enough of that. Mr. Paul has now decided to join forces with Sens. Byrd and Clinton in

promoting rescinding the original use of force authorization:

Mr. Paul also announced today his plans to introduce legislation that would sunset the use of force authorization in Iraq after six months. He said “basically I would support” a similar measure sponsored by Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Robert Byrd that would set Oct. 11, 2007 but noted that his legislation would give Congress more time to take action. David All, the founder of a Republican consulting firm specializing in “modern media strategies,” and Jerome Armstrong, a liberal blogger at the influential [MyDD](#), were there to film Mr. Paul for the next episode of “[Under the Dome](#),” their politics show on YouTube. They [asked viewers](#) whether they’d prefer to see the Texas congressman or Mike Gravel, an underdog Democratic candidate, and Mr. Paul won handily, the net gurus said. The web video is available [here](#).

[Paul Offers Giuliani a Few Policy Tips – The Caucus – Politics – New York Times Blog](#)

Let’s hope that Mike Gravel, the former Senator from Alaska has a similar effect on the Democratic side.

UPDATE: See the comment, below, from Gravel’s campaign.