

The Alternative Hypothesis

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Welcome to the Alternative Hypothesis- stories you won't find on broadcast news, coming to you from the heart of Washington DC.

This week we're going to focus on the ISG- the Iraq Study Group's report. You probably know that it included a recommended withdrawal of troops, discussions with Iran and Syria, and a sharp rebuke of Bush foreign policies.

But you may not have seen this article from the December 8 Boston Globe: ([link](#))



“In a little-noticed section of its report, the bipartisan Iraq Study Group lambasted the method the Bush Administration has used to pay for the Iraq war, saying its reliance on "emergency" budgeting procedures has circumvented congressional oversight and led to billions of taxpayer dollars spent on extras and pet projects not directly related to the war. “

The article goes on to point out that “Sen. John McCain Republican of Arizona, and Sen. Robert Byrd, Democrat of West Virginia, co-authored legislation requiring the war funding to be routed through the normal federal budget process. “

Bush has been getting around this legislation by using signing statements. As the Boston Globe describes in a April 30, 2006 article: ([link](#))

“In his signing statements, Bush has repeatedly asserted that the Constitution gives him the right to ignore numerous sections of the bills -- sometimes including provisions that were the subject of negotiations with Congress in order to get lawmakers to pass the bill. He has appended such statements to more than one of every 10 bills he has signed. “



In his December 6 [washingtonpost.com](#) column Dan Froomkin points to a statement from Bush on the ISG report, questioning the sincerity with which the president discusses “cooperation.” Bush says that bipartisan cooperation will be: ([link](#))

“... for the good of the country -- not for the good of the Republican Party or the Democrat Party...”

As Dan Froomkin points out:

“Bush's alleged commitment to bipartisanship would probably be easier to swallow if he referred to the opposition party by its proper name. Although the White House press office tidied up the official transcript, the fact is that even in talking about finding common ground, the president referred to the "Democrat party" -- a clipped, [derogatory](#) locution favored by those who suggest that it isn't "democratic.” “

Finally, we take a look at Dana Milbank's December 7 [Washington Post](#) column in which he quotes panel member Lawrence Eagleburger about Bush's reaction to the ISG report: ([link](#))

"His reaction was, 'Where's my drink?' " the former secretary of state cracked after the commission's White House visit and Capitol Hill news conference. Reaching for his own cola, Eagleburger continued: "He was a little loaded. It was early in the morning, too, you know."



As a postscript we go to talkingpointsmemo.com, where David Kurtz points out the President's now standard fallback position when challenged: ([link](#))

"I am the commander in chief." I doubt that is the sort of management technique he was taught at Harvard Business School. It's more like something [Steve Carell's](#) character in *The Office* would come up with."

Until next week this has been the Alternative Hypothesis. Make sure to check out the blog for all the latest at blog.althippo.com.