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Bush's "United 93" screening: A new low in the exploitation of 9/11



A number of things in recent months have alarmed us over the possibility of a new war in Iran or elsewhere in the Middle East, but nothing more so than this: The stepped-up and renewed exploitation of 9/11 by the Bush administration and its supporters.

In recent months, we've seen the long-awaited yet over-the-top trial of Zacarias Moussaoui, an al-Qaeda low-level low life. The evidence was clear that Moussaoui had zilch to do with anything that actually happened on 9/11. but the federal government used that case as an excuse to relive those horrific events in the media over and over again, with [heartbreaking family testimony](#) and by finally releasing [the Flight 93 cockpit transcript](#) that easily could have been released four years earlier. Days later, the Pentagon unexpectedly released [a new videotape of the Flight 77 crash](#) there, fueling yet another day

of "breaking news" about the 2001 event.

As all this happened, Bush and his aides continued to wave the bloody shirt of 9/11, no matter what the issue, from border security to hurricane preparedness. When Bush spoke last week to graduates at West Point, it was played up that this was "the class of 9/11," as [Bush told them](#): ""The reality of war has surrounded you since your first moments at this academy." His hatchet man Dick Cheney remains more explicit, [telling Minnesota guard troops](#) that "[t]he United States will never go back to the false comforts of the world before September 11th, 2001."

Into this volitile, march-to-war atmosphere comes the Hollywood movie, "[United 93](#)," which has done more than anything to keep Americans thinking about 9/11, those thoughts that the government exploits to spy at home and drop bombs overseas. Now, the government didn't have anything to do with film -- and by all accounts, skilled director Paul Greengrass is even-handed in his rendering of the heroism of the passengers -- but that doesn't mean that they can't [take advantage](#) of some good timing:

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush invited relatives of some of the 40 passengers and crewmembers who are portrayed in United 93 to join him for a screening of the film at the White House Tuesday night.

Bush and his wife, Laura, planned to watch the film about the attacks in the family theater. The film focuses on the tragic drama aboard United Flight 93, the plane that crashed in rural Pennsylvania after passengers fought back against their hijackers.

"The president has always said that those who were on the flight, that the passengers and crewmembers of the flight, were heroes," said White House spokeswoman Dana Perino.

The president is surely right: The passengers and crew were quite heroic that morning. They had to be, because they were left to fend for themselves by the White House and the Pentagon. In fact, the movie should make Bush very uncomfortable, because as [New York Magazine film critic David Edelstein noted](#), parts of the film are...