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PAULA ZAHN NOW

Dramatic Video Released of Russian Terrorists; Malaria Drug Raising Concerns

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(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

PAULA ZAHN, CNN ANCHOR (voice-over): In Russia, amid the pain, the anguish, and the sorrow, dramatic new video of children held hostage in a

school wired with explosives, the worst terrorist attack since 9/11. Tonight, Beslan, blood, tears, and terror.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

ZAHN: Good evening. Thanks so much for joining us tonight. Welcome to a brand new week here.

Tonight, the war on terrorism, the world's war. We start with the grim reality in Russia, where the past two weeks have been dreadful. Terrorists at first bombed a Moscow subway station, brought down a pair of airliners, and in what some Russians are calling their 9/11, seized a school full of teachers, parents, and children in a town called Beslan.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

ZAHN (voice-over): This was the disaster in the making. Russia's NTV showed video apparently shot by the hostage takers themselves inside the school gymnasium last week. Bombs hung from the ceiling and even from basketball goals. More than 1,000 people were taken hostage on Wednesday. At least 335 died when Russian forces attempted a rescue mission on Friday and the terrorists set off their bombs.

Today was the second day of national mourning in Russia. This anti-terrorism demonstration in Moscow was organized by trade unions, a sea of people, anger and outrage. The signs read: "Down with terrorism, bring the killers to justice, Russia will not be brought to her knees."

In Beslan itself, the funerals go on and on. So does the heartbreak. Flowers and candles now decorate the burned-out school. Russian President Vladimir Putin defends the decision to storm the gym, saying the hostage takers had begun shooting children out of boredom. Who would do such a thing and why? Russian state television has played an interview with a suspect captured at the school.

"We were made up of different nationalities," says the man. There were Uzbeks, Arabs, and even several Chechens. "When we asked why we were doing this, what our goal was," he continues, "the colonel answered us, because we need to start a war across the Caucasus." The Caucasus, a mountainous region of southern Russia, has long been considered an ethnic powder keg. It includes North Ossetia, where the school massacre happened, as well as Chechnya, where separatists have been battling Russian troops for 10 years.

But in a surprising move at a meeting with Western experts, President Putin complained mid-level officials in the U.S. government are undermining his country's war on terrorism by supporting Chechen separatists. The separatists are not freedom fighters, says President Putin, adding a pointed question: "Would you talk with Osama bin Laden?" The State Department says there have not been any recent meetings with Chechen officials and that the U.S. does not meet with terrorists.

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(END VIDEOTAPE)

ZAHN: And joining me now, Stephen Cohen, professor of Russian studies at New York University and author of many books on Russia, including "Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia."

Always good to see you, Stephen. Welcome.

So, at the end of the day, does Mr. Putin end up jobless because of what happened?

STEPHEN COHEN, AUTHOR, "FAILED CRUSADE": Jobless, no. Wounded, weakened. He's ruled since 1999 based on an enormous popularity of Russians.

And that popularity have been based on the Russian assumption, hope, that he can protect the country, make them safe, after all the turbulence of the last decade.

(CROSSTALK)

ZAHN: Well, that hasn't happened.

COHEN: That hasn't happened, but they've forgiven him every time up until now. It's the children.

A Russian friend of mine said, a woman, if a czar can't protect our children, he's no kind of czar at all.

ZAHN: So what do you think he's going to do strategically to try to link his war on terrorism with our war on terrorism here? Or will he even try to do that?

COHEN: Well, he'll try. He's already said repeatedly it's the same war. But the Bush State Department today said that Putin should negotiate with the Chechens, that the only solution to the Chechen terrorism in Russia is a political settlement of the war. And the Bush State Department in this instance is absolutely right.

But Putin won't admit that. But you can see that the level and the kind of terrorism is escalating. Imagine purposely killing 200, 300 children. What's next, you have to ask yourself?

ZAHN: Well, I'm lost here, because wasn't it Mr. Putin himself that said it was mid-level folks at the U.S. State Department that in fact are having contacts with these Chechen rebels?

COHEN: And he's objecting to that now.

And, in fact, in the State Department statement today, I believe they said that they would have more contacts. You have to understand that when Putin sent the army or whoever sent the army back into Chechnya in 1999, the Russian army overthrew an elected Chechen government. That government, its president, is in the mountains of Chechnya. He wants to negotiate.

He has -- Maskhadov is his name -- has denounced the terrorism against civilians. The Kremlin won't talk to him. The American State Department is essentially saying now, talk to that man in the mountains or you'll never end the terrorism. And I think, in that case, it's correct. In other words, Paula, it's different from the kind of terrorism that we confront, because, for us, for Bush, there's nobody to negotiate with.

If bin Laden dies tomorrow, the terrorism goes on. If Putin could negotiate with the Chechen leadership, maybe 90 percent of the terrorism against Russia would end.

ZAHN: Just a final thought on the tactics these terrorists are using. Obviously, nothing is sacred to them. They're using children as bargaining chips here.

COHEN: You want to cry. It's not news analysis, but there ought to be room for tears in news analysis. That's the horror of it all. We all Sunday reached out and embraced our children.

But it's important in Russia. Russians invest so much of their future hope in their children. They care for their children more than anything else, as do we all. But they don't have anything else, so the children is everything. And now the children of the town are gone.

ZAHN: Stephen Cohen, thank you so much for your insights tonight.

As we reported earlier, Russian authorities have said a number of the hostage takers were of Arab descent, once again raising the specter of radical Islam. Muslims around the world realize that many Westerners connect their religion with acts of terror. With that in mind, we asked our Cairo bureau chief, Ben Wedeman, to survey Arab reaction to these events in Russia.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

BEN WEDEMAN, CNN CAIRO BUREAU CHIEF (voice-over): The jarring images of bloodshed and violence in Russia horrified the Arab world, the top story on Arabic satellite news channels and in newspapers throughout the region. (on camera): Editorials across the Arab world condemned the killings. But the condemnation is often combined with a certain amount of sympathy for the struggle of the Chechen people for independence, a struggle often depicted as the fight of an oppressed Muslim people against the brutal Christian invaders.

(voice-over): Here, the interest in the story was intensified by persistent, yet unconfirmed claims by Russian officials that Arab militants were among the hostage takers. The grisly pictures coming out of Russia are prompting some people like liberal Egyptian newspaper editor Hisham Qassim to ask pointed questions.

HISHAM QASSIM, EDITOR, "AL-YAUM": Why are we beginning to be associated with terrorism worldwide? Why are we beginning to go through strict procedures whenever we're going through airports? Why is a visa now for a Muslim worldwide becoming more difficult?

WEDEMAN: The Beslan massacre set a new standard for brutality in a world growing accustomed to images of cruelty, videotaped executions in Iraq, terror attacks in New York, Washington, Madrid, and Bali, each grisly incident linked to groups with an agenda wrapped in Islamic rhetoric.

And now a few scattered voices like an op-ed piece in this influential Arabic daily are starting to wonder there's something fundamentally wrong with Muslim society that it creates extremists willing to carry out such horrific violence. But much more often in the street, one hears claims, echoed in the media, that Islam is the target of a dark and deadly conspiracy.

"It's all a Zionist campaign against Arabs and Muslims," Gamal (ph), an accountant tells me. "And the Americans are behind it," he adds.

Many others insist, Islam cannot be blamed for the excesses of a tiny violent minority.

"As an Arab, as a Muslim," says store owner Muhammad (ph), "I say this attack has no connection with Islam."

No connection, perhaps, but the use by extremists of Islam to justify murder is creating burdens many Muslims are finding increasingly difficult to bear.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

ZAHN: And that was CNN's Ben Wedeman from Cairo.

With me now to take a closer look at Muslim reaction to Beslan, Fouad Ajami, director of Middle East studies at Johns Hopkins University.

Welcome back. Good to see you.

FOUAD AJAMI, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY: Thank you, Paula. Thank you. ZAHN: Let me pose that question.

AJAMI: Sure.

ZAHN: Is there something fundamentally wrong with Muslim society that continues to spawn these terrorists?

AJAMI: Well, I think this is a question that's haunting ordinary Muslims. And I think Ben Wedeman has done a good job giving you a sense of the responses in the Muslim world.

And there was this editorial in one of the leading papers in the Arab world, "Al Asharq Al-Awsat," where a very thoughtful Saudi commentator basically probed the question that you have put forth. Is there something wrong in the modern condition of Islam today? Is there something wrong in the Arab world itself?

ZAHN: Is there?

AJAMI: And I think there is something -- we have to look at the -- the one answer is to say, Islam is innocent of all this. The other answer is to say, well, look, we have to look very carefully at the conditions of modern Muslims today.

And that's what Sam Huntington once said when he described what he called the bloody borders of the Islamic world, that wherever Islam rubs up against other civilizations, there seems to be trouble. There is something problematic in the Muslim world today, which is the rise of these new preachers. They're not religious. They're actually terrorists. They're sectarians. They're extremists. And they have hijacked the faith and run away with it.

And unless Muslims, mainstream Muslims, ordinary Muslims, establishment Muslims, scholars, rulers, intellectuals and journalists, reclaim the faith, this faith, it has become an instrument of radicalism.

ZAHN: But what evidence have you seen that would suggest that any of those subsets you're talking about are willing to do that? I know that everybody felt that this inflammatory editorial may be a step in the right direction. But

in addition to that, what else have you seen?

AJAMI: No, you're absolutely right.

For example, there are these preachers who many of them live in England. Many of them live on welfare. Many of them live courtesy of England and France and Germany, and they incite -- one of them said recently, Ahmad Bekli Mohammad (ph), who is a preacher of a sect in London, he said it's permissible to kill women and children. If they are captured and if they come again in harm's way in this jihad operation, it's permissible.

Another such sectarian in Saudi Arabia said, is it permissible to desecrate the dead? Now, classical Islam frowns on any desecration of the dead. But this man said you could desecrate the dead if it gladdens the hearts of the Muslim warriors and if it scares the unbelievers. So there is trouble in the land.

ZAHN: And, finally, do you believe that what happened in Beslan is actually going to move those discussions ahead?

AJAMI: I think there is -- the discussion is moving forward. It's Beslan. It's what's happening in Saudi Arabia. It's the third anniversary of September 11. And it's a growing recognition on the part of many Arabs that they need to talk about the modern condition of the Arab world forthrightly and not opt for denial.

ZAHN: Fouad Ajami, if you wouldn't mind, we'd like you to sit there. Don't move.

For Americans, 9/11 will never just be another day on the calendar. And for Russians, Beslan will never just be the name of a town. It will stand for the brutal treatment of so many innocent children. When we come back, children as political pawns in the war on terror.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ZAHN: And welcome back.

We're talking about the Muslim world's reaction to last week's hostage tragedy in a middle school in Beslan, Russia. Terrorists seized more than 1,000 hostages last Wednesday. At least 335 were killed when the ordeal ended violently on Friday. The attack has prompted discussion on at least one Islamist Web site often used by anti-Western militants.

One person writes: "There are those who believe that taking children hostage and killing them is a kind of jihad, God forbid. And that kind of talk makes my heart bleed, as it defaces the peaceful religion of Islam. Keep what the Russian criminals and others have done to Muslims aside. This doesn't give us the excuse to be like them and commit acts that the infallible Prophet Muhammad does not accept. Remember, the prophet used to his followers not to hurt a child or an elderly or a woman."

What appears to be a response to this entry is posted on that same Islamist Web site. It reads: "I don't believe the Muslims are committing such acts. And if they do, then Islam disowns them. And what did those children -- and most of them are Muslim -- do? Are they the ones who occupied Chechnya? This is the ugliest crime against innocent children, and anyone who supports it is a part of that crime."

Fouad Ajami, director of Middle East studies at Johns Hopkins University, is back with us again.

AJAMI: Thank you.

ZAHN: What does it suggest to you that there's this open debate on this Web site? What does it mean?

AJAMI: There is this open debate. And what's interesting about the Islamist -- I love this one -- is that they hate the West, but they love the Web sites and they love the satellite channels, which are perfected by Westerners. So they live off the West. But here is where we are.

I just brought to you this anecdote. I thought about it when I was coming to do this program, that there was a Ottoman sultan, al-Delbheni II (ph), who -- he was nervous about assassins. And whenever he appeared in public in his carriage -- and this is the late 19th century -- he always put a child on his lap and said, no decent assassin would ever hit a child. So I think people know the difference between legitimate combat and illegitimate combat.

And the problem are these radical preachers who have hijacked the faith and who have access to this deadly technology -- the Web, television, the videotape -- and we are seeing it playing itself out.

ZAHN: But if you believe it is ultimately the religious scholars and the intellectuals that could change the opinions of some of these terrorists, what is it they'd have to do to stop this?

AJAMI: Well, I think they have to stop equivocating. They have to stop saying, we condemn terrorism, but if Chechens committed it, then it's OK. We condemn terrorism, but we must understand the pain of the Palestinians. And so it's OK if a Palestinian boy walks into a disco tech or a pizzeria or a bus in Jerusalem and explodes himself.

They have to be able to draw clear moral lines. And they have to dissociate themselves from terrorism, because they're feeling the impact on it, because the fire that came to America on September 11 and so on has now returned to the Arab world, as we have seen in the last year or so in Saudi Arabia. The attacks have returned to Saudi Arabia. And that's the -- the moral lines have to be clearly drawn.

ZAHN: You've spent your whole adult life studying these issues. How much does it break your heart to see children being slaughtered like we saw slaughtered in Russia?

(CROSSTALK)

AJAMI: Well, I think this is exactly -- this is the great tragedy of what is playing out in the modern world.

And this terrorism has run amok. And I think it has to be defeated. Above all, it must be defeated by modern Muslims themselves. We can't win this war for them. And even though we talk about diplomacy and we talk about trying to win Muslim hearts and minds, this is a war for Muslims themselves. They must be the ones who weed these radicals out of the faith. And this is really beginning to happen. Increasingly, people are becoming more courageous against these radicals.

ZAHN: Give me an example of that.

AJAMI: Exactly the kind of -- the column that Ben Wedeman was talking about has become a subject of great discussion.

ZAHN: That doesn't mean anybody was outed.

AJAMI: No, I agree with you. The fact that the Saudi government just recently basically expressed its sympathy with the Russian people in their hour of need, now, generally, this would have never happened, because of the sympathy of the Chechen in their struggle with the Russians.

So, gradually, you're beginning to have -- the ground is being pulled from underneath these radicals. But the battle is just beginning. The battle is just beginning, because the level of the evasion in the Muslim world is very deep. And the level of evading all kinds of moral responsibility, this is the problem.

ZAHN: We always appreciate your input.

AJAMI: Thank you.

ZAHN: Thank you for dropping by tonight, Fouad Ajami.

Coming up next, we move on to a medical mystery. A drug that is supposed to protect U.S. soldiers may be doing just the opposite -- that story when we come back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ZAHN: A grim marker today for U.S. troops in Iraq. The number of military personnel who have died in Iraq has surpassed 1,000. It now stands at 1,002. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld acknowledged that today noting that war -- quote -- "has its cost."

Another cost for U.S. troops is the exposure to potentially deadly diseases. And tonight, there is new concern about a drug that is supposed to prevent malaria that's been given to thousands of soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. A CNN investigation with UPI reporters Mark Benjamin and Dan Olmsted has uncovered a series of suicides among a group of elite soldiers who took that drug.

Here is Mark Benjamin.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

MARK BENJAMIN, UPI REPORTER (voice-over): Army special forces soldiers are carefully selected and trained for mental stability. Bill Howell had excelled in difficult assignments around the globe for 10 years. But three weeks after his return from Iraq, his wife, Laura, says he snapped. In an uncontrollable rage, he beat her with his fists. Then he got his gun.

LAURA HOWELL, WIFE OF SOLDIER: I'm screaming at him to put the gun down. He still has a hold of me by the shoulder, by the collar of my shirt. And he's screaming, you're going to watch this, you're going to watch this. And he takes a couple of steps back. And I think that was the first time that he heard the police officers, because they're screaming at him, put it down, it's not worth it. Put the gun down. Put the gun down. And he kind of just -- oh -- noticed and took a step back and shot himself. BENJAMIN: We found six special forces soldiers, including Bill Howell, who friends and family say had sudden deadly psychotic breaks. Among these are the only five special forces suicides since the U.S. entered Afghanistan and Iraq.

According to those who knew them, each of these soldiers had taken the anti-malaria medication called Lariam. The Food and Drug Administration warns Lariam, also called mefloquine, might cause mental problems, including rare instances of psychosis, aggression and suicide. The drug's manufacturer, Roche Pharmaceuticals, said there is no reliable scientific evidence linking Lariam and violent criminal behavior.

L. HOWELL: I knew my husband. I knew who he was. I knew what he was. The only difference was one pill, was a little white pill that he took.

BENJAMIN: An Army study in 2000 showed special forces soldiers actually produce more of a brain chemical that manages stress.

Dr. Paul Ragan, a former military psychiatrist, said special forces soldiers rarely snap.

PAUL RAGAN, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY: It's just antithetical to their whole practice of their craft to suddenly lose control, become depressed, paranoid, hallucinate and become suicidal. You have to look for some exogenous, some outside factor, something new in the mix that would change how they have otherwise been able to operate.

BENJAMIN: Invented by the Army to prevent malaria, Lariam is in a class of drugs called quinolones. It can actually cross what is called the blood-brain barrier and dissolve into the brain. For most people, this is harmless. But there's mounting evidence that, for some, Lariam may kill.

This summer, the Department of Veterans Affairs notified all of its doctors to be on the alert for mental and physical disorders among soldiers who had taken Lariam, even if they hadn't taken the pills in a long time. More than a year ago, the Food and Drug Administration ordered that anyone given Lariam should get a written warning about reports of suicide. The same month the FDA warning was issued, Special Forces Sergeant Timothy Tyler (ph) Whiffen walked into these woods behind his Northern Virginia condo and put his gun in his mouth. He had taken Lariam during his six months in Afghanistan.

At the time of his suicide, Whiffen's wife, Karla, was four months pregnant. She said that before he began taking Lariam, Tyler was happy.

KARLA WHIFFEN, WIFE OF SOLDIER: No, he wasn't depressed at all. And in fact, I have never known anyone to enjoy life so much in all my life. He truly defined living.

BENJAMIN: The possible side-effects of Lariam listed by its manufacturer are physical as well as psychological. After he returned home, Bill Howell's wife said he had a rash, diarrhea and panic attacks. In addition to diarrhea and headaches, Tyler Whiffen's wife said he endured night sweats, insomnia, aggressiveness, paranoia, and delusions.

WHIFFEN: There was nothing in his life that would have pointed to this. This was not him. For him to take his life, it was so out of the blue and out in left field. And sometimes you have a 20/20 vision, and nothing, nothing, nothing has surfaced that would make this anything but this drug.

BENJAMIN (on camera): There are alternatives to Lariam to prevent malaria. A recent scientific study showed that 29 percent of people taking Lariam experienced some kind of mental problem, twice the rate of a similar malaria drug. In testimony before Congress this year, the now retired Army surgeon general dismissed concern about Lariam as Internet mystique.

(voice-over): Despite repeated requests from CNN and UPI over a span of weeks, the Army would go no further than issuing a statement, saying they have no data that indicate that Lariam was a factor in any Army suicides in Iraq or Afghanistan.

However, a Navy doctor at a Pentagon treatment facility in San Diego has diagnosed Lariam as the likely cause of permanent damage to this special forces soldier's brain stem. The soldier, whose identity we've hidden because he's still on active duty, said the drug can induce a sudden urge to do the unthinkable.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: You're on the brink. You're ready to take that plunge into hurting someone or hurting -- or killing yourself. And it comes on unbelievably quickly. There is no thinking about it. There is no logic to it. It's just a sudden thought. It's the right thing to do. And you'll get a mental picture.

BENJAMIN: These deaths, which include three murder/suicides at Fort Bragg in 2002, raise concerns about the tens of thousands of soldiers who have taken mefloquine.

The Army announced late last year it would stop using Lariam in Iraq because the risk of malaria is so low. In February, the Pentagon ordered a new study on the link between Lariam and suicide.

WHIFFEN: Knowing my husband and knowing how strong mentally and physically he was, I think that is a very powerful drug. I think that if it can take him, it can take anyone.

BENJAMIN: Mark Benjamin...

(END VIDEOTAPE)

ZAHN: And with me now is the man you've just been hearing talking over the last several minutes. Mark Benjamin of UPI, welcome.

BENJAMIN: Thank you.

ZAHN: Is there any way with where the science is today you can make this direct link between Lariam and this extreme behavior that you're talking about?

BENJAMIN: Science does not prove a direct link between taking the pill and committing suicide.

However, when you have these high-level individuals who are OK; they take the drug; then they have a series of physical and mental problems after taking the drug; and it results in suicide, it's a very compelling case.

ZAHN: You talk very pointedly about the FDA's warnings about these drugs. The soldiers you talked to, how many of them had been warned about the social side effects of taking it?

BENJAMIN: I have talked with dozens and dozens of soldiers at eight bases in the United States and Europe. I have not met a soldier yet who's been warned about the possible side effects of this drug, despite FDA requirements to do so.

ZAHN: Why is that, Mark?

BENJAMIN: I don't know why the Army is not doing its job in warning these soldiers. But I do know there are a lot of soldiers who wish they had been warned.

ZAHN: Is there a suggestion of some kind of cover-up there? You also pointed out in this report that our government is responsible, actually, for manufacturing -- originally, I should say, creating this drug.

BENJAMIN: The Army did invent this drug in the 1970s to prevent malaria. I don't have any evidence that this is a cover-up. However, it is an extremely disturbing series of events. No question about it.

ZAHN: Well, there's another thing that caught my eye that I thought was disturbing. And that is the fact by law, the military is required to put into the medical records of soldiers when Lariam has been administered. That hasn't happened.

BENJAMIN: That's right.

ZAHN: Why?

BENJAMIN: Well, we don't know for sure. After the first Gulf War, Congress moved swiftly to make sure that if we may have caused some of Gulf War illness with anthrax shots or some other medicines, that doesn't happen again in terms of trying to figure out what happened.

In other words, Congress said, "Army, record everything in these medical records so we can go back and find out if we've done any damage to our soldiers."

The Army didn't do it. And once again, we're in a situation where we have, really, an unknown number of soldiers out there with potentially very serious health problems.

ZAHN: And how many of them may potentially be at risk?

BENJAMIN: We don't know for sure. We know that the latest prescription data from the Pentagon shows that at the end of October 2003, 45,000 service members had been given prescriptions for this drug up to that -- in that year ending in October 2003.

ZAHN: Just want to jump back to that other question of why this stuff wasn't recorded in medical records. Would someone be motivated to do that out of the desire to cover up something? Or is there just sloppiness at work?

BENJAMIN: I have no -- I have no evidence that it was nefarious conduct by the Army. But I wish they'd done better.

ZAHN: Mark Benjamin, thank you for bringing that report to us this evening.

And this note: we asked the Army for a response; got none.

Coming up next, a soldier tells us why she thinks Lariam led her to commit an unthinkable act of violence.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ZAHN: We are talking about questions surrounding an anti-malaria drug given to thousands of American military personnel and whether the drug is connected to suicides and other acts of violence by some troops.

Joining us now is one former member of the Army who says she took Lariam for months while serving in Afghanistan and then tried to shoot her lieutenant. She has asked us not to reveal her last name or location, so we will call her just by her first name, Destiny.

Thanks so much for joining us, Destiny.

DESTINY, FORMER SOLDIER: Hi.

ZAHN: First of all, how many months did you take Lariam for?

DESTINY: Six months: August '02 to January '03.

ZAHN: And you took it orally about once a week?

DESTINY: Every Monday, yes, ma'am.

ZAHN: And how long was it before you felt you were having reaction to any of the medication you were taking?

DESTINY: Like the stomach cramps, diarrhea, nausea happened the first week or two. And after that, it just steadily got worse: the nightmares, the panic attacks, being dizzy, being scared, not knowing what you're scared of.

ZAHN: Did you take any of these effects of this medicine to your doctors or to your superiors? DESTINY: Well, we all took it, but no one ever told me to think that's what it was. They didn't -- they didn't tell us that anything could happen. They said, you know, that when you take it, be prepared to have to, you know, maybe throw up, you know, have cramps. That was all they ever told us about it.

ZAHN: So no one ever told you what the FDA is telling doctors today, that there can be psychotic episodes associated with Lariam? No one ever said that to you?

DESTINY: No, ma'am, not even the doctors when I saw combat stress. They never even mentioned that that's what it could have been. You know, it...

ZAHN: You -- you never witnessed combat personally, right? You served in Afghanistan, but were never on the front line?

DESTINY: No, ma'am.

ZAHN: So describe to us the rage you felt when you attempted to attack your lieutenant.

DESTINY: I can't even explain it, just being so angry for nothing. I mean, just being -- so just livid and so irate that you have no control over anything: your thoughts, your actions, nothing.

ZAHN: And Destiny, when you look back on it, do you think at that point of your downward spiral...

DESTINY: That wasn't me.

ZAHN: Yes. Would you have been capable of killing him?

DESTINY: At the time?

ZAHN: Yes.

DESTINY: Maybe.

ZAHN: And -- and today, you can make a complete disconnect between where you are emotionally and where you were then?

DESTINY: I hope I'm better than I was then. Sometimes I see a difference, and sometimes I don't. I see -- I see me getting upset. I see me screaming at my parents to the point that my parents are scared of my sometimes.

My little brother and sister can be completely terrified of me, because I get just so angry so quickly.

ZAHN: And I understand to help smooth out all of this, you've been given some anti-depressants; you've been given some Valium.

What do doctors tell you about this potential link between Lariam and what you're describing tonight? DESTINY: Most of the time, I know more about it than they do. V.A. -- all the doctors I've seen so far, they're just -- I had to

bring them their own document. They didn't even know it existed.

ZAHN: Do you feel like...

DESTINY: They're learning.

ZAHN: Sorry, Destiny, there's a little bit of a delay in the signal. Do you think many of them write you off as having cracked up along the way, and not take this seriously?

DESTINY: The military doctors did. Now that I've gotten to V.A. finally, they seem to be, like, looking -- reading into it. And they listen to me; they think about it. And they read through the documents and my medical records.

And just over the last year of doctors and -- civilian and military doctors. They think that everything points toward that. But they don't know -- they don't know enough about it to flat out tell me anything.

ZAHN: Well, Destiny...

DESTINY: They can't find anything else.

ZAHN: We know this has been a very tough journey for you and your family. We appreciate you sharing your story with us.

And just a reminder, that what Destiny is describing tonight is pretty similar to some other stories he's heard from family members who have taken this drug while on duty in Iraq or Afghanistan.

We'll take a short break.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ZAHN: And on to the presidential race now.

Labor Day is over. The conventions are done. And the bounce, a modest one, goes to President Bush.

Two weeks ago, a CNN/"USA Today"/Gallup poll of likely voters had the president ahead of Senator Kerry by three points, effectively a dead heat within the margin of error.

Well, now, after the GOP convention, the president has opened up a seven-point lead, at least in this poll: 52 percent to 45 percent.

And on the campaign trail, the gloves are definitely off.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: You woke up yesterday morning with yet another new position. And this one is not even his own. It is of that his one-time rival Howard Dean. He even used the same words Howard Dean did back when he supposedly disagreed with him.

No matter how many times Senator Kerry flip-flops, we were right to make America safer by removing Saddam Hussein from power.

SEN. JOHN KERRY (D-MA), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: He says that he's confused about the differences in our positions on Iraq. And yesterday, he even tried to claim that we have the same position.

So let me explain it to him in a few simple words: it's not -- it's not that I would have done just one thing differently in Iraq. I would have done everything differently in Iraq.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

ZAHN: Joining us now, "CROSSFIRE" co-hosts Paul Begala, Tucker Carlson.

Good to see both of you. Welcome.

PAUL BEGALA, CO-HOST, "CROSSFIRE": Thanks, Paula.

ZAHN: Paul, you're the guy that a lot of Democrats are saying they hope will be the rescue boat for John Kerry.

Can you tell us what John Kerry meant when he said, "This is the wrong war, the wrong time in Iraq," and yet he voted to authorize the war? Doesn't the president have a right to attack him for a flip-flop there?

BEGALA: What he's saying is he voted to authorize the war, but the way it was waged was wrong.

But General Anthony Zinni, who's not a partisan, a four star Marine general who was the head of the Central Command before Tommy Franks, knows a lot more about that region than, frankly, either President Bush or Senator Kerry. He used the exact same language.

There's a whole lot of expert military folks who believe that with a real war that we needed to fight against al Qaeda terrorists in Afghanistan, the president made a big mistake in pulling out of Afghanistan in the way he did and switching over to Iraq, where there were no weapons and there was no threat.

ZAHN: What about that, Tucker?

TUCKER CARLSON, CO-HOST, "CROSSFIRE": Well, I mean, the problem of the explanation is the Congress doesn't get to send troops into war. Only the president does.

What the Congress does is authorize the president to send the troops to war. Right?

So Senator Kerry knew that going in. If it was a bad idea then, it's a bad idea now. You see what I mean?

Nothing really has changed, except for the fact that Kerry had to win the Democratic primary and now is running against a president who is, you know, connected to the war.

The one thing that I thought was really notable, though, of what he said yesterday was Kerry said he would not maintain military bases in Iraq. That's going beyond Howard Dean.

The idea that after 1,000 soldiers are killed, we don't even get to keep a military base in sort of the world's main hot spot? I mean, it's not -- That's a reckless thing to say.

ZAHN: Paul, is that reckless?

BEGALA: No. I'm curious as to how yesterday President Bush said that John Kerry had the same position on Iraq as he did. Today the president says Kerry has the same position as Howard Dean.

My question would be, was the president telling the truth when he said he had miscalculated? And if so, which miscalculations were there, and what has he done to correct them?

We've seen no course correction from President Bush. And this thing has been a colossal debacle. And a lot of Americans feel like we've been misled going into it.

We're \$200 billion into this deal, and tragically 1,000 lives, more importantly, 1,000 lives into it, and the president hasn't told us anything he'll do differently. I kind of like it when John Kerry says he'll do everything differently, and I hope he does.

ZAHN: These numbers are not helpful to the president, Tucker, when you reach that 1,000 mark: 1,000 servicemen and women who have lost their lives in this war. How does the president plan to confront that?

CARLSON: I think it's all about the war. And if, you know, a month and a half from now, seven weeks from now, it's perceived by the majority of Americans that the war is a disaster, Bush loses.

I mean, all these attempts to bring in all these other issues: "No, it's about Social Security. It's about the economy." No, it's not. It's about the war in Iraq. I'm not saying that because I think it helps Bush. I don't think it does necessarily help Bush. I just think it's true and obvious.

ZAHN: Tucker and Paul, we've got to leave it there. Stay there for a moment as we look at what some say is John Kerry's ace in the hole, his reputation as the comeback kid.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ZAHN: Two months to go before election day, and Democrat John Kerry, as we've seen tonight, is behind in the polls. Maybe that will work in his favor. Well, it has in the past.

Here's "INSIDE POLITICS" anchor Judy Woodruff.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE) JUDY WOODRUFF, HOST, "INSIDE POLITICS" (voice-over): The two faces of John Kerry. Cautious politician...

KERRY: I actually did vote for the \$87 billion, before I voted against it.

WOODRUFF: ... scrappy underdog...

KERRY: We'll go out there and fight for every vote.

WOODRUFF: ... who performs best when his back's against the wall. In Boston, he's known as a closer.

BRIAN MOONEY, REPORTER, "BOSTON GLOBE": In the past, at least, he becomes much sharper at the end.

WOODRUFF: Brian Mooney of the "Boston Globe" has covered Kerry for nearly three decades. He describes the senator's career as a series of eleventh hour comebacks.

MOONEY: People will say that there's something in him -- they use Vietnam as an example -- where he responds to stress and thinks clearly when times are confusing and there's great tension in the air.

WOODRUFF: The textbook example, his 1996 reelection campaign. That August, polls showed the senator in serious jeopardy, trailing his Republican challenger, popular Governor William Weld, by nearly 10 points.

The rap on Kerry then rings familiar now: an aloof campaigner with a muddled message. But his comeback also holds lessons.

KERRY: Thank you, Iowa, for making me the comeback Kerry.

WOODRUFF: When some analysts thought all was lost, Kerry shook up his campaign staff, used eight debates to show voters what made him tick.

KERRY: I know something about killing. I don't like killing. And I don't think a state honors life by turning around and sanctioning killing.

WOODRUFF: And dumped a pile of his own money into the fight. And he won.

KERRY: How sweet it is.

WOODRUFF: And Bill Weld spent the next eight years warning Republicans not to underestimate John Kerry.

BILL WELD (R), FORMER GOVERNOR, MASSACHUSETTS: He really wants to win. He really wants to win and he bends every energy to the task.

WOODRUFF: Like last winter when the primaries loomed just ahead. Once the frontrunner, Kerry found himself stalled in third place, with Iowa and New Hampshire fast approaching. So he fired his campaign manager, took out a big loan, and set out to show voters he was more than just another Washington suit. And it worked, again.

Is another comeback in the cards this autumn? Hard to tell. Weld was, after all, a Republican in Massachusetts, the most Democrat of Democratic states.

Kerry's Iowa victory did owe something to the collapse of Howard Dean and Dick Gephardt.

MOONEY: He'll be tested this time. This is the ultimate test. This is -- it doesn't get any tougher than this.

WOODRUFF: A fact that is surely not lost on John Kerry.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

ZAHN: That was Judy Woodruff.

Joining us now again from Washington, "CROSSFIRE" co-hosts Paul Begala and Tucker Carlson.

So Tucker, how worried are you about this "comeback kid" label that a lot of people are putting on John Kerry right now?

CARLSON: I think it's a fair thing to say. I mean, the Weld race in 1996 was sort of amazing. Now, the fact is Kerry did well. They had a bunch of debates that year.

You still in order to win have to be running on something. Kerry's running on, like, nine different things. Maybe he'll pick one by then. I think if he runs on the war and does it in a clear way and has some sort of credible message that kind of sounds like he means it, and those are big ifs, you know, he could win.

ZAHN: But Paul, let's take a look at what the latest CNN/"USA Today"/Gallup poll about the issues that are of chief concern to American voters. And Iraq is not at the top of the list.

Terrorism is at the top of the list with 31 percent; the economy, 31 percent. And Americans now give President Bush a 27-point lead on fighting terrorism.

How will John Kerry possibly close that gap in two months?

BEGALA: Well, some of it is we are polling at the president's high watermark.

He had a very successful and very focused convention where they savaged John Kerry, really. And I'm all for attack politics, believe me, but they went across the line on some of these really hateful attacks on Senator Kerry.

But I think that will abate as people see the real John Kerry. The problem with Bush's strategy is this. He's trying to tell Americans John Kerry is a dangerous, reckless man who can't be trusted with national security.

Well, I remember when Jimmy Carter tried that against Ronald Reagan, and it worked up until we got close to the election and people took a hard look at Reagan and said, "Well, gee, he doesn't look all that dangerous to me."

I think people will take a look at John Kerry. And I think, frankly, he does stack up pretty well, and I think he'll do just fine when people get a look at him.

ZAHN: Now Tucker, interesting thing in this poll, also suggests the majority of Republicans polled believe that John Kerry has been attacked unfairly. Fifty-two percent say yes; 41 percent say no.

CARLSON: Yes. That goes into the who cares column. I mean, I've done stories on this over past election cycles on voters' perceptions of the unfairness of attacks.

And it turns out, A, most people, no matter what they tell pollsters, I believe deep down think if you're attacked you deserve it. B, when you complain about it, they think you're a whiner.

I have never seen a race, and you know, Paul's run a lot of races, maybe he has -- but I personally have never seen a race where whining about the attacks, the other guy is inflicting on you, has gotten the candidate anywhere. People just say, "Oh, you know, knock it off."

ZAHN: I can only give you two 10 seconds apiece. Paul Begala, going into this race, John Kerry's single biggest vulnerability?

BEGALA: The fact that he for a long time let attacks go unanswered. Tucker's right. General Patton said the object of war is not to die for your country. It's to make the other S.O.B. die for his country.

The object of the campaign is not to respond to attacks. It's to attack. And I think the Kerry campaign is going to do that.

ZAHN: All right. And Tucker, you continue to believe, as you told me for months, the president's greatest vulnerability is the issue of Iraq....

CARLSON: Absolutely.

ZAHN: ... and what might happen between now and election day?

CARLSON: That's right. And you know, if there's some sort of massive Tet offensive type situation with the insurgents there killing a lot of Americans, it's bad.

Kerry's vulnerability, obviously, is terrorism. If you don't close that 27-point gap, you're not going to win. ZAHN: All right, gentlemen, we're going to leave it there. Tucker Carlson, Paul Begala, thank you for your time tonight.

CARLSON: Thanks.

ZAHN: We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

ZAHN: Women beware: the medical gender gap could kill you. Thanks so much for joining us tonight. Same time, same place tomorrow night. Good night.

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