

CNN CROSSFIRE

Did President Bush Let Osama bin Laden Get Away?; Has He Failed For Search For Peace in Middle East?

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ANNOUNCER: CROSSFIRE: on the left, James Carville and Paul Begala. On the right, Robert Novak and Tucker Carlson. In the "Crossfire" tonight: Did the president let Osama bin Laden get away? Did he give the go-ahead for a coup in Venezuela? And has he failed for the search for peace in the Middle East? We'll hand the grades for Mr. Bush's global report card.

As the race for governor heats up in New York, challenger Andrew Cuomo is questioning Governor George Pataki's leadership in the wake of September 11. Has he gone too far? Our pundit pugilists take on the issues and each other ahead on CROSSFIRE. From the George Washington University, Paul Begala and Robert Novak.

ROBERT NOVAK, CO-HOST: Good evening. It is tonight's edition of the new CROSSFIRE coming to you live from the George Washington University in downtown Washington, D.C. What we'll debate tonight, Democrat Andrew

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WEXLER: Those pronouncements were late and they were lame. And they were nothing to compare to the pronouncements of fledgling democracies from much smaller countries. The president of the United States should have been the first one in the world to stand up for democracy.

(CROSSTALK) NOVAK: Mr. Wexler, I'm glad you never have to live under a leader like Hugo Chavez, and you have somebody like George W. Bush instead. Thank you very much.

(CROSSTALK)

WEXLER: And we've got a constitution that we should all stand for.

NOVAK: Thank you very much, Robert Wexler, Congressman from Florida. Thank you, Tom Davis, Republican from Virginia.

Still to come on CROSSFIRE, the man known as The Juice faces more legal problems. Details in the CROSSFIRE "Police Blotter." And the "Quote of the Day," here's hint number two. He's a political spouse who's no longer calling the shots. CROSSFIRE returns in a moment.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

NOVAK: If you're a public official and you're in trouble with the law, look out. It's Thursday night, and it's time for the CROSSFIRE "Police Blotter."

Poor O.J. Simpson, in trouble again. No, not for murder. Just for stiffing his lawyers in a child custody fight last year. It's not chicken feed. O.J.'s being sued for over \$200,000 in unpaid legal fees, plus interest. But then, again, that may be chicken feed for Simpson. A civil jury that held him liable for killing his ex-wife and another person ordered him to pay \$33.5 million. Anybody really think he's paid that?

BEGALA: A federal judge has given EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman the go-ahead to confiscate the files of the EPA ombudsman and to transfer the ombudsman, Robert Martin, to a new job answering the phone on a hotline. Mr. Martin has served as EPA ombudsman, which is part public advocate and part investigative watchdog, since the first Bush administration. His investigations have won praise and support from both Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill.

So what did Mr. Martin do to deserve this exile? Apparently only his job. The ombudsman was investigating a possible conflict of interest between Whitman's husband and polluters at two clean-up sites. Mr. Martin's investigations have long been supported on Capitol Hill, and at least one published account suggests he may be planning on resigning in protest.

Christine Todd Whitman says the files containing the investigation of her husband will be burned as an example of EPA's commitment to alternative energy sources. Just kidding.

NOVAK: What a tragedy. For some time now, left-wing crazies have demanded that Henry Kissinger be tried as a war criminal. A Spanish judge hasn't gone that far, but he wants to question the former secretary of state as a witness to so-called human rights violations by Latin American dictatorships. Judge Baltazar Garzon (ph) of Spain is the pushy jurist who ordered the 1998 arrest of former Chilean President Augusto Pinochet. And now he's demanding that Kissinger be