

Common Sense:

On his recent surprise visit to Iraq, president Bush told an Australian Deputy Minister that we were "kicking a___" over there. Heartwarming. The man has a way with words, doesn't he? A day or two later he called APEC OPEC and Australians Austrians in the same speech. Does he rehearse this stuff or is it possible that a man can be so...careless? You thought I was going to say dumb, didn't you?

No, I'm not getting into the IQ thing. I don't think that IQ is as important as a lot of eggheads and test makers would have us believe. I'm not talking about intelligence. I'm talking about common sense. I think our President may be challenged in the common sense department.

Common sense is the quality that tells you to get in out of the rain. It's that voice in the back of your head that tells you to look before you leap. It's the reminder that putting your foot in your mouth is a self-inflicted wound. In other words, be careful. For world leaders, common sense is even more important than it is for the rest of us. It's tough when you are always on stage, when most of the press loves it every time you mess up. There's no doubt about it. Our President is an easy target for smarty pants journalists and snooty commentators.

All the more reason he should "BE CAREFUL OUT THERE."

But he doesn't seem to want to. Or, more accurately, when he gets on a roll in a rousing speech he forgets. He forgets to be careful. In true cavalry spirit, when the bugle sounds, he charges. Just like Custer.

If I were working for the President I would recommend that he wear a discreet buzzer, hidden somewhere on his person. You pick the place. This buzzer would be accessible to a panel of FIMA's who would be on duty, 24/7, in a secure bunker near Washington DC. These dozen or so people would each be expert in areas that have been minefields for our President. Geography, names, numbers, three syllable words, foreign relations and compass directions, to name a few. The Foot in Mouth Agents would sit with their attention focused on live video and audio feeds of the President. Each of them would have his/her finger poised over a large red button. Every time the President wanders into one of his personal minefields a FIMA would hit the button, thereby delivering an inaudible but substantial buzz to the President's body. In this way the President would know that he was entering a dangerous area. He would be reminded to think twice and say once.

By my rudimentary calculations this would reduce his foot in mouth occurrences by about 63%. That's a lot. If those numbers are close to accurate it means our leader would offend less than half the allies that he offends now. Big improvement.

The downside is fairly obvious. The image of the poor man being jolted into common sense frequently throughout his performances gives one pause. Since only a few trusted advisers would know of the program, it would appear to the rest of the world that he had lost his toughness and swagger. In a difficult venue, let's say a G8 summit, the President would twitch, bump and pause his way through the entire 20-minute speech. He'd be bouncing like a marionette, looking more like Howdy Doody than ever. Big problem.

This is where spin would come in. The Presidents publicity department would be wise to invent a malady for him that would, A: explain his jumpy, halting new manner and B: get those slumping poll numbers up with a strong sympathy vote. I think a condition with the word Syndrome in it works because they are not usually fatal. Combine that with a strong word to indicate his ongoing virility and resolve. Got it! Patriots' Syndrome. That's what our leader would have. Patriots' Syndrome.

I can just see those popularity numbers rising. Folks all over the globe would have newfound respect for the President. Here's this guy with the toughest job in the world going out there every day in spite of that painful Patriots' Syndrome. Even when he plows right through a buzz from FIMA and rams his foot into his mouth, yet again, people will cut him some slack. After all, the man has PS.

All this is far fetched, I know. It's highly doubtful that a program like this could be pulled off. It's unrealistic. It's not that secrecy is the main challenge. We're pretty good at hiding whatever we want to hide. And it's not that the President wouldn't agree to it. He's gone with more harebrained stuff than this. The problem is this. Where on earth are we going to find enough people to fill all the Foot In Mouth Agent positions that would be required? The President is a handful. He has a way of turning a brunch appearance with the Dairy Board into a midnight run through Baghdad. This President could misplace China. Where will we find those special people who could handle him?

What kind of person is calculating and controlling enough to enjoy pushing that red button? Who would want to jerk the President around like that day after day? I mean, how many Dick Cheneys can there be?