

# GHOST WRITING

I think it ought to be mandatory for everyone who reads this LAT article to also watch Bill Kristol on TDS. It's bad enough, after all, to learn that the Petraeus report we've all been waiting for might as well be called the Dick Cheney report.

Despite Bush's repeated statements that the report will reflect evaluations by Petraeus and Ryan Crocker, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, administration officials said it would actually be written by the White House, with inputs from officials throughout the government.

And though Petraeus and Crocker will present their recommendations on Capitol Hill, legislation passed by Congress leaves it to the president to decide how to interpret the report's data.

Though now I understand how the Administration is going to use the NIE on Iraq that is also due next month—they're going to *interpret* the news from the intelligence community for us. And here's a description of the interpretive process:

The senior administration official said the process had created "uncomfortable positions" for the White House because of debates over what constitutes "satisfactory progress."

During internal White House discussion of a July interim report, some officials urged the administration to claim progress in policy areas such as legislation to divvy up Iraq's oil revenue, even though no final agreement had been reached. Others argued that such assertions would be disingenuous.

"There were some in the drafting of the

report that said, 'Well, we can claim progress,' " the administration official said. "There were others who said: 'Wait a second. Sure we can claim progress, but it's not credible to . . . just neglect the fact that it's had no effect on the ground.'"

That is, there will be a vigorous debate in the White House about how much they can lie to us and to Congress in their last-ditch attempt to win support for their failed war.

With that in mind, go back and watch Kristol. Note his emphasis on trust. Petraeus will convince you, he tells Stewart, all the while not explaining why we ought to trust Petraeus.

Hard to believe these guys are about to lose even more credibility, with their thinly-disguised propaganda. But I suspect that's what's going to happen.