

September 9, 2004 *CBS Evening News Report*

Dan Rather: Democratic Senators sent a letter to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld today asking for an investigation into the status of President Bush's National Guard service records. The Democrats called the belated revelation of new records "inexcusable." Some of those records were obtained exclusively by *60 Minutes*. And there was more political fallout today as CBS' John Roberts reports.

John Roberts: Neither President Bush nor John Kerry mentioned the documents obtained by CBS News today but the campaigns fought furiously to gain advantage. White House officials dismissed the documents as politics, an attack by the Kerry campaign. Democrats jumped on them as proof the President skipped out on the National Guard.

Unidentified Male Speaker: It's about whether he did do his duty or not and the records, as I say, show, I think, very clearly he did not do his duty.

John Roberts: The records, memos written by the President's squadron commander, Colonel Jerry Killian, suggest Mr. Bush ignored a direct order to appear for a physical in 1972 and that a year later Killian was being pressured by superiors to "sugar coat" Mr. Bush's record. The White House is eager to get the revelations off the radar screen, anxious about anything that could blunt the President's momentum.

Unidentified Male Speaker: We've got about 50 days left to go in this campaign. Every day matters, both campaigns are fighting to win today - to get those undecided voters. This is like the NFL, you put your pads on every morning and you go out and bang heads.

John Roberts: And no one took a harder hit than Ben Barnes, who claims, as Speaker of the House in Texas, he pulled strings to get Mr. Bush into the National Guard. Republicans skewered Barnes as a political hack.

Dan Bartlett: It's not surprising that people like Ben Barnes, longtime activist, Democrat activist who is a vice chairman of John Kerry would be making these recycled charges of President Bush.

John Roberts: The documents and Barnes' claims have given new life to charges President Bush got favorable treatment to both get in the Guard and get out. But will they impact Mr. Bush in the same way questions about service in Vietnam did John Kerry? Republicans say four years ago, they might have.

Unidentified Male Speaker: But now he's been commander-in-chief, I think voters are willing to look past it and are more interested in what he's doing on Iraq and how he's performing as commander-in-chief.

John Roberts: Democrats, on the other hand, insist it will make a difference. They say it goes to the issues of leadership, honesty and honor. Which just happen to be the

President's strongest attributes. John Roberts, CBS News, Jonestown, Pennsylvania.