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***GAO Report on 2004 Election:  
Results Could Have Been Flipped  
by Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman***

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As a legal noose appears to be tightening around the Bush/Cheney/Rove inner circle, a shocking government report shows the floor under the legitimacy of their alleged election to the White House is crumbling.

The latest critical confirmation of key indicators that the election of 2004 was stolen comes in an extremely powerful, penetrating report from the General Accounting Office that has gotten virtually no mainstream media coverage.

The government's lead investigative agency is known for its general incorruptibility and its thorough, in-depth analyses. Its concurrence with assertions widely dismissed as "conspiracy theories" adds crucial new weight to the case that Team Bush has no legitimate business being in the White House.

Nearly a year ago, senior Judiciary Committee Democrat John Conyers (D-MI) asked the GAO to investigate electronic voting machines as they were used during the November 2, 2004 presidential election. The request came amidst widespread complaints in Ohio and elsewhere that often shocking irregularities defined their performance.

According to CNN, the U.S. House Judiciary Committee received "more than 57,000 complaints" following Bush's alleged re-election. Many such concerns were memorialized under oath in a series of sworn statements and affidavits in public hearings and investigations conducted in Ohio by the Free Press and other election protection organizations.

The non-partisan GAO report has now found that, "some of [the] concerns about electronic voting machines have been realized and have caused problems with recent elections, resulting in the loss and miscount of votes."

The United States is the only major democracy that allows private partisan corporations to secretly count and

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tabulate the votes with proprietary non-transparent software. Rev. Jesse Jackson, among others, has asserted that "public elections must not be conducted on privately-owned machines." The CEO of one of the most crucial suppliers of electronic voting machines, Warren O'Dell of Diebold, pledged before the 2004 campaign to deliver Ohio and thus the presidency to George W. Bush.

Bush's official margin of victory in Ohio was just 118,775 votes out of more than 5.6 million cast. Election protection advocates argue that O'Dell's statement still stands as a clear sign of an effort, apparently successful, to steal the White House.

Among other things, the GAO confirms that:

1. Some electronic voting machines "did not encrypt cast ballots or system audit logs, and it was possible to alter both without being detected." In other words, the GAO now confirms that electronic voting machines provided an open door to flip an entire vote count. More than 800,000 votes were cast in Ohio on electronic voting machines, some seven times Bush's official margin of victory.
2. "It was possible to alter the files that define how a ballot looks and works so that the votes for one candidate could be recorded for a different candidate." Numerous sworn statements and affidavits assert that this did happen in Ohio 2004.
3. "Vendors installed uncertified versions of voting system software at the local level." Falsifying election results without leaving any evidence of such an action by using altered memory cards can easily be done, according to the GAO.
4. The GAO also confirms that access to the voting network was easily compromised because not all digital recording electronic voting systems (DREs) had supervisory functions password-protected, so access to one machine provided access to the whole network. This critical finding confirms that rigging the 2004 vote did not require a "widespread conspiracy" but rather the cooperation of a very small number of operatives with the power to tap into the networked machines and thus change large numbers of votes at will. With 800,000 votes cast on electronic machines in Ohio, flipping the number needed to give Bush 118,775 could be easily done by just one programmer.
5. Access to the voting network was also compromised by repeated use of the same user IDs combined with easily guessed passwords. So even relatively amateur hackers could have gained access to and altered the Ohio vote tallies.
6. The locks protecting access to the system were easily picked and keys were simple to copy, meaning, again, getting into the system was an easy matter.
7. One DRE model was shown to have been networked in such a rudimentary fashion that a power failure on one machine would cause the entire network to fail, re-emphasizing the fragility of the system on which the Presidency of the United States was decided.
8. GAO identified further problems with the security protocols and background screening practices for vendor personnel, confirming still more easy access to the system.

In essence, the GAO study makes it clear that no bank, grocery store or mom & pop chop shop would dare operate its business on a computer system as flimsy, fragile and easily manipulated as the one on which the 2004 election turned.

The GAO findings are particularly damning when set in the context of an election run in Ohio by a Secretary

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of State simultaneously working as co-chair of the Bush–Cheney campaign. Far from what election theft skeptics have long asserted, the GAO findings confirm that the electronic network on which 800,000 Ohio votes were cast was vulnerable enough to allow a tiny handful of operatives — or less — to turn the whole vote count using personal computers operating on relatively simple software.

The GAO documentation flows alongside other crucial realities surrounding the 2004 vote count. For example:

- The exit polls showed Kerry winning in Ohio, until an unexplained last minute shift gave the election to Bush. Similar definitive shifts also occurred in Iowa, Nevada and New Mexico, a virtual statistical impossibility.
- A few weeks prior to the election, an unauthorized former ES&S voting machine company employee, was caught on the ballot-making machine in Auglaize County.
- Election officials in Mahoning County now concede that at least 18 machines visibly transferred votes for Kerry to Bush. Voters who pushed Kerry's name saw Bush's name light up, again and again, all day long. Officials claim the problems were quickly solved, but sworn statements and affidavits say otherwise. They confirm similar problems in Franklin County (Columbus). Kerry's margins in both counties were suspiciously low.
- A voting machine in Mahoning County recorded a negative 25 million votes for Kerry. The problem was allegedly fixed.
- In Gahanna Ward 1B, at a fundamentalist church, a so-called "electronic transfer glitch" gave Bush nearly 4000 extra votes when only 638 people voted at that polling place. The tally was allegedly corrected, but remains infamous as the "loaves and fishes" vote count.
- In Franklin County, dozens of voters swore under oath that their vote for Kerry faded away on the DRE without a paper trail.
- In Miami County, at 1:43am after Election Day, with the county's central tabulator reporting 100% of the vote – 19,000 more votes mysteriously arrived; 13,000 were for Bush at the same percentage as prior to the additional votes, a virtual statistical impossibility.
- In Cleveland, large, entirely implausible vote totals turned up for obscure third party candidates in traditional Democratic African–American wards. Vote counts in neighboring wards showed virtually no votes for those candidates, with 90% going instead for Kerry.
- Prior to one of Blackwell's illegitimate "show recounts," technicians from Triad voting machine company showed up unannounced at the Hocking County Board of Elections and removed the computer hard drive.
- In response to official information requests, Shelby and other counties admit to having discarded key records and equipment before any recount could take place.
- In a conference call with Rev. Jackson, Attorney Cliff Arnebeck, Attorney Bob Fittrakis and others, John Kerry confirmed that he lost every precinct in New Mexico that had a touchscreen voting machine. The losses had no correlation with ethnicity, social class or traditional party affiliation – only with the fact that touchscreen machines were used.

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- In a public letter, Rep. Conyers has stated that "by and large, when it comes to a voting machine, the average voter is getting a lemon – the Ford Pinto of voting technology. We must demand better."

But the GAO report now confirms that electronic voting machines as deployed in 2004 were in fact perfectly engineered to allow a very small number of partisans with minimal computer skills and equipment to shift enough votes to put George W. Bush back in the White House.

Given the growing body of evidence, it appears increasingly clear that's exactly what happened.

*Bob Fittrakis & Harvey Wasserman are co-authors of How the GOP Stole America's 2004 Election & is Rigging 2008, available via <http://freepress.org> and <http://harveywasserman.com>. Their What Happened in Ohio, with Steve Rosenfeld, will be published in Spring, 2006, by New Press.*