

POLITICO

George W. Bush suspended from Texas Air National Guard, Aug. 1, 1972

By **ANDREW GLASS** | 08/01/13 05:04 AM EDT

On this day in 1972, George W. Bush, the nation's 43rd president, was permanently suspended from flying with the Texas Air National Guard for having missed an annual medical examination.

The matter spawned a political controversy in both the 2000 and 2004 presidential campaigns. Reporters probed not only how and why Bush had lost his flight status but also how he came to be a member of the Texas Air National Guard during the Vietnam War and whether he had in fact fulfilled the requirements of his military service contract.

Bush defended his military record by contending that he satisfactorily completed all of his military obligations.

National Air Guard regulations require pilots to pass an annual physical in order to remain in flight status during the three months prior to a pilot's birthday, in Bush's case, July 6. Because Bush did not take the exam during this time frame, his commander suspended his flight status. The decision to do so was confirmed by Col. Bobby Hodges on Sept. 5, 1972, and re-confirmed by a National Guard Bureau order on Sept. 29 of that year.

As a presidential candidate in 2000, Bush said he wanted wait to take the physical until it could be done by his own private doctor. However, Air Guard regulations require that the physical be performed by an Air Force doctor. Moreover, flight surgeons conducted Bush's two previous physical exams.

According to his military records, Bush never flew again as an Air National Guard pilot after April 1972. He received an honorable discharge from the Air National

Guard in 1973 to attend Harvard Business School.

Some opponents of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq subsequently equated Bush's stint in the Texas Air National Guard and his Harvard deferment as evidence that he had maneuvered to escape the draft during the Vietnam War.

SOURCE: WWW.HISTORY.COM