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'Doonesbury' offers \$10,000 for proof Bush served

WASHINGTON (Reuters) --The frequently irreverent "Doonesbury" comic strip is offering \$10,000 to anyone who can show that President Bush served in the Alabama Air National Guard.

"That's right -- we're offering \$10,000 cash to anyone who can prove George W. Bush fulfilled his Guard duty in Alabama," Wednesday's strip said. "So if you served with Mr. Bush -- even if only in the officers' club -- we want to hear from you right now!"

Readers are referred to the Web site doonesbury.com, where a Witness Registration Form asks for online testimony. The site says the prize money is being underwritten by Doonesbury creator Garry Trudeau. "Thanks to Bush's massive tax cuts for people who don't need them, GBT is flush."

The hitch is the winner will not actually receive the reward. Instead the Web site says the cash will be donated in the winner's name to the United Service Organization (USO), which entertains American troops.

The strip first offered the reward on Monday and already there are hundreds of responses, according to David Stanford, duty officer at the online Doonesbury Town Hall.

"We're only in day three and have already received witness forms from over 600 contestants, with more streaming in every hour," Stanford said in an e-mail response to questions.

"We'll be carefully processing all of them, but what's immediately striking is that so many who've plunged into the depths of their 1972 memories have surfaced with accounts that involve automobiles, alcohol, aliens, secret ops and Elvis," Stanford said.

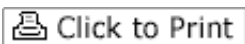
The White House had no comment on the contest, but Christine Iverson of the Republican National Committee said laughingly, "It sounds like a stunt worthy of a comic strip."

Democratic National Committee chairman Terry McAuliffe has accused Bush of being absent without leave from his Guard service from May 1972 to May 1973.

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