

THE DISASTERS OF WAR



In 1985, President Ronald Reagan received a group of bearded men.... They were very ferocious-looking bearded men with turbans looking like they came from another century. President Reagan received them in the White House. After receiving them, he spoke to the press. He pointed towards them, I'm sure some of you will recall that moment, and said, "These are the moral equivalent of America's founding fathers." These were the Afghan Mujahiddin.

They were at the time, guns in hand, battling the Evil Empire....

In August 1998, another American President ordered missile strikes from the American Navy based in the Indian Ocean to kill Osama Bin Laden and his men in the camps in Afghanistan. I do not wish to embarrass you with the reminder that Mr. Bin Laden, whom fifteen American missiles were fired to hit in Afghanistan, was only a few years ago the moral equivalent of George

Washington and Thomas Jefferson! He got angry over the fact that he has been demoted from "Moral Equivalent" of your "Founding Fathers." So he is taking out his anger in different ways....

You see, why I have recalled all these stories is to point out to you that the matter of terrorism is rather complicated. Terrorists change. The terrorist of yesterday is the hero of today, and the hero of yesterday becomes the terrorist of today. This is a serious matter of the constantly changing world of images in which we have to keep our heads straight to know what is terrorism and what is not. But more importantly, to know what causes it, and how to stop it.

Eqbal Ahmad
"On Terrorism"
Talk at the University of Colorado, Boulder
October 12, 1998



Guantánamo Bay, Cuba 2002, photo: Beth A. Keiser/AP

David Barsamian: You wrote an article some years ago called “Comprehending Terror” in which you said it’s important to start by defining the terminology?

Eqbal Ahmad: First of all, I think terrorism should be defined in terms of the illegal use of violence for the purposes of influencing somebody’s behavior, inflicting punishment, or taking revenge. If we define terror in that way, the first thing we discover is that it has been practiced on a larger scale, globally, both by governments and by private groups. Private groups fall into various categories. The political terrorist is only one category out of many others. When we talk about terror, then, we are talking about the political variety. When we talk about the political variety, the first thing to ask is, what are its roots? Who is the terrorist?

A Project by Ann Messner



**Commissioned by curator Nina Felshin for the exhibition
Disasters of War: From Goya to Golub
 September 10 - December 11, 2005
 Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery, Wesleyan University**

**Second printing in conjunction with the exhibition
Meanwhile in Baghdad
 curated by Hamza Walker
 November 11 - December 23, 2007
 The Renaissance Society at The University of Chicago**

The official attitude toward terror suffers from a suspension of any inquiry into causation. We seldom ask what produces terrorism. “There is no connection,” said Secretary of State George Shultz, “with any cause. Terrorism is just a bad crime.” Official definitions, even academic definitions of terror, exclude the illegal violence—torture, burning of villages, destruction of entire peoples, genocide—as outside of the definition of terror, which is to say the bias of terror is against people and in favor of governments. The reality is that the ratio of human losses between official and terrorist activity has been one to a thousand. For every life lost by unofficial terrorism, a thousand have been lost by the official variety.

Another characteristic that we have seen of terror in our time, if you take my definition of it, is that there was a rise of fascist governments in third-world countries, particularly throughout the 1970s and 1980s. All these fascist governments—in Indonesia, Zaire, Iran, South Korea, and elsewhere—were fully supported by one or the other of the superpowers. They have committed a huge amount of terrorist violence, the source of which is the state. Again, there has been very little focus on this by governments, the media, and even academics....

(excerpted from an interview by David Barsamian with Eqbal Ahmad)

**Eqbal Ahmad
 Terrorism: Theirs and Ours
 2001**

The novelty of the September 11 terror spectacle was the use of hijacked airplanes to crash into buildings and destabilize urban and economic life. The attacks were symbolic, yet had material effects, disrupting the airline industry, the businesses centered in downtown New York, and the global economy itself through the closure of the U.S. and other stock markets and subsequent downturns of the world’s markets. Indeed, as a response to terror, an unparalleled shutdown occurred in New York, Washington, D.C., and other major cities throughout the United States, with government and businesses closing up for the day and the airline system canceling all flights. Wall Street and the stock market were shut down for days; baseball and entertainment events were postponed; Disneyland and Disneyworld were closed; McDonald’s locked up its regional offices; and most major U.S. cities became eerily quiet.

The 9/11 terror spectacle unfolded in a city that was one of the most media-saturated in the world and thus played out the deadly drama live on television. The images of the planes hitting the WTC towers and their collapse were broadcast repeatedly, as if repetition were necessary to master a highly traumatic event. The spectacle conveyed the message that the United States was vulnerable, that terrorists could create great harm, and that anyone at any time could be subject to a deadly terrorist attack, even in Fortress America. Suddenly, the suffering, fear, and death of loved ones that many people endure on a daily basis in violent and insecure situations in other parts of the world were also deeply experienced by U.S. citizens, in some cases for the first time. The terrorist attacks thus had the material effect of harming the U.S. and global economies, and the

psychological effect of traumatizing a nation. The spectacle of terror was broadcast throughout the global village, with the whole world watching the assault on the United States and New York’s attempts to cope with the attacks.

The media became “weapons of mass hysteria” by playing the 9/11 Twin Tower attacks over and over, focusing on the devastation at “Ground Zero,” a term first used to describe the epicenter of the Hiroshima atomic bomb that was appropriated to signify the devastation and enormity of the 9/11 attacks. Day after day, terrorist “experts” described bin Laden and Al Qaeda and repeatedly disseminated everything that was known about the terrorists, creating a culture of hysteria, as the Bush administration trotted out John Ashcroft and Dick Cheney to frighten the public with further warnings of impending terror attacks. The media thus served in a perverse way as instruments of Al Qaeda and terrorism, since one of the goals of terror attacks is to spread fear and anxiety.

The U.S. media and the Bush administration thus created a legend of bin Laden and Al Qaeda, projecting into the figure of bin Laden enormous evil and power, which in turn elevated his status in the Arab and Muslim world to a quasi-demigod able to inflict harm on the American superpower....

For several days, U.S. television suspended broadcasting of advertising and entertainment programs and focused solely on the terrorist attacks in New York, leading to the claim in a May 2002 HBO film, *In Memoriam*, that 9/11 was “the most documented event in history.” The Bush administration and the images

Cover photo: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein greets Donald Rumsfeld, then special envoy of President Ronald Reagan, in Baghdad on December 20, 1983.

and discourses of the corporate media failed to provide a coherent account of what happened, why it happened, and what would count as intelligent and responsible responses. The Bush administration and corporate media privileged the “clash of civilizations” model, established a binary dualism between Islamic terrorism and civilization, and largely circulated retaliatory discourses that whipped up war fever and called for military intervention. Such one-dimensional militarism, however, has the potential to generate a cycle of violence and perpetual war that makes the current situation even worse. Thus, although the media in a democracy should critically debate urgent questions facing the nation, such as whether to declare war, in this crisis the mainstream U.S. corporate media, especially the television networks, promoted only military solutions to the problem of global terrorism and provided a propaganda machine for Bush administration militarism.

The network anchors as well as political commentators framed the event as a military attack. The constant invocation of analogies to Pearl Harbor inevitably elicited a need to strike back and prepare for war. For example, Peter [Jennings] of ABC stated, “The response is going to have to be massive if it is to be effective.” News programs featured logos such as “War on America,” “America’s New War,” and other inflammatory slogans that assumed that the United States was already at war. On the day of the strikes on the WTC and Pentagon, the networks brought out an array of national security consultants, usually ranging from the right to the far right, to explain the horrific events of September 11. These “experts” had close connections to the Pentagon and usually would express the Pentagon viewpoint and

the bathroom. After a few hours they were lying on the floor in their own urine and feces.

The photographed arrival of the Guantánamo prisoners created one of the more enduring images of the U.S. war on terror. The Muslim world and others were shocked when they saw crew-cut marines standing over a row of kneeling, shackled, goggled Muslim men in the Cuban sun. It became an iconic image of all that the United States was doing wrong to the Muslim world.

The British prisoners whom we represent spent the next two years under extremely high-security imprisonment at Guantánamo. First, they were detained at Camp X-Ray in dog-run-like cages, exposed to the elements and at the mercy of the Immediate Reaction Force (IRF), which would go into the cages and beat people up, a process that came to be called “IRFing.” Some of these beatings were taped and have recently been requested by one of the congressional committees involved in the investigation. They may turn out to be important evidence of abuse and torture, if the most damaging evidence implicating these IRF squads has not already been destroyed by the military.

In the middle of 2002 the cells of those initially imprisoned in the dog-run cells were upgraded and a number of prisoners, including our clients, were transferred from Camp X-Ray to Camp Delta. These prisoners were still in cage-like cells, three sides of which were chain link. Prisoners had their hair shaved off; their toilets were holes in the floor; they had to stoop to get water; and guards, female and male, walked by them twice every minute, so they had absolutely no privacy. The detainees were deprived of the most basic utensils for human care. And they underwent scores and scores of additional interrogations under coercive conditions.

Ray: But the Pentagon claims it is treating the prisoners at Guantánamo well, that it is a model institution, that it is respecting the prisoners’ religion, providing Muslims with prayer rugs, the Koran, and “culturally appropriate meals.”

Ratner: This is not at all true. There are many different levels to consider in the abuses suffered there. First, there is a psychological level. People, as far as we know, have been (and are still being) rounded up and taken to Guantánamo from all over the world, where they are put into wire-mesh cages for observation. They are isolated from each other and repeatedly taken into separate interrogation booths—trailers, really.

A critical psychological issue is that these people have no idea if or when they are ever getting out. For all they know, each time they are taken out of their cells they may well be put up against a wall and shot.

Ray: I read reports a year or so ago that the camp commander at the time, Major General Geoffrey Miller, floated a rumor in the media and also let it become known around the camp that the new, hard-walled prison [that] Halliburton was building, Camp Echo, was to be a death row prison, with its own execution chamber.

Ratner: Yes, and this just reinforced the belief in the prisoners’ minds that Guantánamo was the end of the line, a death camp. The Red Cross has said one of the most psychologically devastating things happening to people in Guantánamo is the notion that they have reached a dead end, that there is no way out. The psychological harm is horrendous. In fact, one of the threats employed to make prisoners in Iraq talk, even



Photos of detainees being transported from Afghanistan to Guantánamo Bay. Anonymously sent to news organizations, November 2002

message of the day, making them propaganda conduits for the U.S. military rather than independent analysts....

Although many critics cautioned against calling the terrorist attacks “war” and called for multilateral legal, police, and military coalitions to go after the Al Qaeda network, such debates did not take place in the U.S. broadcasting media. Instead, after September 11, the networks kept their cameras aimed at “Ground Zero” to dramatize the destruction, the harm done to victims, and the discovery of dead bodies, and constantly speculated on the whereabouts of bin Laden and the Al Qaeda terrorists who had committed the atrocities, helping to generate and sustain widespread public desire for a military response....

Douglas Kellner
Media Spectacle and the Crisis of Democracy:
Terrorism, War and Election Battles
2005

Michael Ratner: After a month in Kandahar some of the prisoners were dressed in orange jumpsuits, put into chains that tied their legs, arms, and waists together, and flown to Guantánamo. Wearing blacked out goggles and ear coverings, they were shackled and chained flat against the floor in a transport plane for twenty-four hours. They didn’t know where they were going. They weren’t allowed to get up to go to

Some of these may have been videotaped as well. It was during this process that some of the released British detainees made false confessions.

Ellen Ray: How are the Guantánamo camps set up?

Ratner: There is a series of cell blocks, one after the other, just like storage facilities. Within Camp Delta there are levels one through four.

Within each camp there are different levels, depending on how much you’ve cooperated. Level one is for the cooperators, levels two through four for the people who don’t cooperate. Then there is level four-minus. Once you get into level four-minus, from what I understand, you’re essentially in isolation, with no utensils, maybe a little bit of cloth or something to sleep on, but really very, very harsh conditions.

There is another camp, Camp Echo, which is considered solitary, and is primarily for those people who are going to face commissions. There may also be people there whom the captors consider problems.

They have built two new camps, Romeo and Tango, “R&T,” which are going to be worse than the others: total isolation camps. In these camps the detainees can be put in stripped, and after a few days given shorts—that is all they are given to wear—which only go down to about half a foot above the knee. These are for Muslim men who pray four or five times a day, men whose knees are supposed to be covered. When they sit and pray in these shorts, anyone can look into the pants and see their genitals. This is obviously meant to embarrass them and tear down the human personality of the people involved.

after they had been subjected to abuse and torture, was to threaten them with going to Guantánamo, because everyone understood that there was little or no chance of ever getting out of there. About one in five of the prisoners have been put on antidepressants, psychotropics, and other drugs. In addition to hunger strikes, there have been more than thirty suicide attempts. Guantánamo is like Dante’s ninth circle of hell. The temperature is often 110 degrees Fahrenheit, and of course the prisoners have no such thing as air conditioning. The place is infested by scorpions and banana rats. The detainees sleep on concrete floors, with no mattresses; the toilet is a hole in the ground. It is a horrific situation from a physical, psychological, and legal point of view.

(excerpted from an interview by Ellen Ray with Michael Ratner)

Michael Ratner and Ellen Ray
Guantánamo: What the World Should Know
2004



Detainees at Guantánamo Bay. Photo: Shane T. McCoy/AP, U.S. Navy, obtained on cryptome.org.



Detainees at Guantánamo Bay. Photo: Shane T. McCoy/AP, U.S. Navy, obtained on cryptome.org.

These prisoners at Camp Delta (and formerly Camp X-Ray), detained indefinitely, are not even called “prisoners” by the Department of Defense or by representatives of the current US administration. To call them by that name would suggest that internationally recognized rights pertaining to the treatment of prisoners of war ought to come into play. They are, rather, “detainees,” those who are held in waiting, those for whom waiting may well be without end. To the extent that the state arranges for this pre-legal state as an “indefinite” one, it maintains that there will be those held by the government for whom the law does not apply, not only in the present, but for the indefinite future. In other words, there will be those for whom the protection of law is indefinitely postponed. The state, in the name of its right to protect itself and, hence, through the rhetoric of sovereignty, extends its power in excess of the law and defies international accords; for if the detention is indefinite, then the lawless exercise of state sovereignty becomes indefinite as well. In this sense, indefinite detention provides the condition for the indefinite exercise of extra-legal state power. Although the justification for not providing trials—and the attendant rights of due process, legal counsel, rights of appeal—is that we are in a state of national emergency, a state understood as out of the ordinary, it seems to follow that the state of emergency is not limited in time and space, that it, too, enters onto an indefinite future. Indeed, state power restructures temporality itself, since the problem of terrorism is no longer a historically or geographically limited problem: it is limitless and without end, and this means that the state of emergency is potentially limitless and without end, and that the prospect of an exercise of state power in its lawlessness structures the future indefinitely.

....

So, these prisoners, who are not prisoners, will be tried, if they will be tried, according to rules that are not those of a constitutionally defined U.S. law nor of any recognizable international code. Under the Geneva Convention, the prisoners would be entitled to trials under the same procedures as U.S. soldiers, through court martial or civilian courts, and not through military tribunals as the Bush administration has proposed. The current regulations for military tribunals provide for the

death penalty if all members of the tribunal agree to it. The President, however, will be able to decide on that punishment unilaterally in the course of the final stage of deliberations in which an executive judgment is made and closes the case. Is there a timeframe set forth in which this particular judicial operation will cease to be? In response to a reporter who asked whether the government was not creating procedures that would be in place indefinitely, General Counsel Haynes pointed out that, “[A]s an ongoing additional judicial system created by the executive branch, the rules [for the tribunals] ... do not have a sunset provision in them ... I’d only observe that the war, we think, will last for a while.”

Judith Butler
Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence
2004

On January 22, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld explained why these prisoners should not be called “prisoners of war,” and why he prefers to call them “battlefield detainees” or “unlawful combatants.” For the United States, these are not POWs, because this is no ordinary war; it is not primarily a battle between recognizable nation-states or, in the parlance of the Geneva Conventions, “High Contracting Parties.” The term they have come up with, “battlefield detainees,” designates a place not yet under the law or, indeed, outside the law in a more or less permanent way. It is unclear whether some of these prisoners will ever be tried, and Rumsfeld at the end of February indicated (and recently reaffirmed) that they might be held “indefinitely” without trial.

The Geneva Conventions and the United States both engage in the questionable practice of distributing rights of protection differentially, depending on a prisoner’s affiliation with a state-based military operation. Instead of asserting an entitlement to protection against degradation and violence and rights to a fair trial as a universal right, the Geneva Accord on POWs applies a

selective criterion to the question of who merits protection and who does not, and it clearly privileges those prisoners in wars between recognizable states. The Conventions accept conventional war, but have not been articulated well enough to have a clear application in the present circumstance.

....

Thus, the Geneva Conventions not only presuppose a conventional sense of war (where the model appears to be based on wars prior to its drafting in 1949) and of what a “legal combatant” is, but they enforce that sense, operating as an instrument not only of the nation-state but of the geopolitical distribution of legitimate and illegitimate violence. Legitimate violence is waged by nation-states; groups of armed resisters who are directly representing no nation-state in particular, or several in tangential ways, are, de facto, illegal combatants. Only “High Parties” can legally go to war and deserve the human rights protections guaranteed by the Geneva Conventions. The notion of the legitimate warrior is in part drawn from World War I, it seems, when everyone could be “seen” on the battlefield. Of course, this requirement is untenable, since it implies that there are no undercover actions in legitimate war, no stealth bombers, no camouflage.

....

To what extent does the nation-state operate as the basis for our notions of what is “human”? And does the Geneva Convention encode this expectation that humans, as we know and honor them under the law, belong primarily to nation-states? It is not just that some humans are treated as humans, and others are dehumanized; it is rather that dehumanization—treating some humans as outside the scope of the law—becomes one tactic by which a putatively distinct “Western” civilization seeks to define itself over and against a population understood as, by definition, illegitimate.

Judith Butler
“Guantánamo Limbo”
in *The Nation*
April 1, 2002

Detainees at Guantánamo Bay. Photo: Shane T. McCoy/AP, U.S. Navy, obtained on cryptome.org.



Four of the missiles intended for Afghanistan fell in Pakistan. One was slightly damaged, two were totally damaged, one was totally intact. For ten years the American government has kept an embargo on Pakistan because Pakistan was trying, stupidly, to build nuclear weapons and missiles. So the U.S. has a technology embargo on my country. One of the missiles was intact. What do you think the Pakistani official told *The Washington Post*? He said it was a gift from Allah. Pakistan wanted U.S. technology. Now they have the technology, and Pakistan’s scientists are examining this missile very carefully. It fell into the wrong hands.

....

What is remarkable in this period is that the United States is acting unilaterally and declaring its right to act unilaterally when it is the superpower that has access, in some cases controlling access, to international institutions. Why did it not go to the court in Rome and present to it the evidence, on a secret basis if they so wished, that it had against the camp in Afghanistan and against bin Laden and his connection to the factory in Khartoum? There is a fundamental principle of politics, which is that when power has no countervailing forces balancing and checking it, it is always abused. It’s abused in extreme ways. The most dangerous characteristic of the current period is that a single power dominates the world militarily and dominates international institutions of peacekeeping and law without countervailing forces. That makes the current world system much more dangerous, especially for the weak and the poor, than even during the Cold War. We are in a time much worse than the Cold War.

Eqbal Ahmad
Terrorism: Theirs and Ours
2001



Spectacolor Times Square, March 19, 2001. Photo: Ann Messner

To be sure, the United States itself had engaged in countless military aggressions in the post-World War II era and often subverted international law and global institutions. Nonetheless, the Bush administration doctrine of preemptive strikes was perceived as a sharp break with previous U.S. and regnant global military doctrine and could unleash a series of wars that would plunge the world into the sort of nightmare militarism and totalitarianism sketched out in George Orwell’s *1984*. The Bush policy is highly repressive, taking the global community into a Social Darwinist battleground where decades of international law would be put aside and a new era of barbarism could unfold. The Bush Doctrine portends a possible future in which an escalating militarism could generate a cycle of unending violence and retribution, such as has been evident in the Israel and Palestine conflict.

....

On March 19, 2003, the media spectacle of the war against Iraq unfolded with a dramatic attempt to “decapitate” the Iraqi regime. Large numbers of missiles were aimed at targets in Baghdad, where Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi leadership were believed to be staying, and the tens of thousands of ground troops on the Kuwait-Iraq border poised for invasion entered Iraq in a blitzkrieg toward Baghdad. The media followed the Bush administration and Pentagon slogan of “shock and awe,” and presented the war against Iraq as a great military spectacle, as triumphalism marked the opening days of the U.S. bombing and invasion of Iraq.

The *Al-Jazeera* network live coverage of the bombing of a palace belonging to the Hussein family was indeed shocking as loud explosions and blasts jolted viewers throughout the world. Whereas some western media presented this bombing positively as a powerful assault on “evil,” for Arab audiences it was experienced as an

attack on the body of the Arab and Muslim people, just as the September 11 terrorist attacks were experienced by Americans as assaults on the very body and symbols of the United States. Whereas in Gulf War I, CNN was the only network live in Baghdad, and throughout the war framed the images, discourses, and spectacle, there were more than 20 networks broadcasting in Baghdad for the 2003 Iraq war, including several Arab networks, and all of the television companies presented the war differently.

Douglas Kellner
Media Spectacle and the Crisis of Democracy: Terrorism, War and Election Battles
2005

In the initial campaign of the war against Iraq, the U.S. government advertised its military feats as an overwhelming visual phenomenon. That the U.S. government and military called this a “shock and awe” strategy suggests that they were producing a visual spectacle that numbs the senses and, like the sublime itself, puts out of play the very capacity to think. This production takes place not only for the Iraqi population on the ground, whose senses are supposed to be done in by this spectacle, but also for the consumers of war who rely on CNN or Fox, the network that regularly interspersed its war coverage on television with the claim that it is the “most trustworthy” news source on the war. The “shock and awe” strategy seeks not only to produce an aesthetic dimension to war, but to exploit and instrumentalize the visual aesthetics as part of a war strategy itself. CNN has provided much of these visual aesthetics. And

although *The New York Times* belatedly came out against the war, it also adorned its front pages on a daily basis with romantic images of military ordnance against the setting sun in Iraq or “bombs bursting in air” above the streets and homes of Baghdad (which are not surprisingly occluded from view). Of course, it was the spectacular destruction of the World Trade Center that first made a claim upon the “shock and awe” effect, and the U.S. recently displayed for all the world to see that it can and will be equally destructive. The media becomes entranced by the sublimity of destruction, and voices of dissent and opposition must find a way to intervene upon this desensitizing dream machine in which the massive destruction of lives and homes, sources of water, electricity, and heat, are produced as a delirious sign of a resuscitated U.S. military power.

Judith Butler
Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence
2004

“What we are seeing is not the war in Iraq. What we are seeing is slices of the war in Iraq.”
— Donald Rumsfeld, March 21, 2003

The Bush administration’s unprecedented “effects-based campaign” has become increasingly complex. Effects, it turns out, are not so predictable. Initially, as Donald Rumsfeld and other administration spokespeople described it, the campaign was premised on selective and spectacular targeting, that is, “shock and awe.” Ironically, perhaps, this plan depended less on surprise

than on intensive military orchestration, aided by predictable patterns of reporting, a War Show devised by U.S. media for U.S. viewers. Indeed, on the first night of the war, March 19, Ari Fleischer made a dramatic entrance and exit in about 20 seconds. “The opening stages of the disarmament of the Iraqi regime have begun. The President will address the nation at 10:15,” he said. Quite the news wallop: reporters scrambled to have their pictures prepared, their cameras trained on Baghdad. And then, nothing. Imagine the panic in network HQs: go with *Survivor* or stick with the snoozy Baghdad skyline?

Then came the “target of opportunity,” the concept propitiously introduced into the popular lexicon as the US shot cruise missiles at Baghdad, in a display that Roland Watson and Elaine Monaghan called “a blitzkrieg designed to terrify Iraqi leaders and their Republican Guard into surrender.” This blitzing took as its particular targets the “so-called Peace Palace” and the “so-called Flowers Palace” (the so-calling is actually Wolf Blitzer’s), in an effort to “decapitate” the “command and control,” namely, Saddam Hussein. Or rather, Saddam Himself, a term frequently used by news anchors asking probing questions of guest experts. For example, “What would Saddam Himself be thinking at this moment?” Or again, “What if the missile killed Saddam Himself?”

Speculating about such events “as they happen” is precisely the imprecise business of television reporters and those endlessly proliferating consultants. Since that first night, complete with MSNBC’s oft-noted countdown clock, the War Show has only grown more various and sprawling. In an effort to contain it, to make it recognizable and compelling, television’s Operation Iraqi Freedom includes grandiose theme music, lively graphics, and colorful banners, with time allotted for commercial breaks, re-airable packages, and great images. Was ever a girl more perfectly made for television than the



courageous Jessica Lynch, her file photo posed before a U.S. flag, no less?...

The first “toughest day,” March 23, brought bad news and dead bodies on frequent display. For all the military and media’s efforts to adhere to plan and control information flow, the televisual frenzy escalated quickly: too much information, too many embedded correspondents, too many scenes and stories to track and source and report. The news gush now comes so quickly that ticker-tapes across the bottoms of screens occasionally conflict with reporters’ versions, as when, on March 23, the stand-up asserted that a British Tornado GR4 aircraft was downed by a U.S. Patriot missile, even as the tape below him rehearsed the U.S. military’s assertion that “no Coalition planes” were reported missing. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Richard Meyers cites a breakdown in the “elaborate procedures and electronic means to identify friendly and enemy aircraft” as a possible cause. During CentCom’s March 23rd briefing, the U.S. rep tossed a question about the “reliability” of the Patriot to British General Peter Wall, so he might insist on the Coalition’s “confidence” in precision soft-and hardware.

A similar confidence, just as suspect, attaches to the current wall-to-wall war coverage, as if more hours equals more truth. But the pieces remain disjointed and incoherent. A highlight reel as of April 4, 2003 might include the following: tracers repeatedly lighting up Baghdad’s nighttime skyline; Saddam (is he dead or not?) Hussein greeting a crowd of enthusiastic devotees; a proud young Iraqi woman, weapon in hand, declaring on video her intention to become a suicide bomber, for her cause; and CNN’s Walt Rodgers declaring, after an interview with a U.S. Army captain, “The score was at least 20 Iraqi tanks and armored vehicles killed, no losses for the 6th Cavalry.” (The score?) Or consider the eager young marines firing a missile at

a target near the Saddam, now-Baghdad, International Airport on April 4, and cheering when it hits, like they've won big at *Grand Theft Auto*. Even the camera gibbered a bit, as if made giddy by the moment.

This last scene, like so many that comprise the War Show, comes courtesy the Show's newest and most astounding innovation, the embedded correspondent (also known as the embed or the embedee). Each is assigned to a unit, according to the Pentagon, "living, traveling and going into combat with it. But instead of a weapon, the journalist will wield a pen [or] videotape camera."...

Most obviously, the battle for "hearts and minds" is largely waged with media imagery. And this battle has rules: Saddam on television is exhorting his "henchmen" to do their dirty work (and here the limits of television are revealed: no one can quite tell if he is Saddam Himself, or a double, or a previous tape). The U.S. President can call his adversary any name he wants, and, as too many ex-generals have noted, "let loose the dogs of war."

Similarly, the display of multiple surrenders at gunpoint and relentless bombs over Baghdad, without even a sign of injuries or corpses, is fair. *Al-Jazeera's* decision to air video of U.S. POWs, wounded or executed, is not. Rumsfeld argues that, according to the Geneva Conventions, it's "illegal for prisoners of war to be shown and pictured and humiliated." According to this way of thinking, mistreatment of POWs, or torture of "enemy combatants," is okay, as long as you don't tape and air such violence.

Such fudging of what's fair leads to the next aspect of embedding. It is, in its way, also a logical step for the Bush Doctrine, a way to take it to mass media outlets—not as propaganda exactly, but as, well, doctrine. Conceived during the first Bush administration (by Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz, et. al.) and outlined in a September 2002 document known as "The National

cameras, large floor maps where white guys walk around with pointers, Fox News' fx-ed "Flyover," and the table maps that allow ex-strategists to move little blue and red jet fighters, troops, and tanks around as if on a game board. The effect can be so egregious that even the occasional anchor notices it. Holt, looking earnest, asks, "Have we made war glamorous?" Ventura, looking annoyed, answers, "It reminds me a lot of the Super Bowl."...

As if to exacerbate the show-ness of the Show, embedded reporters have been doing incredible stand-ups. Sometimes gunfire or explosions can be heard in the distance. Sometimes the reporter cuts the transmission ("Gotta go! Bye!"), and sometimes the studio does, when situations suddenly look too "hairy." At these points the War—usually, a landscape or Baghdad streets—appears as photos in the television screen corner, with a map in the center and the journalist's embedded, wind-battered voice speaking over the video phone. No snuff television, at least for now....

Cynthia Fuchs
"The War Show"
in *Bad Subjects: Political Education for Everyday Life*
Issue #63, April 2003
<http://bad.eserver.org>

The dramatic story of "Saving Private Lynch" was one of the more spectacular human interest stories of the war that revealed the constructed and spectacle nature of the event and the ways that the Pentagon constructed mythologies that were replicated by the TV networks. Private Jessica Lynch was one of the first American

representation of night-vision green bomb paths that follow the vectors of launch, seek and destroy, and the trope that the bombs' precision will only demolish the target with a minimum of collateral damage. In the current invasion, however, the bombs are marketed as smarter, larger, and more precise in their surgical ability to remove the cancerous target without damage. What happens when you juxtapose the images of digital reproduction of a smart bomb, and those of a child whose face is burned, and scarred for life? The military claims that these wounded and dead children are the result of Iraqi bombs, suicide bombers, and the Republican Guard using human shields, avoiding their own responsibility.

This media spin continues the schizophrenia of American exceptionalism that drives state and military policy. American bullets don't kill, they liberate; American bombs don't destroy, they remove obstacles to freedom. America does not have to abide by any rules of diplomacy and engagement because it holds the higher moral ground. America condemns torture, yet the School of the Americas continues to offer courses on how to electrocute suspects in the field with car batteries.

In the current invasion, there is an implied disappointment that the light and fireworks show of the full scale bombing sorties and drops are sub par in their drama and intensity, and are in need of good post-production digital effects. The reality of bombing campaigns, no matter that they are the largest and most unrelenting ever, falls short of the adrenaline-producing bombs and explosions demanded in action films. Both CNN and Fox, to "catch and hook" their audiences, now have brief introductory montages of animated images of tanks, missiles and hi-tech soldiers with a pounding military beat. At CNN.com, those who don't want to be bored with "real" images of an assault on the Baghdad airport and tanks on the move can be entertained and educat-



Video stills from "Channels of War, Shocking and Awful," Deep Dish TV, 2004.

Security Strategy of the United States," the Bush Doctrine states that the U.S. "reserves the option" to wage preemptive war and allows for American use of nuclear weapons against nonnuclear states, unilateral and imperial rights assumed because the U.S. is "exceptional." Again, this exceptionalism allows the U.S. to take decisions against world opinion when such opinion opposes perceived U.S. interests and/or official "beliefs."

Embedded television allows a useful display of power, exemplifying just why such "rights" might be "reserved." That such power can be made so quickly and blatantly visible on television only makes the still-next steps seem more inevitable. Iran, Syria, Yemen, the Saudi royal family, North Korea: even the most lay of lay inter-viewers are finding such Bush Doctrine-inspired wonder-ing within their grasp, and expert commentators are no longer pretending such an expansionist design is unthinkable. Now, it seems obvious: "Iraq," as Shimon Peres and others have repeated recently, "is only the beginning."

As such, Iraq is both good and bad for (and as) televi-sion. War stories multiply, as do the means to tell them. MSNBC came up with an "America's Bravest" wall of pho-tos, sent in by viewers missing their relatives, a latest permutation of the instant memorials that crop up at disaster sites. And, of course, experts step up. Henry Kissinger appears on Fox News, talking with the mightily clueless Rita Cosby: "Do you think Saddam Hussein is alive?" she asks; "I have no possible way of knowing," comes the answer. Over on MSNBC, Jesse Ventura, "America's most respected independent voice," has a new gig: the ex-Navy Seal and Vietnam vet opines to Lester Holt, "War is the end result of failed political policy, not the serviceman's fault."

To shore up all the opinionating, the studio sets are full of maps: digital relief types with CGI-ed "swooping"

POWs shown on Iraqi TV and since she was young, female, and attractive, her fate became a topic of intense interest. Stories circulated that she was shot and stabbed and was tortured by Iraqis holding her in captivity. Eight days after her capture, the U.S. media broadcast footage of her dramatic rescue, obviously staged like a reality TV spectacle. Soldiers stormed the hospital, found Lynch, and claimed a dramatic rescue under fire from Iraqis. In fact, several media institutions interviewed the doctors in the hospital who claimed that Iraqi troops had left the hospital two days before, that the hospital staff had tried to take Jessica to the Americans but they fired on them, and that in the "rescue" the U.S. troops shot through the doors, terrorized doctors and patients, and created a danger-ous scene that could have resulted in deaths, simply to get some dramatic rescue footage for TV audiences.

Douglas Kellner
"Spectacle and Media Propaganda in the War on Iraq: A Critique of U.S. Broadcasting Networks"
<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/>
accessed on June 18, 2005

The advent of the 1990s smart bombs during the first invasion of Iraq probably began the tendency to use a video game platform to market, entertain, and worship the U.S. military's strategies for bombing and troop/tank movement as a digital complement to well-paid military consultants. The current bombing campaign attempts to re-state video games' visual

ed by Quicktime animation of urban warfare. You can also learn more about the "bunker buster," "Predator," "Patriot," and "e-bomb" with Quicktime animations. I wonder who will get the site license to market the next hot game, "Eliminate Baghdad," with thirty-six pulse pounding levels as you reach the "evil one's" nuclear-proof bunker and achieve the ultimate master ranger status? PS2, Nintendo, or the X-Box?

.... So we are told to sit with our popcorn, surround-sound system calibrated for maximum sound effects, high-definition images, and chant our patriotic slogans (Free Iraq, Defend our Homeland, and Operation Freedom). Then we get offended and feel it is in bad taste to see the brutality of war, children bleeding, women crying, scattered limbs, people hungry and fighting for water, and other visual tidbits of the carnage of war. Or wait, maybe the blood and gore are good for ratings? Has the screening of war entered into the reality television show craze as a digitally-enhanced streaming video and heavily-edited and orchestrated "live coverage" show to compete with *Fear Factor*, *The Bachelorette*, *Blind Date*, *Cops*, or *Swag*?

Arturo Aldama
"The 'Reality' Video Game of War: Loose Reflections on the Invasion of Hope"
in *Bad Subjects: Political Education for Everyday Life*
Issue #63, April 2003



Face of Saddam Hussein briefly covered before statue is pulled down by an American tank April 9, 2003. Photo published in Brooklyn Rail, December 2004.



Photojournalist Jose Couso's camera on floor of room in Palestine Hotel after U.S. forces bombed the hotel, April 8, 2003. Photo circulated widely via email, photographer unidentified.

Sanitized

Two wars took place in Iraq in 2003. The real war: 8,000 to 10,000 Iraqi civilians killed and 20,000 injured and an undetermined number of Iraqi military killed....

Then there was the fake war—the one Americans saw on TV. In this war, there were almost no victims. The United States overran a whole country, destroyed a foreign army, engaged in street-to-street combat and intense aerial bombing, rescued a brave young woman soldier from enemy hands—and barely saw a victim. The American flag starred in this war....

CNN has two divisions: CNN International (CNNi) broadcasts to the world, whereas CNN broadcasts to the U.S. audience. They make separate decisions on what images to air—from the same stock of available footage and reports. The result: one war carefully crafted for Americans, another war for the rest of the world.

The difference was never more stark than on the famous day when U.S. soldiers pulled down a large statue of Saddam Hussein, initially wrapping his head in an American flag. CNN played the triumphal footage in an endless loop: the carefully stage-managed statue-toppling “celebration,” in which a small group of Iraqis were allowed into the heavily guarded plaza to cheer for the cameras as Marines, outside the view of the camera, pulled down the edifice. CNNi showed it on a split screen, with images of wounded Iraqis in a hospital sharing half the screen.

Even the websites of the two CNN’s conveyed opposite messages. On one typical day during the war, the CNN website featured a photo of people defacing a mural of Saddam Hussein. CNNi went with a picture of an anguished Iraqi being comforted.

The Wall Street Journal paraphrased CNN president Chris Cramer, assuring that “rather than politics, the difference in approach between CNNi and the U.S. CNN reflects the practical and commercial need to cater to different audiences.”...

Killing the Messenger

Trouble came early on April 8, 2003. At 7:45 a.m., Tareq Ayyoub, chief Baghdad correspondent for the Arab news service *Al-Jazeera*, was standing on the roof of the network’s Baghdad bureau, intently narrating a pitched battle between Iraqi troops and two American tanks that had earlier appeared on the nearby Al-Jurnhuriya Bridge. Ayyoub’s cameraman, an Iraqi named Zuheir, was panning back and forth from the battle to the reporter for the accompanying shots.

Suddenly, the sound of gunfire was drowned out. An American fighter jet came swooping in low across the city. Ayyoub and Zuheir instinctively looked up and saw the jet bank its wing and head straight for where they were standing. “The plane was flying so low that those of us downstairs thought it would land on the roof—that’s how close it was,” recounted Ayyoub’s colleague, Maher Abdullah, to Robert Fisk of London’s *The Independent*.

Inside the bureau, Ayyoub’s other colleagues could hear the rocket launch from the plane. There was a high-pitched whine, followed by the thunderous roar of an explosion. “It was a direct hit—the missile actually exploded against our electrical generator,” Abdullah recalled. Colleagues frantically scooped up the shattered body of 35-year-old Ayyoub and carried him out in a blanket to an ambulance. But it was too late. “Tareq died almost at once,” said Abdullah. The cameraman was injured, but survived.

Moments later and less than a mile away, the journalists and staff of Abu Dhabi Television—which is written in large blue letters on the roof of their building—took cover in their offices. They had just heard that the United States had bombed *Al-Jazeera*. Twenty-five staff members huddled in the basement, phoning and pleading over the air for someone to help save them. Again, their pleas fell on deaf ears. U.S. soldiers battered their offices with artillery. Miraculously, there were no serious injuries.

Just before noon, it was the turn of the inter-

national press corps. At the Palestine Hotel, where a hundred unembedded reporters were staying, many watched in horror as a U.S. tank positioned on the Al-Jumhuriya Bridge slowly rotated its gun in their direction. A French television crew filmed the armored behemoth as it took aim and suddenly, with no warning, unleashed a round into the side of the towering hotel. The bomb struck the fifteenth floor, making a direct hit on the room serving as a bureau for Reuters, the international news agency. A veteran Ukrainian cameraman for Reuters, Taras Protsyuk, 35, was killed instantly. Jose Couso, 37, a cameraman for Telecinco Spanish television, who was filming one floor below, was also killed. Three other international journalists were seriously injured....

Amy Goodman and David Goodman
The Exception to the Rulers: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media That Love Them
2004

Whereas during the 1991 Gulf War, the United States censored every image and word in the media pool system concocted for that intervention, and had strict guidelines and control mechanisms for the embedded reporters in the 2003 Iraq intervention, the digital age has made it ultimately impossible to hide the dark sides of the current Iraq occupation. The widespread use of digital cameras and the ease with which images could be shot and disseminated, including direct transmission through wireless connections, demonstrated how media spectacle could trump U.S. military control. As Donald Rumsfeld exclaimed during the Iraq prisoner abuse hearings on May 7, “People are running around with digital cameras and taking these unbelievable photographs and then passing them off, against the law, to the media, to our surprise, when they had not even arrived in the Pentagon.” The Pentagon indicated during these Senate and House hearings that many, many more photos and videos were in play, but in light of the negative publicity already received, military leaders managed to prevent circulation of more scandalous material.

....
Deeply rooted racism lies behind the Iraqi prisoner abuse, as soldiers and the U.S. public have widely viewed Iraqis and Arabs as less than human at least since the Gulf War of 1991. Arabs and Iraqis have been villains of countless Hollywood films and television shows, and racism toward Arabs and Muslims intensified after the 9/11 attacks. Near the end of the first Gulf War, U.S. soldiers went on a “turkey shoot,” slaughtering hundreds of Iraqis escaping from Kuwait City. During the current Iraq war, U.S. snipers talk of “rats’ nests” of Iraqi troops and cheer when they take out the “vermin.” U.S. architect for the Iraq invasion Paul Wolfowitz speaks of “snakes” and “draining the swamps” in “uncivilized parts of the world.”

....
Many news organizations have run stories about civilian deaths in Iraq. But overseas reporters and commentators emphasize the issue more than their American counterparts and play up civilian casualties in ways the U.S. media rarely pursue. After recent U.S. bombing raids on Fallujah, *Al-Jazeera.net* published graphic photos of wounded children that are unlikely to appear in a U.S. news outlet.

While American journalists can say, correctly, that definitive statistics on civilian casualties are hard to come by, the true number is certainly a multiple of U.S. casualties, according to Human Rights Watch. In a 2003 study, the New York-based watchdog group said “thousands” of Iraqi civilians had been killed or wounded in the three weeks between the invasion and the fall of Baghdad.

Human Rights Watch cited two other attempts to quantify the dead. The *Los Angeles Times* did a survey

of 27 hospitals in the Baghdad area after the U.S. invasion and found that at least 1,700 civilians died. In June 2003, the Associated Press canvassed 60 of Iraq’s 124 hospitals and calculated that at least 3,420 civilians died in the first months of the war. AP described the count as “fragmentary” and said, “the complete toll—if it is ever tallied—is sure to be significantly higher.” Since then, other figures have been floated. Commentators for *The Jordan Times* and *The Daily Star* in Beirut, Lebanon, have cited an estimate of 30,000 deaths. That is the figure disseminated by the Iraqi Human Rights Organization, an independent group in Baghdad.

A more conservative figure comes from Iraqbodycount.net, a British Web site that compiles media reports on Iraqi civilian deaths. Based on such reporting, the site says there have been a minimum of 12,778 civilian deaths in Iraq and a maximum of 14,820.

....
In November the respected British medical journal *The Lancet*, cited a Johns Hopkins study indicating that more than 100,000 Iraqi civilians had been killed.

....
“A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both.”
James Madison

Douglas Kellner
Media Spectacle and the Crisis of Democracy: Terrorism, War and Election Battles
2005

So yesterday was the burning of books. First came the looters, then came the arsonists. It was the final chapter in the sacking of Baghdad. The National Library and Archives—a priceless treasure of Ottoman historical documents including the old royal archives of Iraq—were turned to ashes in 3,000 degrees of heat. Then the Islamic Library of Korans at the Ministry of Religious Endowment was set ablaze. I saw the looters.

One of them cursed me when I tried to reclaim a book of Islamic law from a boy of no more than 10. Amid the ashes of Iraqi history, I found a file blowing in the wind outside: pages of handwritten letters between the court of Sharif Hussein of Mecca, who started the Arab revolt against the Turks for Lawrence of Arabia, and the Ottoman rulers of Baghdad.

And the Americans did nothing. All over the filthy yard they blew, letters of recommendation to the courts of Arabia, demands for ammunition for troops, reports on the theft of camels and attacks on pilgrims, all in delicate hand-written Arabic script. I was holding in my hands the last Baghdad vestiges of Iraq’s written history. But for Iraq, this is Year Zero; with the destruction of the antiquities in the Museum of Archaeology on Saturday and the burning of the National Archives and then the Koranic library, the cultural identity of Iraq is being erased.

Why? Who set these fires? For what insane purpose is this heritage being destroyed? When I caught sight of the Koranic library burning, flames 100 feet high bursting from the windows, I raced to the offices of the occupying power, the U.S. Marines’ Civil Affairs Bureau. An officer shouted to a colleague that “this guy says some biblical [sic] library is on fire.” I gave the map location, the precise name in Arabic and English. I said the smoke could be seen from three miles away and it would take only five minutes to drive there. Half an hour later, there wasn’t an American at the scene, and the flames were shooting 200 feet into the air.

There was a time when the Arabs said that their books were written in Cairo, printed in Beirut and read in Baghdad. Now they burn libraries in Baghdad. In the National Archives were not just the Ottoman records of the Caliphate, but even the dark years of the country’s modern history, handwritten accounts of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, with personal photographs and military diaries, and microfiche copies of Arabic newspapers going back to the early 1900s.

But the older files and archives were on the upper floors of the library where petrol must have been used to set fire so expertly to the building. The heat was such that the marble flooring had buckled upwards and the concrete stairs that I climbed had been cracked.

The papers on the floor were almost too hot to touch, bore no print or writing, and crumbled into ash the moment I picked them up. Again, standing in this shroud of blue smoke and embers, I asked the same question: why?

So, as an all-too-painful reflection on what this means, let me quote from the shreds of paper that I found on the road outside, blowing in the wind, written by long-dead men who wrote to the Sublime Porte in Istanbul or to the Court of Sharif of Mecca with expressions of loyalty and who signed themselves “your slave.” There was a request to protect a camel convoy of tea, rice and sugar, signed by Husni Attiya al-Hijazi (recommending Abdul Ghani-Naim and Ahmed Kindi as honest merchants), a request for perfume and advice from Jaber al-Ayashi of the royal court of Sharif Hussein to Baghdad to warn of robbers in the desert. “This is just to give you our advice for which you will be highly rewarded,” Ayashi says. “If you don’t take our advice, then we have warned you.” A touch of Saddam there, I thought. The date was 1912.

Some of the documents list the cost of bullets, military horses and artillery for Ottoman armies in Baghdad and Arabia; others record the opening of the first telephone exchange in the Hejaz, soon to be Saudi Arabia, while one recounts, from the village of Azrak in modern-day Jordan, the theft of clothes from a camel train by Ali bin Kassem, who attacked his interrogators “with a knife and tried to stab them but was restrained and later bought off.” There is a 19th-century letter of recommendation for a merchant, Yahyia Messoudi, “a man of the highest morals, of good conduct and who works with the [Ottoman] government.” This, in other words, was the tapestry of Arab history, all that is left of it, which fell into *The Independent’s* hands as the mass of documents crackled in the immense heat of the ruins.

King Faisal of the Hejaz, the ruler of Mecca, whose staff are the authors of many of the letters I saved, was later deposed by the Saudis. His son Faisel became king of Iraq. Winston Churchill gave him Baghdad after the

French threw him out of Damascus, and his brother Abdullah became the first king of Jordan, the father of King Hussein and the grandfather of the present-day Jordanian monarch, King Abdullah II.

For almost a thousand years, Baghdad was the cultural capital of the Arab world, the most literate population in the Middle East. Genghis Khan’s grandson burnt the city in the 13th century and, so it was said, the Tigris river ran black with the ink of books. Yesterday, the black ashes of thousands of ancient documents filled the skies of Iraq. Why?

Robert Fisk
“**Library Books, Letters and Priceless Documents Are Set Ablaze in Final Chapter of the Sacking of Baghdad**”
in *The Independent*, London
April 15, 2003

In 1989, two years before the Gulf War, I traveled to Baghdad to write an article on the Hanging Gardens of Babylon which the Iraqi Ministry of Culture planned to have rebuilt. The project never materialized, but I was able to explore Baghdad and its intricate labyrinth. One experience was memorable above all: the discovery, in the National Museum of Iraq, of two small clay tablets from the fourth millennium B.C. that had recently been unearthed in Syria.

Each tablet was the size of the palm of my hand and bore a few simple marks: a small indentation near the top, as if a finger had been stuck into the clay, and below it a stick-drawn animal meant to represent a goat on one tablet, and on the other, perhaps a sheep. Standing in the museum and staring at these ancient



Maktabat al-Awqaf Library, burned interior
Photo: Nabil al-Tikriti

tablets, I tried to imagine how, on an unimaginably remote afternoon, a brilliant and anonymous ancestor recorded a transaction of livestock by drawing signs on clumps of dirt, and in doing so invented for all future times the magical art of writing. Writing, I realized, much to a reader’s chagrin, was the invention not of a poet but of an accountant.

The hand that made those first signs has long turned to dust; but the tablets themselves survived until last week, when they disappeared in the looting of the museum.

....

The tablets in the National Museum, the volumes in the National Library and in the National Archives, the exquisite collection of Korans kept at the Ministry of Religious Endowment have practically all now disappeared. Lost are the manuscripts lovingly penned by the great Arab calligraphers, for whom the beauty of the script must mirror the beauty of the contents. Vanished are collections of tales, like “The Arabian Nights” which the 10th-century Iraqi book dealer Ibn al-Nadim called “evening stories” because one was not supposed to waste the hours of the day reading trivial entertainment.

The official documents that chronicled Baghdad’s Ottoman rulers have joined the ashes of their masters. Gone at last are the books that survived the Mongol conquest of 1258, when the invaders threw the libraries’ contents into the Tigris to build a bridge of paper that turned the waters black with ink. No one will follow again the years of correspondence that described voyages and cities caught in time. And no one will ever consult these particular copies of certain great reference works like “Dawn for the Night-Blind” by the 14th-century Egyptian scholar al-Qalqashandi, who, in one of its 14 volumes, explained in great detail how each of the letters of Arabic script should be formed, since he

believed that what’s written will never perish. Trust in the survival of the word, as well as the urge to destroy it, is as old as the first clay tablets. To hold and transmit memory, to teach through the experience of others, to share the knowledge of the world and of ourselves are some of the powers (and dangers) of books, and the reasons why we both treasure and fear them....

Alberto Manguel
“**Lost in Iraq: Our First Words, Written in Clay, in an Accountant’s Hand**”
in *The New York Times*
April 20, 2003

It has been called the worst cultural disaster to happen since the Second World War, and one archaeologist has likened it to a “lobotomy of an entire culture.” To the dismay of archaeologists throughout the world, the toppling of the Iraqi government by U.S. troops unleashed a wave of looting and destruction of Iraq’s national patrimony. Despite pleas for action from outraged scholars, the culturally blinkered Bush administration remained indifferent, belatedly acting only when media coverage mushroomed into a public relations fiasco that threatened to upend the manufactured image of benign liberation. Although the scale of loss from the looting of the National Museum in Baghdad was less serious than initially indicated, it was nevertheless a crippling blow, while elsewhere in Iraq the situation ran alarmingly out of control....

Anticipating such a turn of events, the museum staff had taken the precaution of removing most of the objects from the public galleries for safekeeping before war broke out. Only those pieces remained that were too



Dar al-Kutub wa-al-Watha'iq National Library, incinerated paper
Photo: McGuire Gibson

heavy or too fragile to move and those that were permanently fastened to pedestals. Other artifacts were left in the museum simply because time ran out. In all, looters took 42 of the objects left in the public galleries and vandalized others. A terra cotta statue of a lion and a statue of a woman from Hatra both suffered attempted beheadings with blunt instruments. The Harp of Ur was broken and stripped of gold. Statues were decapitated and their bodies struck by heavy blows. “They were too heavy to move to the basement, and stood there until the vandals came and laid into them with iron bars,” recalled museum archaeologist Raeed Abdul Reda. Thieves stole the famed Warka Vase, widely considered one of the museum’s most valuable possessions. Also taken were the prized Bassetki Statue, dating from 2300 BCE, a Sumerian marble head of a woman from Warka, a full-sized statue of King Entemena from Ur, an ivory relief of the Assyrian god Ashu, and busts of Apollo, Poseidon, Nike and Eros. Archaeologist Selma al-Radi reported that although a lot of the artifacts looted were “fairly ordinary,” also missing were some of the “top objects of the museum,” and “it seems almost like a wish list of collectors; ‘if you get in there, get me this, this, and the other.’ They were the top objects.”...

The looting went on for three days, the thieves hauling away their booty in cars and trucks. It ended only on April 12 when the staff returned to the museum, chased out looters and posted a sign saying that American troops were in the museum and would shoot anyone who entered. It was a bluff, but one hat held swirling mobs at bay for a few days. The National Museum was not the sole target of looting, as office buildings and libraries throughout Baghdad were plundered. Just days after the first looters entered the National Museum, both the National Library and Archives and the Library of Korans were looted and then set afire. Almost the entire collection of 12 million volumes at the National Library

and Archives perished in the conflagration. Despite an outcry from scholars from around the world and damning media coverage, days passed while apathetic U.S. officials failed to take any measures whatsoever to safeguard the museum. In a press conference on April 11, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld dismissed concerns with a curt, “Stuff happens! But in terms of what’s going on in that country, it is a fundamental misunderstanding to see those images over, and over, and over again of some boy walking out with a vase and say, ‘Oh, my goodness, you didn’t have a plan.’ That’s nonsense.” Rumsfeld was correct. The Pentagon did have a plan, for U.S. troops had immediately set up guard around the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, which held intelligence records that occupation authorities would be anxious to gain access to, and the Ministry of Oil.

....

The museum in the northern city of Mosul suffered a savage looting following the fall of the Iraqi government. Before the war, the staff at the museum had taken the precaution of shipping more than 5,000 of its most valuable objects to the National Museum in Baghdad. It took looters only 12 hours to empty the museum of nearly everything that remained. The first thieves to enter the museum were apparently acting on behalf of Western dealers. They ignored replicas and snatched only the genuine pieces. "They knew what they wanted," said Iraqi archaeologist Abdullah Amin. In the basement library, which Amin characterized as "the most important library in the humanities in Mosul," thieves took only the rarest books, manuscripts and atlases. The second wave of looters took whatever they could, prying open safes, ransacking offices, and toppling statues too heavy to cart away.

....

While it is possible to rebuild a war-ravaged infrastructure, the devastation of Iraq’s archaeological patrimony cannot be repaired. Although Mesopotamia



Non-authorized digs, archeological site of ancient city of Isin
Photo: Walter Sommerfeld

comprises one of the world’s richest sources of antiquities, this is a finite resource. Every artifact stolen, damaged or looted rightfully belongs to all of humanity and can never be replaced. Timothy Potts, Director of the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, judges the pillage in Iraq to be “among the worst mass desecrations of cultural sites in our lifetime, perhaps the worst.” The same philosophy of greed and individual acquisitiveness at the expense of the public good lies behind both the antiquities trade and plans that call for the privatization and sell-off of Iraqi state-owned firms to Western corporations. Perhaps that explains the indifference with which collectors and dealers are treated. Any weakly flickering signs of outrage are reserved solely for local looters and not for the powerful and wealthy interests that drive the whole disgraceful process. It is primarily impoverished local looters who bear the risk of arrest, while those who reap the profits and benefits from this trade act with impunity. As long as collectors and dealers continue to brazenly loot, through proxies, the cultural heritage of the world, no effort aimed at lowly looters can have any effect. The ravenous antiquities market is booming as never before, and its appetite has unleashed a scourge of looting and destruction that expands at an ever more alarming rate. Unless an effective effort is made soon to attack the problem at its root, we will all stand to be culturally poorer.

Gregory Elich
“Spoils of War:
The Antiquities Trade and the Looting of Iraq”
Centre for Research on Globalisation
posted on January 3, 2004

Having settled at Saddam’s Republican Palace complex, occupation authorities quickly moved to implement the Bearing Point workplan. Little more than one month after the invasion was declared “mission accomplished” by Bush in May 2003, then Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) chief L. Paul Bremer II, unveiled the U.S.’ economic agenda on Iraq at a World Economic Forum meeting in Jordan. “Our strategic goal in the months ahead is to set in motion policies which will have the effect of reallocating people and resources from state enterprises to the more productive private firms,” he said. That same month, the American adviser to the Ministry of Industry and Minerals announced the “fast-track” privatization of 48 state-owned enterprises (SOEs). By the time the U.S. handed-over “sovereignty” in a secret ceremony in June 2004, key elements of its economic designs on Iraq had been put in place. The CPA had passed an array of laws that were to be the foundations and pillars of Iraq’s neo-liberal regime.

Among the most groundbreaking was *Order 39* which was described as fulfilling the “wish list of international investors” by *The Economist* and as a “free market manifesto” by *Reuters*. The Order allows foreign investors to buy and take over Iraq’s SOEs, to enter and leave Iraq as they please, to have the same rights as any Iraqi in selling to the domestic market, and to repatriate 100% of their profits and other assets anytime. Seen another way, the Order effectively deprives the Iraqis sovereignty over their economy. By moving towards the privatization of Iraq’s SOEs, the Order effectively allows the transfer of the Iraqi people’s assets to foreign and/or private owners whose priority is to maximize profits rather than to provide services or products to Iraqis. By removing restrictions on investments, the Order denies the Iraqi state any power to regulate and control investments entering its territory. By giving foreign investors “national treatment,” it deprives Iraqis the option to support local business or pursue industrialization policies in the hope of attaining a degree of self-sufficiency



Archeological site of Nippur, destroyed objects left at surface
Photo: Walter Sommerfeld

and economic sovereignty. The clause allowing full and unimpeded repatriation takes away the Iraqi state’s prerogative to compel foreign investors to re-invest their profits in the domestic economy.

While oil was exempted from this Order, the Bearing Point contract specifically states that it “will implement USAID-approved recommendations to begin supporting the privatization, especially those in the oil and supporting industries.” It was told to go ahead with preparing legislation and implementing regulations to establish an “improved fiscal regime for petroleum and mining sectors and for transit pipelines.” Earlier, Bush had signed an Executive Order giving blanket and indefinite immunity to U.S. oil corporations involved in any oil-related activity in Iraq.

Order 12, or the “Trade Liberalization Policy,” suspended tariffs, duties, and other taxes on goods entering Iraq’s market, thereby depriving the Iraqis of revenue control over trade flows and an independent trade policy.

Order 40 allowed a few foreign banks to enter the Iraqi market and take over up to 50% of domestic banks. Combined with the other Orders, this gives foreign bankers power over Iraqis’ access to credit and loans and gives the government less control over monetary policy.

Order 49 reduced the tax-rate on corporations and individuals from 40% to a flat rate of 15%. Doing away with the principle of progressive taxation, the idea that those who have more should contribute more, it also means that an Iraqi who earns \$100 a month will have to pay the same percentage of tax as a corporation that earns \$1 billion a month.

Order 81, which lays the ground for Iraq’s intellectual property rights regime, introduces a system of monopoly rights over seeds. This facilitates the entry of multinational agricultural corporations and undermines Iraqis’

“food sovereignty,” or their right to define their own food and agriculture policies instead of having them subordinated to international market forces.

Observers were quick to point out the similarities between elements of the plan and the structural adjustment policies imposed by the World Bank in scores of developing countries around the world since the 1980s or the “shock therapy” administered to Russia in the 90s. Only this time, it goes further. *The New York Times* economic columnist Jeff Madrick noted that, “By almost any mainstream economist’s standard, the plan ... is extreme—in fact, stunning.” Former World Bank chief economist and Nobel prize winner Joseph Stiglitz observed that Iraq’s own was “an even more radical form of shocktherapy than pursued in the former Soviet world.” Naomi Klein was more descriptive, saying, “Iraq’s ‘reconstruction’ makes those wrenching economic reforms look like spa treatments.” If all goes well, *The Economist* says Iraq will be a “capitalist’s dream.”

The extremism of the plan—and U.S. officials’ determination to pursue it—was not just ideological; it was driven by all that was at stake. With the U.S. expected to depend on other countries for 70% of its oil needs by 2025—and with both ally countries and rivals as, if not more, dependent on oil imports, securing access to oil was both a matter of survival and a source of great power. Old surveys indicate that Iraq holds around 100-130 billion barrels of oil, or about 11% of the world total, making it second only to the world’s largest reserve, Saudi Arabia. But there could be more. With only 17 out of 80 oil fields tapped, there’s widespread belief among industry insiders that the wells run deeper and that reserves might even exceed 300 billion barrels, or about a quarter of global reserves. In a speech at the London Institute of Petroleum in 1999, U.S. Vice President Richard Cheney said, “While many regions of the world offer great oil opportunities, the Middle East, with two-thirds of the world’s oil and the lowest cost is



Vault of the National Museum of Iraq in Bagdad after looters pillaged the institution for two days. Photo: Jerome Delay/AP

still where the prize ultimately lies.”

A clear appreciation of this fact was evident during the invasion. British Petroleum engineers were embedded with the troops during the invasion and traveled with them in order to locate and secure the oil wells. While virtually all other ministries were bombed down, the Oil Ministry complex was spared. Subsequently, as much as 20% of the U.S.’ \$18-billion reconstruction budget for Iraq was to go to oil infrastructure, including exploration and development of new oil and gas fields. A Pentagon policy document had, as early as 1999, argued that a war for Iraq’s oil should be considered a legitimate military option. Two months before the invasion, the Pentagon officials said they “have crafted strategies that will allow us to secure and protect those fields as rapidly as possible in order to preserve those prior to destruction.” This mental exercise in taking over Iraq’s petrol reserves had a precedent: As early as the 1970s, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had put forward plans for invading Middle Eastern oil fields in an essay entitled “Seizing Arab Oil.”

Herbert Docena
“‘Shock and Awe’ Therapy”
in *Fourth Session/The Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*
World Tribunal on Iraq (WTI)
worldtribunal.org, accessed on July 18, 2005.

A few days after his arrest, according to a federal court affidavit filed by his attorney, James Brosnahan, a group of armed American soldiers “blindfolded [John Walker] Lindh, and took several pictures of Mr. Lindh and themselves with Mr. Lindh. In one, the soldiers scrawled ‘shit-head’ across Mr. Lindh’s blindfold and posed with him.... Another told Mr. Lindh that he was ‘going to hang’ for his actions and that after he was dead, the soldiers would sell the photographs and give the money to a Christian organization.” Some of the photographs later made their way to the American media. Lindh was stripped naked, bound to a stretcher with duct tape, and placed in a windowless shipping container. Once again, the affidavit said, “Military personnel photographed Mr. Lindh as he lay on the stretcher.” On July 15, 2002, Lindh agreed to plead guilty to carrying a gun while serving in the Taliban and received a twenty-year jail term. During that process, Brosnahan told me, “The Department of Defense insisted that we state that there was ‘no deliberate’ mistreatment of John.” His client agreed to do so, but, the attorney noted, “Against that, you have that photograph of a naked John on that stretcher.”

The photographing of prisoners, both in Afghanistan and in Iraq, seems to have been not random but, rather, part of the dehumanizing interrogation process. *The New York Times* subsequently published an interview with Hayder Sabbar Abd, who claimed, convincingly, to be one of the mistreated Iraqi prisoners in the Abu Ghraib photographs. Abd told Ian Fisher, the *Times* reporter, that his ordeal had been recorded, almost constantly, by cameras, which added to his humiliation. He remembered how the camera flashed repeatedly as soldiers told him to masturbate and beat him when he refused.

....

The government consultant said that there may have been a serious goal, in the beginning, behind the sexual humiliation and the posed photographs. It was thought that some prisoners would do anything—including spying on their associates—to avoid dissemination of the shameful photos to family and friends....

Seymour M. Hersh
Chain of Command:
The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib
2004

A woman ties a noose around a naked man’s neck and forces him to crawl across the floor. Uniformed people strip a group of hooded men, then laboriously assemble them into a pyramid. Men are forced to masturbate and simulate fellatio. In the past few days, we have all participated in the pornographic gaze. The sight of wide-eyed, grinning young men and women posing in front of their stripped and degraded captives has proved profoundly shocking. These snapshots tell us more than we may perhaps want to know about our society’s heart of darkness.



Tehran, Iran. Photo: AP

This festival of violence is highly pornographic. The victims have been reduced to exhibitionist objects or anonymous “meat.” They either wear hoods, or are beheaded by the camera. The people taking the photographs exult in the genitals of their victims. There is no moral confusion here: the photographers don’t even seem aware that they are recording a war crime. There is no suggestion that they are documenting anything particularly morally skewed. For the person behind the camera, the aesthetic of pornography protects them from blame....

Joanna Bourke
“The Pornography of Pain”
in *The Guardian*, London
May 9, 2004

There they were, the would-be liberators, dehumanizing their prisoners and evidently relishing the experience. At once the contention of power and dignity was bared—literally—in blistering images. The world was treated to the performance of power when it becomes suddenly accessible to the powerless in relation to the even more powerless: the result was a graphic demonstration of the indiscriminating arrogance of power, manifested in the personal and sexual humiliation of the weaker, those who were made so only by circumstances, not by any intrinsic qualities, not by others’ social or economic superiority—simply by circumstances that could be reversed at any moment.

Those circumstances were indeed reversed, and with an even more sickening escalation of horror, as a hostage was offered up to the world as a sacrificial lamb. The gruesome beheading of a hapless hostage in the name of reprisal, carried out in a manner that was clearly orchestrated toward global consumption, leapfrogged the incontinence of the U.S. Army reservists in its barbarity, its arrogance and intensity of visceral laceration.

Was this Killing purely an act of vengeance? If it were, the event would be recorded simply for periodic savoring of the wages of vengeance and/or sadistic pleasure by the perpetrators. Staged deliberately for global instruction, however, it can be read also as another statement of power, directed at the world. The quasi-state sets its own laws and strikes at will.

This exhibitionist act was of a different nature from the mob fury that was unleashed on the four American contractors, the mutilated corpses of two to be later hung upside down over a bridge in an ultimate act of desecration. That was a blood frenzy that belonged more within the psychopathology of mob susceptibility than to the statement of power. The bloody execution of a hostage, by contrast, the manner of its staging, was the communication of power, however desperate and transient....

Wole Soyinka
The Climate of Fear:
The Quest for Dignity in a Dehumanized World
2005

The lynching pictures were in the nature of photographs as trophies—taken by a photographer in order to be collected, stored in albums, displayed. The pictures taken by American soldiers in Abu Ghraib, however, reflect a shift in the use made of pictures—less objects to be saved than messages to be disseminated, circulated. A digital camera is a common possession among soldiers. Where once photographing war was the province of photojournalists, now the soldiers themselves are all photographers—recording their war, their fun, their observations of what they find picturesque, their atrocities—and swapping images among themselves and e-mailing them around the globe.

....

To live is to be photographed, to have a record of one’s life, and therefore to go on with one’s life oblivious, or claiming to be oblivious, to the camera’s non-stop attentions. But to live is also to pose. To act is to share in the community of actions recorded as images.

The expression of satisfaction at the acts of torture being inflicted on helpless, trussed, naked victims is only part of the story. There is the deep satisfaction of being photographed, to which one is now more inclined to respond not with a stiff, direct gaze (as in former times) but with glee. The events are in part designed to be photographed. The grin is a grin for the camera. There would be something missing if, after stacking the naked men, you couldn’t take a picture of them.

Looking at these photographs, you ask yourself, How can someone grin at the sufferings and humiliation of another human being? Set guard dogs at the genitals and legs of cowering naked prisoners? Force shackled, hooded prisoners to masturbate or simulate oral sex with one another? And you feel naive for asking, since the answer is, self-evidently, People do these things to other people. Rape and pain inflicted on the genitals are among the most common forms of torture. Not just in Nazi concentration camps and in Abu Ghraib when it was run by Saddam Hussein. Americans, too, have done and do them when they are told, or made to feel, that those over whom they have absolute power deserve to be humiliated, tormented. They do them when they are led to believe that the people they are torturing belong to an inferior race or religion. For the meaning of these pictures is not just that these acts were performed, but that their perpetrators apparently had no sense that there was anything wrong in what the pictures show....

Susan Sontag
“Regarding the Torture of Others”
in *The New York Times*
May 23, 2004

As commercial porn was being mistaken for photos of real torture, the photos of actual torture at Abu Ghraib were being equated with porn. The day U.S. lawmakers viewed the roughly 1,800 still photos and an undisclosed number of videos from Abu Ghraib that Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld had warned were “sadistic, cruel, and inhuman,” CBS News reported that the images “amounted to hard-core porn.” Given that the Abu Ghraib photos depicted acts of sexual abuse including Iraqi men forced to masturbate and Iraqi women commanded to expose their breasts, that characterization seems apt.

What are we to make of this: porn that looks like actual torture, actual torture that looks like porn? Some claimed the similarity revealed that what might have appeared to be torture wasn’t really so bad after all. Rush Limbaugh wondered what the fuss was all about, since the photos from Abu Ghraib “look like standard good old American pornography.” That in turn led Frank Rich in *The New York Times* to ridicule this likening of “wartime atrocities” to “an entertainment industry that, however deplorable to Islam, has more fans in our Christian country than Major League Baseball.” Although Rich’s article is steeped in irony, his determination to distinguish the Abu Ghraib photos (“atrocities”) from pornography (“entertainment”) could be taken to suggest that anything more popular in the United States than baseball must be morally unproblematic—even Christians like it!—except to those morally benighted Muslims.

But the similarities between American-style torture and hard-core porn are difficult not to notice and, given our tolerant, even self-congratulatory, attitude toward pornography, why should we be so shocked when torture takes this form? Why should it be cause for international alarm when sexually degrading, dehumanizing things are done to Iraqi prisoners (and photographed) when doing the same things to women around the world (and photographing them) for a multibillion-dollar pornography industry is considered entertainment—the sort of all-American fun enjoyed by U.S. troops and available to anyone with access to the Internet?

That interior torture chamber is more visible in popular culture than ever before. One of the nation’s most popular network television shows, “24,” opened its season finale with an over-the-top torture scene of a man, forcibly strapped down to a chair, being shocked repeatedly with volts of electricity, screaming and crying out in sheer agony. The scene was so attention-grabbing that it ended up being featured as one of the week’s top events on VH1’s “Best Week Ever.” Torture pops up everywhere these days, even on the latest T-Mobile commercial, which features a young, black man tied

down to a chair, screaming in an interrogation-style room as he’s tortured by having his phone bill run up. At the end of the commercial, a smiling Catherine Zeta-Jones delivers her pitch as he stumbles around the store, still bound to the chair....

Silja J.A. Talvi
“Torture Fatigue”
in *The New York Times*
June 28, 2005

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s frustration was palpable as he testified before Congress: “We’re functioning with peacetime constraints, with legal requirements, in a wartime situation in the Information Age, where people are running around with digital cameras and taking these unbelievable photographs and then passing them off, against the law, to the media, to our surprise.” That is, we don’t have a problem with how we are prosecuting the war, we have a problem with controlling images of the war.

....
It is harder, in some ways, to spin images. Them, you have to just make go away.

David Levi Strauss
“Inconvenient Evidence:
The Effects of Abu Ghraib”
in *The Brooklyn Rail*
January 2005

It has been more than a year now since we (and, of course, the region in which we presume to be crusading for freedom) were shown a selection of snapshots from Abu Ghraib with their depraved staging of hooded figures, snarling dogs and stacked naked bodies. For all the genuine outrage in predictable places over what was soon being called a “torture scandal”—in legal forums, editorial pages, letters columns—the usual democratic cleansing cycle never really got going. However strong the outcry, it wasn’t enough to yield political results in the form of a determined Congressional investigation, let alone an independent commission of inquiry; the Pentagon’s own inquiries, which exonerated its civilian and political leadership, told us a good deal more than most Americans, so it would appear, felt they needed to know. Members of Congress say they receive a negligible number of letters and calls about the revelations that keep coming. “You asked whether they want it clear or want it blurry,” Senator Susan Collins, a Maine Republican, said to me about the reaction of her constituents to the torture allegations that alarm her. “I think they want it blurry.”

Joseph Lelyveld
“Interrogating Ourselves”
in *The New York Times Magazine*
June 12, 2005







A soldier who is able to see the humanity of the enemy makes a troubled and ineffective killer. To achieve corporate action, self-awareness and especially self-criticism must be obliterated. We must be transformed into agents of a divinely inspired will, as defined by the state, just as those we fight must be transformed into the personification of unmitigated evil. There is little room for individuality in war....

Chris Hedges
“War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning”
2002

It’s another Iraqi town, nameless to the Marines racing down the main drag in Humvees, blowing it to pieces. We’re flanked on both sides by a jumble of walled, two-story mud-brick buildings, with Iraqi gunmen concealed behind windows, on rooftops and in alleyways, shooting at us with machine guns, AK rifles and the odd rocket-propelled grenade (RPG). Though it’s nearly five in the

afternoon, a sandstorm has plunged the town into a hellish twilight of murky red dust. Winds howl at fifty miles per hour. The town stinks. Sewers, shattered from a Marine artillery bombardment that ceased moments before we entered, have overflowed, filling the streets with lagoons of human excrement. Flames and smoke pour out of holes blasted through walls of homes and apartment blocks by the Marines’ heavy weapons. Bullets, bricks, chunks of buildings, pieces of blown-up light poles and shattered donkey carts splash into the flooded road ahead.

....
The Marines’ artillery guns have a range of thirty kilometers. But even in the best of circumstances, artillery fire is an imprecise art. Rounds can veer off by twenty meters or more, as we witnessed today when one burst overhead. Despite the improvements in munitions and the use of computers and radar to help target them, the basic principles of artillery haven’t changed much since Napoleon’s time.
For some reason reporters and antiwar groups concerned about collateral damage in war seldom pay much attention to artillery. The beauty of aircraft, coupled with

their high-tech destructive power, captures the imagination. From a news standpoint, jets flying through the sky make for much more dramatic footage than images of cannons parked in the mud, intermittently belching puffs of smoke.
But the fact is, the Marines rely much more on artillery bombardment than on aircraft dropping precision-guided munitions. During our thirty-six hours outside Nasiriyah they have already lobbed an estimated 2,000 rounds into the city. The impact of this shelling on its 400,000 residents must be devastating.

....
He sounds tired. I think this war has lost its allure for him. It’s not that he can’t take it. During the past hour or so of shooting, he still seemed excited by the action. But I think after mourning the loss of his friend Horsehead, trying to care for dehydrated, sick babies among the refugees the other day, the shot-up kids by the airfield before that, and having seen so many civilians blown apart, he’s connected the dots between the pleasure he takes in participating in this invasion and its consequences. He hasn’t turned against the aims of this war; he still supports the idea of regime change.



from <http://tiredanddirtysoldier.yafro.com> (photo since removed from website)



Iraq 2004. Photographer unidentified. Source unknown.

But the side of him that loves war—his inner warrior—keeps bumping against the part of him that is basically a decent, average suburban guy who likes bad eighties music and Barry Manilow and believes in the American Way.

Evan Wright
Generation Kill
2004

They have names like video games and music videos, and emulate the soundtracks and editing techniques of both. They are videos filmed, produced, and distributed—via the internet—by soldiers fighting in or returning from Iraq. Much like the photographs from Abu Ghraib, the videos—with names like “Ramadi Madness” and “Die Terrorist Die”—have been making the rounds online for a while now, circulated by soldiers and even brought home as entertaining “trophyies,” have finally surfaced in the media, with stories in *The Los Angeles*

Times and *The Palm Beach Post*. And like the infamous photos, their appearance is causing some concern. Soldiers like Pfc. Chase McCollough, who brought home a copy of “Die Terrorist Die” to show his family, make the videos.

When Pfc. Chase McCollough went home on leave in November, he brought a movie made by fellow soldiers in Iraq. On his first night back at his parents’ house in Texas, he showed the video to his fiancée, family and friends.

This is what they saw: a handful of American soldiers filmed through the green haze of night-vision goggles. Radio communication between two soldiers crackles in the background before it’s drowned out by a heavy-metal soundtrack.

“Don’t need your forgiveness,” the song by the band Dope begins as images unfurl: armed soldiers posing in front of Bradley fighting vehicles, two women covered in black abayas walking along a dusty road, a blue-domed mosque, a poster of radical cleric Muqtada Sadr. Then, to the fast, hard beat of the music—“Die, don’t need your resistance. Die, don’t need your prayers”—

charred, decapitated and bloody corpses fill the screen.

“Scenes From a War”
This is Rumor Control
on www.thisisrumorcontrol.org
Posted by Parker on March 16, 2005 - 5:00pm

Wright records one of the soldiers enthusing, “I was just thinking one thing when we drove into that ambush...*Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*,” referring to a popular computer game. “I felt like I was living it when I seen the flames coming out of the windows, and the blown-up car in the street, guys crawling around shooting at us. It was fucking cool.”

“Natural-born Killers Will Never Win Hearts and Minds”
Charles Clover
in *Financial Times*
June 27, 2004



Iraqi Frontline: Image from Mobblogging Soldiers <http://talks.blogs.com/phototalk/2004/05/post.html> (photo since removed from website) photographer unidentified



Sunset surrender. From <http://tiredanddirtysoldier.yafo.com/photo/110846>

Not a single major voice has been raised in the American media against the ongoing destruction of Fallujah. While much of the world recognizes something horrifying has occurred, the U.S. press does not bat an eye over the systematic leveling of a city of 300,000 people.

A journalist for *The Times* (London) described the scene the night the U.S. onslaught began: “The districts comprising Fallujah’s perimeter—where most of the insurgents are concentrated—were already largely in ruins. The crumbling remains of houses and shell-pocked walls reminded me of my home town Beirut in the 1980s at the height of Lebanon’s civil war.... I began to count out loud as the bombs tumbled to the ground with increasingly monotonous regularity. There were 38 in the first half-hour alone. The bombing continued in waves until 5:15 a.m. as the American forces softened up their targets.”

And now? Buildings have been destroyed by the hundreds, corpses buried under many of them. A *Christian Science Monitor* reporter observes: “Some districts reeked from the sickening odor of rotting flesh, a stench too powerful to be swept away by a brisk breeze coming in from the sandy plain surrounding the city 40 miles west of Baghdad.

“A week of ground combat by Marines and some Iraqi troops, supported by tanks and attack helicopters, added to the destruction in a city where the homes and businesses for about 300,000 people are packed into an area a little less than 2 miles wide and a little more than 2 miles long.... Cats and dogs scamper along streets littered with bricks, broken glass, toppled light poles, downed power lines, twisted traffic barriers and spent cartridges. Walls are full of bullet holes. Marines have blown holes in walls and knocked down doors to search homes and shops. Dead Iraqis still lay out in the open Monday.”

David Walsh
“U.S. Media Applauds Destruction of Fallujah”
World Socialist Web Site, www.wsws.org
posted on November 17, 2004

Beginning November 8th, just a few short days after the election of George W. Bush to a second term as president, and with hardly a peep from anyone in the United States, the city of Fallujah was first cordoned off, then systematically emptied of its nearly 300,000 residents (with few in the press ever wondering where they might have gone) and finally reduced to rubble.

The Boston Globe’s Anne Barnard was embedded with a task force from the Army’s 1st Infantry Division in Fallujah. As American forces besieged the city, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Newell told her, “This is the first time since World War II that someone has turned an American armored task force loose in a city with no restrictions.” After two weeks of assault, Barnard writes:

Captain Paul Fowler sat on the curb next to a deserted gas station. Behind him, smoke rose over Fallujah. His company of tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles had roamed the eastern third of the city for 13 days, shooting holes in every building that might pose a threat, leaving behind a landscape of half-collapsed houses and factories singed with soot.

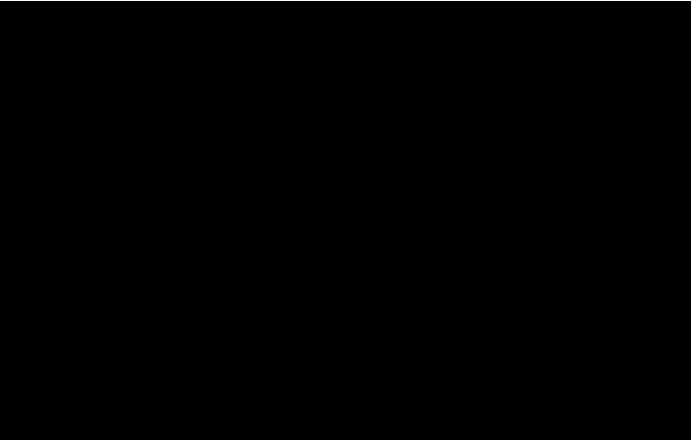
“I really hate that it had to be destroyed. But that was the only way to root these guys out,” said Fowler, 33, the son of a Baptist preacher in North Carolina. “The only way to root them out is to destroy everything in your path.”

In a piece that appeared in *CounterPunch* in late December, Mike Whitney fills in some of the details:

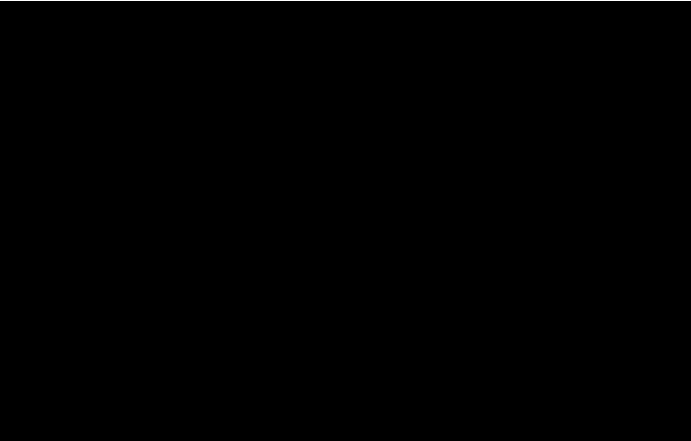
The results have been devastating. Over 250,000 people have been expelled from their homes and the city has been laid to waste. The U.S. military targeted the three main water treatment plants, the electrical grid and the sewage treatment plant, leaving Fallujans without any of the basic services they’ll need to return to a normal life.

Most of the city’s mosques have been either destroyed or seriously damaged and entire areas of the city where the fighting was most fierce have been effectively razed to the ground.

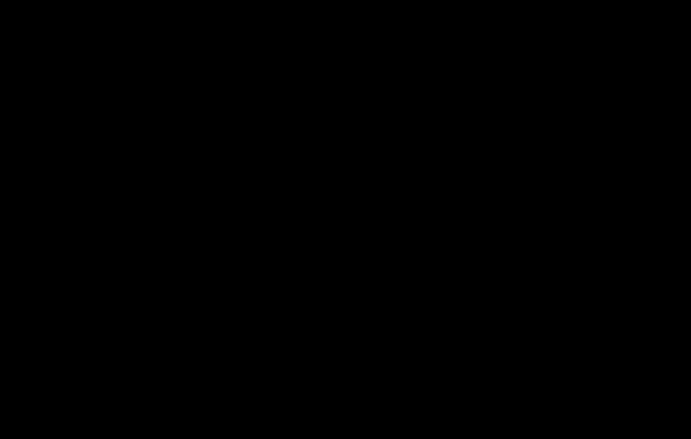
So far, the army has only removed the dead bodies from the streets, leaving countless decomposed corpses inside the ruined buildings. A large percentage of these have been devoured by packs of scavenging



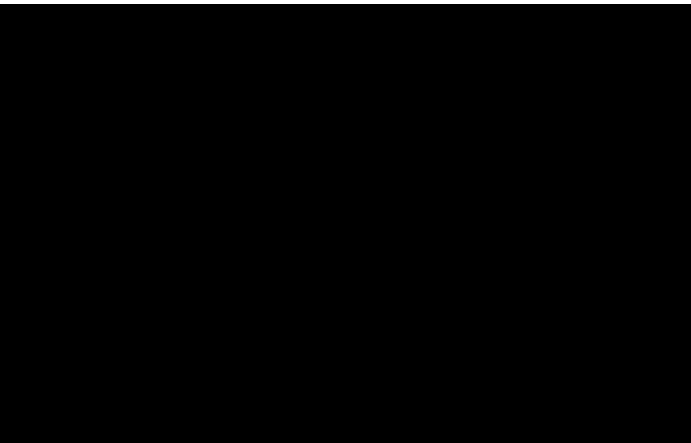
Cheering Iraqis with burning SUV. Photo: AP



Contractors hanging on bridge. Photo: AP



Man in white shirt in front of burning SUV. Photo: AP



Children cheer around burned bodies that had been cut down after being hung from a bridge following an attack on Fallujah. Photo: AP

dogs. The stench of death is reported to be overpowering.

This was the destruction of the city in order to save it, carried out in broad daylight, a brazen “fuck you”? (Last spring the words were scrawled by a Marine on the bridge where the bodies of the 4 contract workers had been hung. More recently, Fallujans returning to examine the rubble have found similar slogans.)

Twenty-four hours before the siege began, *Globe* reporter Barnard was sitting in on a military strategy session when she wrote:

“The first time you get shot at from a building, it’s rubble,” Capt. Paul Fowler told his platoon leaders. “No questions asked.”

Suspected enemy buildings were to be “cleared by fire” before troops entered. “No boots on the ground unless you’re looking for body parts,” Fowler said.

One short week later she was writing:
Corporal Martin Szewczyk surveyed families’ blankets and snapshots strewn on the floor by troops looking for weapons. “I feel bad,” he said. “These were poor people.”

“I think it’s going to get hotter for a while, when people come back and see what we did,” said Specialist Todd Taylor, 21.

....
“We napalmed both those [bridge] approaches,” said Colonel James Alles, commander of Marine Air Group 11. “Unfortunately there were people there... you could see them in the [cockpit] video. They were Iraqi soldiers. It’s no great way to die. The generals love napalm. It has a big psychological effect.”

At the time, the Pentagon insisted the report was untrue. “We completed destruction of our last batch of napalm on April 4, 2001,” it said.

[But] the Pentagon said it had not tried to deceive. It drew a distinction between traditional napalm, first invented in 1942, and the weapons dropped in Iraq, which it calls Mark 77 firebombs. They weigh 510 lbs, and consist of 44 lbs of polystyrene-like gel and 63 gallons of jet fuel.

Officials said that if journalists had asked about the firebombs, their use would have been confirmed. A spokesman admitted they were “remarkably similar” to napalm but said they caused less environmental damage.

Our attachment to napalm is a long one, with each war affording an opportunity for product enhancement. Here is an American pilot talking about the joys of napalm while America was attempting to “liberate” Vietnam:

“We sure are pleased with those backroom boys at Dow. The original product wasn’t so hot. If the gooks were quick they could scrape it off. So the boys started adding polystyrene. Now it sticks like shit to a blanket. But then if the gooks jumped under water it stopped burning, so they added Willie Peter [white phosphorus] so’s to make it burn better. It’ll even burn under water now. And just one drop is enough; it’ll keep on burning right down to the bone so they die anyway from phosphorus poisoning.”

Mark Chmiel and Andrew Wimmer
“Down the Memory Hole: Hearts and Minds, Revisited”
in *Counterpunch*, counterpunch.org
posted on January 12, 2005

Horror stories—including the use of napalm and chemical weapons by the US military during the siege of Fallujah—continue to trickle out from the rubble of the demolished city, carried by weary refugees lucky enough to have escaped their city.

A cameraman with the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) who witnessed the first eight days of the fighting told of what he considered atrocities. Burhan Fasa’a has worked for LBC throughout the occupation of Iraq.

“I entered Fallujah near the Julan Quarter, which is near the General Hospital,” he said during an interview in Baghdad. “There were American snipers on top of the hospital shooting everyone.”

He nervously smoked cigarettes throughout the interview, still visibly shaken by what he saw.

On November 8, the military was allowing women and children to leave the city, but none of the men. He was not allowed to enter the city through one of the main checkpoints, so he circumnavigated Fallujah and managed to enter, precariously, by walking through a rural area near the main hospital, then taking a small boat across the river in order to film from inside the city.

“Before I found the boat, I was 50 meters from the hospital where the American snipers were shooting everyone in sight,” he said, “But I managed to get in.”

He told of bombing so heavy and constant by US warplanes that rarely a minute passed without the ground’s shaking from the bombing campaign.

“The Americans used very heavy bombs to break the spirit of the fighters in Fallujah,” he explained, then holding out his arms added, “They bombed everything! I mean everything!”

This went on for the first two days, he said, then on the third day, columns of tanks and other armored vehicles made their move. “Huge numbers of tanks and armored vehicles and troops attempted to enter the north side of Fallujah,” he said, “But I filmed at least twelve US vehicles that were destroyed.”

“The military wasn’t yet able to push into Fallujah, and the bombing resumed.”

“I saw at least 200 families who had their homes collapsed on their heads by American bombs,”

Burhan said while looking at the ground, a long ash dangling from his cigarette, “Fallujans already needed everything. I mean they already had no food or medicine. I saw a huge number of people killed in the northern part of the city, and most of them were civilians.”

At this point he started to tell story after story of what he saw during the first week of the siege.

“The dead were buried in gardens because people couldn’t leave their homes. There were so many people wounded, and with no medical supplies, people died from their wounds. Everyone in the street was a target for the Americans; even I saw so many civilians shot by them.”

He looked out the window, taking several deep breaths. By then, he said, most families had already run out of food. Families were sneaking through nearby houses to scavenge for food. Water and electricity had long since been cut.

The military called over loudspeakers for families to surrender and come out of their houses, but Burhan said everyone was too afraid to leave their homes, so soldiers began blasting open the gates to houses and conducting searches.

“Americans did not have interpreters with them, so they entered houses and killed people because they didn’t speak English! They entered the house where I was with 26 people, and shot people because they didn’t obey their orders, even just because the people couldn’t understand a word of English. Ninety-five percent of the people killed in the houses that I saw were killed because they couldn’t speak English.”

His eyes were tearing up, so he lit another cigarette and continued talking.

“Soldiers thought the people were rejecting their orders, so they shot them. But the people just couldn’t understand them!”

He managed to keep filming battles and scenes from inside the city, some of which he later managed to sell to Reuters, who showed a few clips of his footage. LBC, he explained, would not show any of the tapes he submitted to them. He had managed to smuggle most of his tapes out of the city before his gear was taken from him.

“The Americans took all of my camera equipment when they found it. At that time I watched one soldier

take money from a small child in front of everyone in our house.”

Burhan said that when the troops learned he was a journalist, he was treated worse than the other people in the home where they were seeking refuge. He was detained, along with several other men, women, and children.

“They beat me and cursed me because I work for LBC, then they interrogated me. They were so angry at al-Jazeera and al-Arabia networks.”

He was held for three days, sleeping on the ground with no blankets, as did all of the prisoners in a detention camp inside a military camp outside Fallujah.

“They arrested over 100 from my area, including women and kids. We had one toilet, which was in front of where we all were kept, and everyone was shamed by having to use this in public. There was no privacy, and the Americans made us use it with handcuffs on.”

He said he wanted to talk more about what he saw inside Fallujah during the nine days he was there.

“I saw cluster bombs everywhere, and so many bodies that were burned, dead with no bullets in them. So they definitely used fire weapons, especially in Julian district. I watched American snipers shoot civilians so many times. I saw an American sniper in a minaret of a mosque shooting everyone that moved.”

He also witnessed something which many refugees from Fallujah have reported.

“I saw civilians trying to swim the Euphrates to escape, and they were all shot by American snipers on the other side of the river.”

The home he was staying in before he was detained was located near the mosque where the NBC cameraman filmed the execution of an older, wounded Iraqi man.

“The mosque where the wounded man was shot that the NBC cameraman filmed—that is in the Jubail Quarter—I was in that quarter. Wounded, unarmed people used that mosque for safety. I can tell you there were no weapons in there of any kind because I was in that mosque. People only hid there for safety. That is all.”

He personally witnessed another horrible event reported by many of the refugees who reached Baghdad.

“On Tuesday, November 16th, I saw tanks roll over the wounded in the streets of the Jumariyah Quarter. There is a public clinic there, so we call that the clinic street. There had been a heavy battle in this street, so there were twenty bodies of dead fighters and some wounded civilians in front of this clinic. I was there at the clinic, and at 11 a.m. on the 16th I watched tanks roll over the wounded and dead there.”

After another long pause, he looked out the window for awhile. Still looking out the window, he said, “During the nine days I was in Fallujah, all of the wounded men, women, kids and old people, none of them were evacuated. They either suffered to death, or somehow survived.”

According to the Iraqi Red Crescent, which managed to get three ambulances into the city on November 14, at least 150 families remain trapped inside the city. One family was surviving by placing rice in dirty water, letting it sit for two hours, then eating it. There has been no power or running water for a month in Fallujah.

People there are burying body parts from people blown apart by bombs, as well as skeletons of the dead because their flesh had been eaten by dogs.

The military estimates that 2,000 people in Fallujah were killed, but claims that most of them were fighters. Relief personnel and locals, however, believe the vast majority of the dead were civilians.

Dahr Jamail
“An Eyewitness Account of Fallujah”
Dahr Jamail’s Iraq Dispatches
dahrjamailiraq.com/hard_news/archives
posted on December 4, 2004, Baghdad

Dahr Jamail's Iraq Dispatches

Images from the War in Iraq

The Face of War

This album contains photos taken by the military of dead men in Fallujah. They were taken on November 19th, 2004, to identify the dead. The IRC estimates that at least 60% of those killed in the assault of Fallujah are women, children and elderly. Warning: These are extremely graphic images posted simply to show the true face of war.

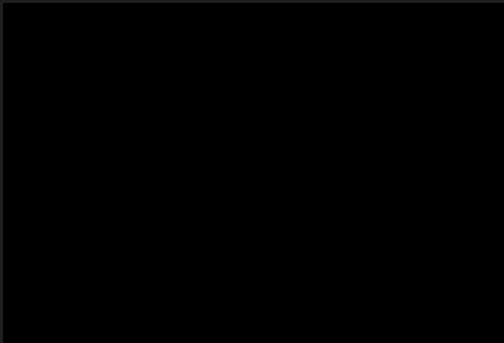
Last changed on 01/31/05. This album contains 82 items. This album has been viewed 64523 times since 01/19/05.

Fallujah Photos

Two weeks ago someone was allowed into Fallujah by the military to help bury bodies. They were allowed to take photographs of 75 bodies, in order to show pictures to relatives so that they might be identified before they were buried. These pictures are from a book of these photos. They are being circulated publicly around small villages near Fallujah where many refugees are staying. Warning: These are extremely graphic images photographed in Fallujah of people killed during the US assault. Weblog | Hard News - Eyewitness Account of the Siege | Hard News - US Obstructing Medical Care During Falluja Siege | Hard News - US Uses Non-conventional Weapons in Falluja

Last changed on 01/31/05. This album contains 72 items. This album has been viewed 183654 times since 12/09/04.

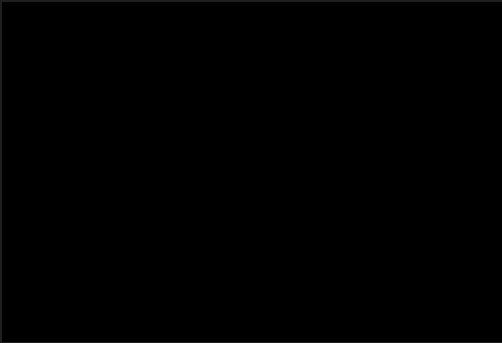
Fallujah Photos



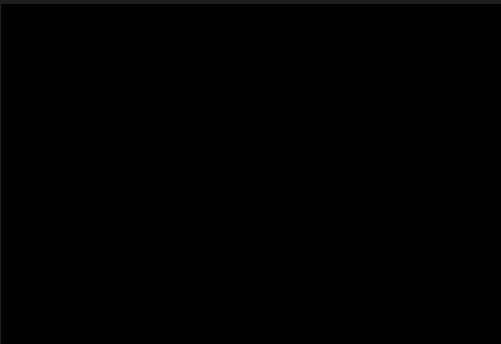
Viewed: 8,286 times.



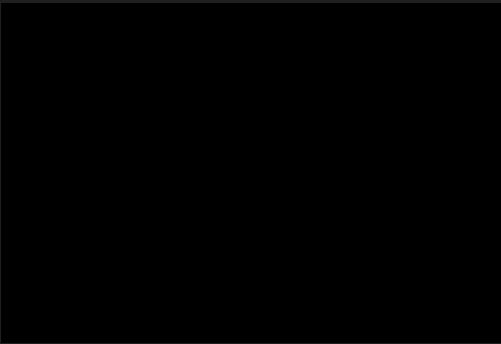
Family member killed
in bed in home.
Viewed: 14,999 times.



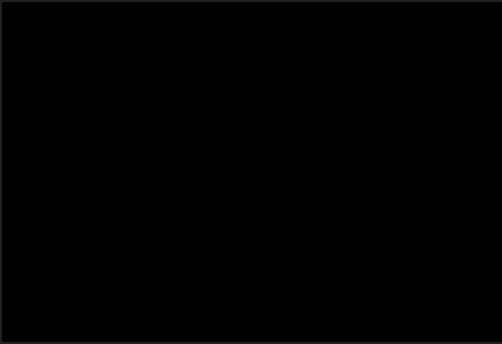
Dead boy holding white surrender
flag.
Viewed: 20,111 times.



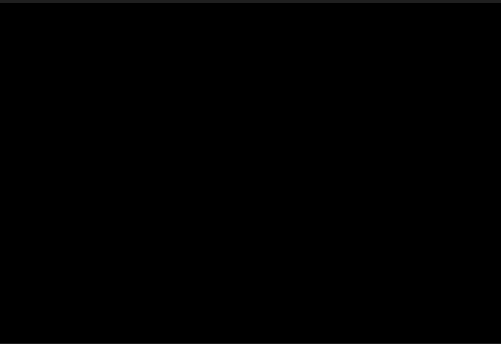
Person with disability-prosthetics above
body. Partially eaten by dogs.
Viewed: 11,970 times.



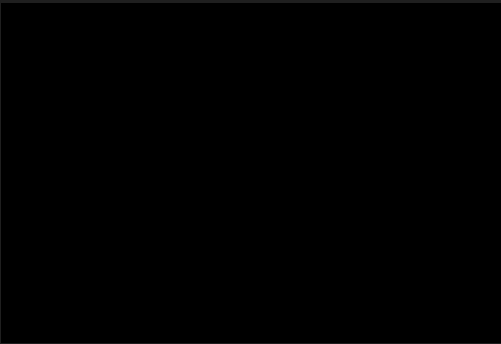
Family member killed
in bed in home.
Viewed: 14,999 times.



Old man-family
recognized body.
Viewed: 9,397 times.



Shot in head in bed.
Viewed: 6,575 times.



No comment.
Viewed: 13,175 times.



Pile of bodies.
Viewed: 9,339 times.

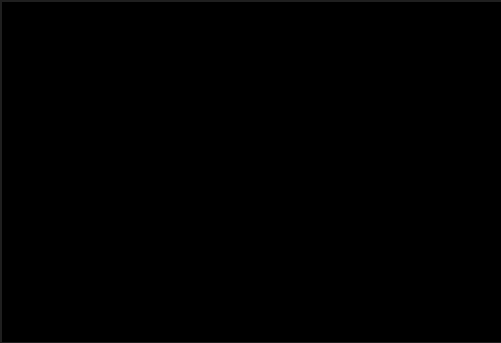
Iraq Dispatches



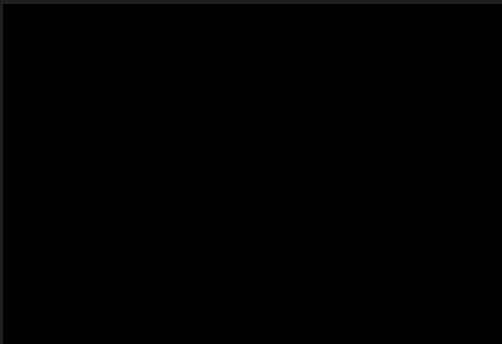
Old man hiding near wall. Family recognized body.
Viewed: 9,827 times.



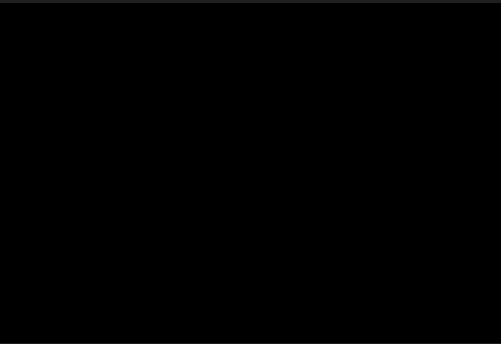
Fighter with scorched skin, partially eaten by dogs.
Viewed: 5,309 times.



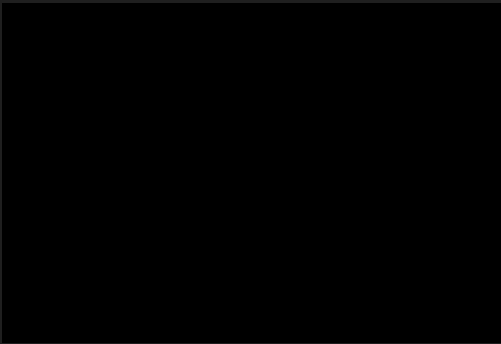
Man killed in house.
Viewed: 13,381 times.



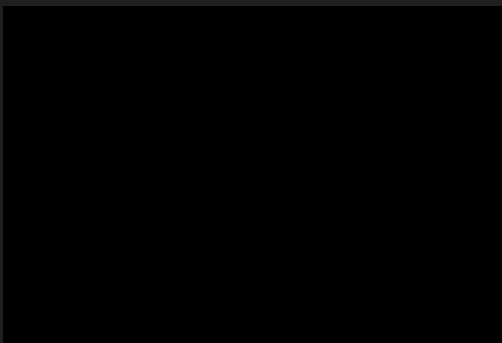
Head partially blown off.
Dead body in home.
Viewed: 5,534 times.



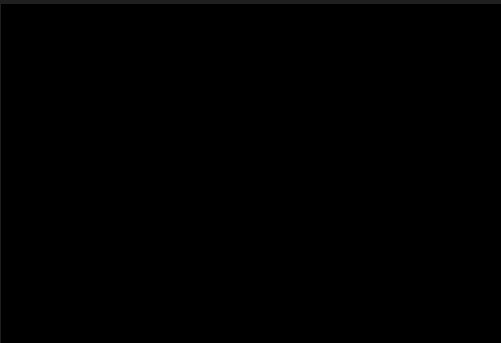
Dead fighters.
Viewed: 5,385 times.



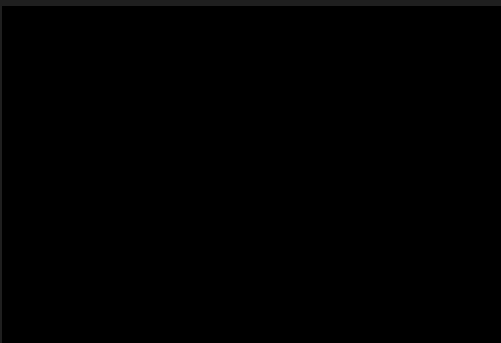
Fighter, partially eaten by dogs.
Viewed: 9,451 times.



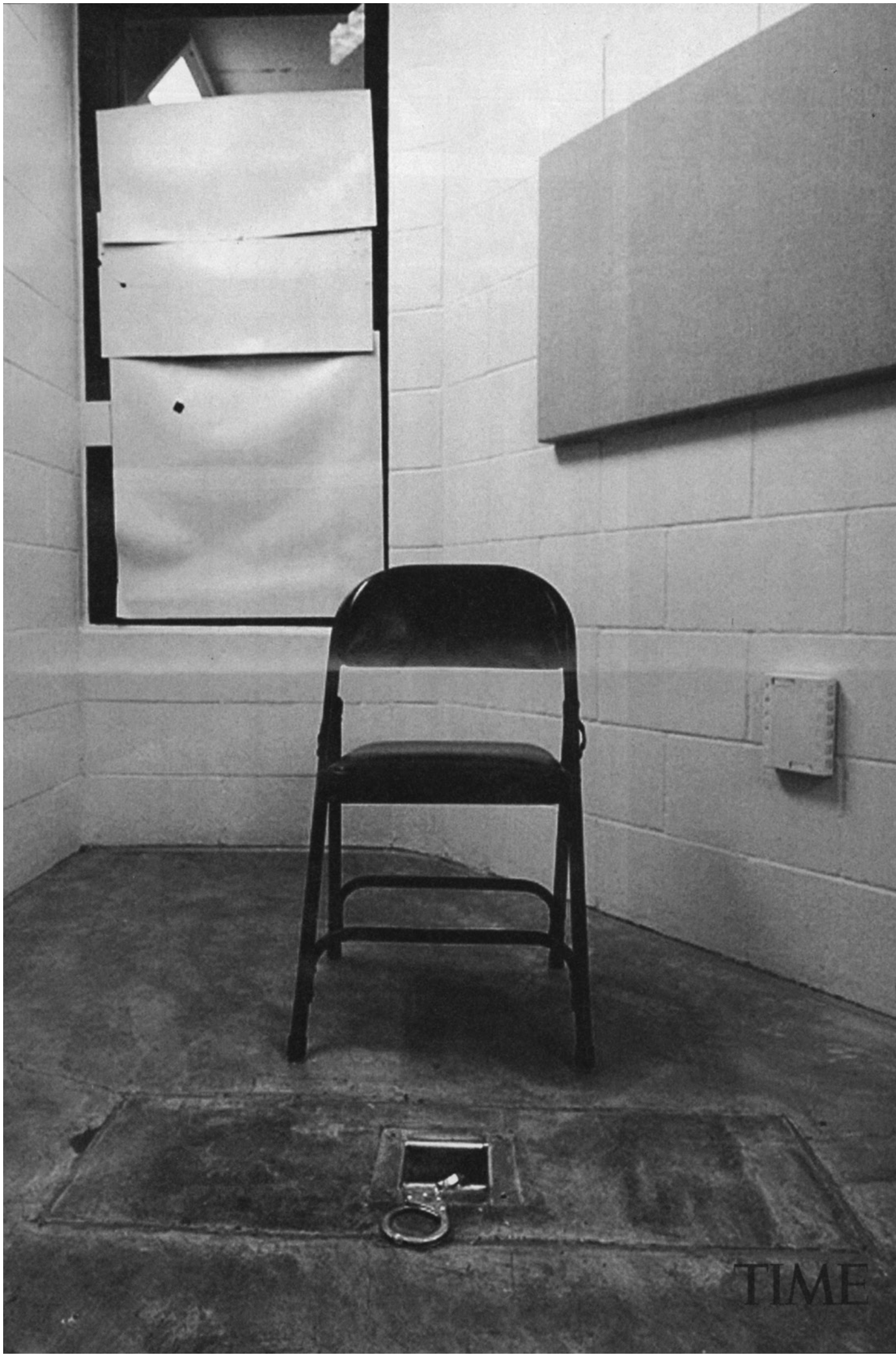
Old man killed with 2 daughters.
Relative recognized body.
Viewed: 8,360 times.



One of man's daughters.
Hair scorched off.
Viewed: 9,708 times.



Boy in rubble of bombed home.
Viewed: 9,945 times.



Interrogation room at Guantánamo, Time Magazine, June 20, 2005 Richard Ross/AP

Amy Davidson: You visited the detention center at Guantánamo Bay. What was your impression of the place? What did, and didn't, you get to see?

Jane Mayer: ...They clearly are waging a tough public-relations battle to try to improve Guantánamo's image in the world, and to do so they have apparently decided that they need to get better press coverage.

....
[They allowed] me to attend one of the Administrative Review Board hearings in which detainees can challenge their status as a danger to the U.S. In the one I attended, the detainee, whose name I had to agree not to release, demanded to see the evidence that the U.S. had against him, so that he could refute it. But much of the evidence, U.S. military authorities told him, was classified, and he would not be allowed to see it. The detainee, a Saudi, wore handcuffs, ankle cuffs, and a belly chain, and was shackled to a bolt in the floor. He spoke very little English, and became increasingly frustrated and angry. At one point, instead of relying on his translator, he started yelling at the three presiding military officers, "Shut up! Shut UP!"

I could not learn the disposition of his case, as the Review Board sends its recommendations in secret up the chain of command in the Department of Defense. What came through to me was the complete breakdown of communication and understanding between the U.S. officials and the detainee, and also the utter lack of due process. It looked like a court hearing, but there were no

lawyers. And although the detainee had a military representative, he had no one to truly be an advocate for his interests. The refusal of the Review Board to share the evidence it had with the accused seemed radically out of synch with U.S. standards of justice.

On the surface, though, thanks to the presence of thousands of U.S. troops there, Guantánamo is becoming like a little American town. A Starbucks had recently opened, and a McDonald's and several other restaurants did a brisk business. The area was unpleasantly wet and hot when I was there, but also surprisingly beautiful—lush and green, framed by hills of tropical jungle and blue mountain peaks. During their free hours, the soldiers swim at the coral beaches and dive. There's even a golf course....

Amy Davidson talks with Jane Mayer
"In Gitmo"

in *The New Yorker Online*
posted on July 6, 2005

"One of the prosecutors told me that they think 30% of the people in Guantánamo Bay were nothing to do with anything. They were just in the wrong place at the wrong time," says Clive Stafford-Smith. "When the prosecutor tells you 30%, I tend to think it's more like 70%. But the

bottom line is we're not talking about 600 of the worst people in the world. We're talking about at least a couple of hundred who didn't do anything.

"You kidnap people who may be totally innocent, you take them all the way around the world in hoods and shackles, you hold them incommunicado for two years, you don't give them a lawyer and you don't tell them what they're charged with. It's not a matter of what's wrong with it, it's a question of what's right with it. And it achieves nothing."

Shah Mohammed was given no apology or compensation when he was released, just a three-paragraph letter from a unit based at Bagram airport in Afghanistan, called CFTF180-Detainee Ops. It is signed by a soldier with a rank lower than corporal, Joseph P Burke. It reads: "This memorandum is to certify that Shah Mohammed Alikhel [his tribal name], ISN-US9PK-00019DP, was detained by the United States Military from January 13 2002 to Mar 22 2003." The letter is dated May 8; in other words, Mohammed was kept prisoner two months longer than the U.S. wanted him.

Despite interrogating him nine or 10 times, the letter goes on to say that the U.S. has no record of Mohammed's place of birth. The letter concludes: "This individual has been determined to pose no threat to the United States military or its interests in Afghanistan or Pakistan. There are no charges pending from the United States against this individual.... [T]he United States government intends that this person be fully rejoined with his family."

“If they kept me for 18 months and sent me a letter to certify I’m innocent, then why did they keep me there for 18 months?” asks Shah Mohammed. “Don’t they have any duty or obligation to me?”

Even less than a duty—a nameless grudge: despite declaring him harmless, the U.S. military transported him home to Pakistan as it had brought him to Cuba—in chains.

James Meek
“People the Law Forgot”
in *The Guardian Unlimited*
December 3, 2003

You may not have heard the term “rendition,” at least not the way the Central Intelligence Agency uses it. But renditions have become one of the most important secret weapons in the war on terror. In recent years, well over 100 people have disappeared or been “rendered” all around the world. Witnesses tell the same story: masked men in an unmarked jet seize their target, cut off his clothes, put him in a blindfold and jumpsuit, tranquilize him and fly him away.

They’re describing U.S. agents collaring terrorism suspects. Some notorious terrorists such as Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, the mastermind of 9/11, were rendered this way. But as Correspondent Scott Pelley reported last March, it’s happening to many others. Some are taken to prisons infamous for torture. And a few may have been rendered by mistake.

One of the covert missions happened in Stockholm, and the details have touched off a national scandal in Sweden. Two Egyptians living in Sweden, Mohammad Al-Zery and Ahmed Agiza, were arrested by Swedish police and brought to an airport. An executive jet was waiting with a crew of mysterious masked men.

“American security agents just took over,” says Tomas Hammarberg, a former Swedish diplomat who pressed for and got an investigation into how the Egyptians disappeared.

“We know that they were badly treated on the spot, that scissors and knives were used to take off their clothes. And they were shackled. And some tranquilizers were [given to them], obviously in order to make them dizzy and fall asleep.”

An airport officer told *60 Minutes* she saw the two men hustled to the plane. She didn’t want to be identified, but she had no doubt about where the plane came from: “I know that the aircraft was American registration ... because the ‘N’ first, on the registration.” The so-called “N” number marks an American plane. Swedish records show a Gulfstream G5, N379P was there that night.

Within hours, Al-Zery and Agiza, both of whom had been seeking asylum in Sweden, found themselves in an Egyptian prison. Hammarberg says Sweden sent a diplomat to see them weeks later.

What did they tell the diplomat about how they were being treated?

“That they had been treated brutally in general, had been beaten up several times, that they had been threatened,” says Hammarberg. “But probably the worst phase of torture came after that first visit by the ambassador.... They were under electric torture.”

The Egyptians say Agiza is an Islamic militant and they sentenced him to 25 years. But Al-Zery wasn’t charged. After two years in jail, he was sent to his village in Egypt. The authorities are not allowing interviews.

“The option of not doing something is extraordinarily dangerous to the American people,” says Michael Scheuer, who until three months ago was a senior CIA official in the counterterrorist center. Scheuer created the CIA’s Osama bin Laden unit and helped set up the rendition program during the Clinton administration.

“Basically, the National Security Council gave us the mission, take down these cells, dismantle them and take people off the streets so they can’t kill Americans,” says Scheuer. “They just didn’t give us anywhere to take the people after we captured [them].”

So the CIA started taking suspects to Egypt and Jordan. Scheuer says renditions were authorized by Clinton’s National Security Council and officials in Congress—and all understood what it meant to send suspects to those countries.

“They don’t have the same legal system we have. But we know that going into it,” says Scheuer. “And so the idea that we’re gonna suddenly throw our hands up like Claude Raines in ‘Casablanca’ and say, ‘I’m shocked that justice in Egypt isn’t like it is in Milwaukee,’ there’s

a certain disingenuousness to that.”

“And one of the things that you know about justice in Egypt is that people get tortured,” says Pelley.

“Well, it can be rough. I have to assume that that’s the case,” says Scheuer.

But doesn’t that make the United States complicit in the torture?

“You’ll have to ask the lawyers,” says Scheuer.

Is it convenient?

“It’s convenient in the sense that it allows American policy makers and American politicians to avoid making hard decisions,” says Scheuer. “Yes. It’s very convenient. It’s finding someone else to do your dirty work.”

The indispensable tool for that work is a small fleet of executive jets authorized to land at all U.S. military bases worldwide. Scheuer wouldn’t tell *60 Minutes* about the planes that are used in these operations—that information is classified. The CIA declined to talk about it, but it turns out the CIA has left plenty of clues out in the open, in the public record. The tail number of the Gulfstream was first reported by witnesses in Pakistan. In public records, the tail number came back to a company called Premiere Executive Transport Services, with headquarters listed in Dedham, Mass. But Dedham is a dead end. The address is a law office on the second floor of a bank. There’s no airline there.

But there was one thing in the records that did lead somewhere—a second tail number. That number belonged to an unmarked 737. *60 Minutes* found the jet in Scotland, apparently refueling. It’s possible to track these planes by their flight plans. Often the information is on the Internet. Using the Web and aviation sources, *60 Minutes* was able to find 600 flights to 40 countries. It appears the number of flights increased greatly in the Bush administration after Sept. 11.

The planes are based in North Carolina. They usually fly to Dulles Airport outside Washington before heading overseas. Major destinations read like a roadmap to the war on terror—30 trips to Jordan, 19 to Afghanistan, 17 to Morocco, 16 to Iraq. Other stops include Egypt, Libya, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The flight log shows one flight took the 737 to Skopje, Macedonia, to Baghdad and finally Kabul, Afghanistan. *60 Minutes* found a man who says he was on that flight.

Khaled el-Masri was born in Kuwait, but he now lives in Germany with his wife and four children. He became a German citizen 10 years ago. He told *60 Minutes* he was on vacation in Macedonia last year when Macedonian police, apparently acting on a tip, took him off a bus, held him for three weeks, then took him to the Skopje airport where he believes he was abducted by the CIA.

“They took me to this room, and they hit me all over and they slashed my clothes with sharp objects, maybe knives or scissors,” says el-Masri. “I also heard photos being taken while this was going on—and they took off the blindfold and I saw that there were a lot of men standing in the room. They were wearing black masks and black gloves.” El-Masri says he was injected with drugs, and after his flight, he woke up in an American-run prison in Afghanistan. He showed *60 Minutes* a prison floor plan he drew from memory. He says other prisoners were from Pakistan, Tanzania, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. El-Masri told *60 Minutes* that he was held for five months and interrogated by Americans through an interpreter.

“He yelled at me and he said that, ‘You’re in a country without laws and no one knows where you are. Do you know what that means?’ I said yes,” says el-Masri. “It was very clear to me that he meant I could stay in my cell for 20 years or be buried somewhere, and nobody knows what happened to you.”

He says they were asking him “whether I had contacts with Islamic parties like al Qaeda or the Muslim Brotherhood or aid organizations, lots of questions.” He says he told the Americans he’d never been involved in militant Islam. El-Masri says he wasn’t tortured, but he says he was beaten and kept in solitary confinement. Then, after his five months of questioning, he was simply released.

At that point, did anyone ever tell him that they’d made a mistake? “They told me that they had confused names and that they had cleared it up, but I can’t imagine that,” says el-Masri. “You can clear up switching names in a few minutes.” He says he was flown out of Afghanistan and dumped on a road in Albania. When he finally made his way back home to Germany, he found that his wife and kids had gone to her family in Lebanon. He called there to explain what happened....

“How do you know if you’re picking up the right people,” Pelley asked Scheuer.

“You do the best you can. It’s not a science,” says Scheuer. “It’s gathering as much information as you can, deciding on the quality of it and then determining the risks the person poses. If you make a mistake, you

make a mistake.”

There’s another destination that *60 Minutes* noticed frequently in the plane’s flight logs: Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, a predominately Muslim country, with a reputation for torture.

Craig Murray is the former British ambassador there. He told *60 Minutes* that Uzbek citizens, captured in Afghanistan, were flown back to Tashkent on the American plane. “I know of two instances for certain of prisoners who were brought back in a small jet, and I believe it was happening on a reasonably regular basis,” says Murray.

Murray says the jet was operated by Premiere Executive Airlines. He says in Uzbekistan, many prisoners are subject to torture techniques straight out of the Middle Ages: “Techniques of drowning and suffocation, rape was used quite commonly, and also immersion of limbs in boiling liquid.” Murray complained to his superiors that British intelligence was using information gleaned by torture. He was recalled by London four months ago and quit the foreign service.

Is there any reason to believe that the CIA knows that people are being tortured in these jails?

“The CIA definitely knows. I asked my deputy to go and speak to the CIA, and she came back and reported to me that she’d met with the CIA head of station, who told her that ‘Yes, this material probably was obtained under torture, but the CIA didn’t see that a problem.’”

The CIA disputes that. The agency told *60 Minutes* that the meeting Murray described didn’t happen. The CIA also says it does not knowingly receive intelligence obtained by torture.

President Bush, in a January interview with the *New York Times*, said: “Torture is never acceptable.” He added, “nor do we hand over people to countries that do torture.”

Scheuer says, in his experience, the United States asks receiving countries to promise that suspects will be treated according to the laws of that country. “I’m not completely confident that any of the information received was exacted by torture,” says Scheuer.

In Egypt?

“In Egypt. Again, I think we have people in the Middle East in the various services we deal with who are extraordinarily experienced in debriefing people,” says Scheuer. “I personally think that any information gotten through extreme methods of torture would probably be pretty useless because it would be someone telling you what you wanted to hear. The information we have received as a result of these programs has been very useful to the United States.”

“And if some of that useful information is gleaned by torture, that’s OK,” asks Pelley.

“It’s OK with me,” says Scheuer. “I’m responsible for protecting Americans.”

Scheuer says in the Clinton and Bush administrations, and in Congress, details of rendition flights were known to top officials. Now that the missions are coming to light, Scheuer says there is worry in the CIA that field agents will take the fall if any of the missions are later deemed illegal.

Are CIA people feeling vulnerable to that?

“I think from the first day we ever did it there was a certain macabre humor that said sooner or later this sword of Damocles is gonna fall because if something goes wrong, the policy maker and the politicians and the congressional committees aren’t gonna belly up to the bar and say, ‘We authorized this,’” says Scheuer.

“CIA Flying Suspects To Torture?”

Transcript of *60 Minutes*, *CBS News Special Report*
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/03/04/60minutes/main678155.shtml>
posted on March 6, 2005



From http://dahrijamailiraq.com/gallery/view_album.php?set_albumName=Anti_american_sentiment

I cringed when I heard Steven Bochco was producing a series about our troops in Iraq. However impressive his credentials—“Hill Street Blues,” “L.A. Law,” “NYPD Blue”—it seemed somehow insensitive, even indecent, to be making a for-profit entertainment program about a war that’s ongoing, bringing new casualties every day.

Noel Holston
“A Commanding Drama on Iraq”
in *New York Newsday*
July 27, 2005

Timing is the questionable element in “Over There,” Steven Bochco’s 13-episode series about U.S. soldiers fighting in Iraq. It is not only the first television drama about the conflict, but also the first American television series that has tried to process a war as entertainment while it was still being fought.

Even in our hyperaccelerated media culture, “Over There” is fast work. And that is both troubling and comforting. The series is a slick, compelling and very violent distillation of the latest news reports and old war movies and television shows. That alone could make it seem like a show business atrocity, a commercial abuse of a raw and unresolved national calamity.

Except that exploitation is not necessarily a bad thing. “Over There,” which began airing in the United States this week on the FX cable network, dramatizes wartime slaughter and suffering that all too often go unnoticed....

Alessandra Stanley
“A Real-Time War Drama”
in *The New York Times*
July 29, 2005

When he’s at the top of his game, Steven Bochco dazzles us with fiction dripping with realism.

....
On the front lines, the images are disturbingly horrific. The torso of an advancing Iraqi is vaporized. An American loses his leg when a truck runs over an IED (improvised explosive device). We see the slaughter of Iraqis, and recoil as Americans stand on their kill.

As we become acquainted with the Americans, we feel their fear, their courage, their confusion. We get a sense of what this war is: night-vision goggles, sandstorms, mortar attacks, machine guns, women combatants. Fear, courage. Courage, fear.

We see soldiers disobeying orders, eating Taster’s Choice out of the packet, going on unauthorized beer runs, sending video e-mail back home.

And the more we come to know them, the greater our concern for them grows. The dialogue, a Bochco specialty, is coarse and rich.

“Someone said tragedy is the inevitable working out of things. The tragedy here is we’re savages,” says a soldier e-mailing home.

“You think you’re bad, fool?” an African-American soldier says to another. “Mortar lands on your head, we won’t find enough of you to fill a condom. Now shut up!”

Tonight’s episode is weighed down by the necessary explaining of who the characters are and learning nicknames. And though the producers have hired military and cultural advisers, mistakes are made. The most obvious in Episode 1 are the little white flags that inexplicably mark hidden IEDs.

Otherwise, production values are strong. The characters come alive. The camaraderie is there. So is the drama.

And the series, judging by Episodes 2 and 3, only gets better.

Controversial? You bet.
Good television? Absolutely.

Mike McDaniel
“Soldiers Walk the Walk, Talk the Talk:
In *Over There*, Bochco Delivers Something More
Real Than Any Reality Show”
in *The Houston Chronicle*
July 27, 2005

As to the enemy—ordinary Iraqi citizens barely exist in the show so far—they are mostly video-game blips in the distance, to be picked off before they pick you off. When they get closer, they are unambiguously treacherous (or seriously misguided), as if to ensure sympathy for our heroes. There is no blurring of right side and wrong. Even the little girl who dies in a car running a checkpoint is revealed to be the pawn of the insurgency, not an innocent victim of American gunfire. The apparently crazy special-operations officer who hijacks the unit’s insurgent prisoner is only crazy like a fox. Synapses of future episodes indicate similar strategies ahead: “A member of the fire team is implicated in a civilian killing that the unit suspects was a setup by Iraqi insurgents”; and later, an Iraqi prisoner “strapped with explosives threatens to blow up himself and everyone else at the prison.”

The series is apolitical in the sense that it doesn’t take a side on whether we should be in Iraq in the first place, and its sympathy toward the troops reflects a widespread, if not universal, attitude that the soldiers are not to blame and not to be criticized. But it’s dreaming to think that one can remove that question, or all the questions that question raises, from the experience of watching it, or indeed from making it. Every decision of what to show or not to show, whether to make a character profane or well-spoken, what to have them say or not to say, what music to use and when to use it, every aesthetic decision ultimately has a political resonance, whether intended or not. The subject is too big, too urgent and too real for it to be otherwise.

Robert Lloyd
“Baghdad Blues”
in *The Los Angeles Times*
July 27, 2005

During the Vietnam War era, it was the news divisions of the big three U.S. television networks that, controversially and unprecedentedly, brought the war into living rooms.

It says something about our own era that the most visceral rendering of the conflict in Iraq now being delivered to American households is in the form of entertainment, a scripted drama by Steven Bochco, the impresario previously responsible for such hits as “Hill Street Blues” and “LA Law.”

The first episode of Mr Bochco’s hard-punching front-line drama “Over There,” the first U.S. television series to depict a war still in progress, has just aired on cable television. Thanks in part to a blaze of advance publicity, it attracted a more than respectable 4.1 million viewers on Wednesday and has become the cultural talking point of the moment.

In an age in which news stations appear more preoccupied with celebrity trials or the disappearance of a young woman in the Caribbean than with the stark realities of the U.S. military presence in Iraq, the show has succeeded in generating more media coverage about life on the Mesopotamian front than almost anything since the fall of Baghdad.

It is also attracting its share of criticism, from puritan critics worried about its graphic violence and no-holds-barred language, from veterans who worry that the realities of combat are being sacrificed to the exigencies of entertainment, and from opponents of the war who say the show ends up condoning the conflict in its very refusal to engage with the question of why it started in the first place.

The critical notices, however, have been largely positive. *The Washington Post* conceded there were moments that were “manipulative, belaboured and cliché-ridden” but added: “The flaws are consistently overshadowed by grueling virtues: suspense, tension and a palpable sense of deep distress.”

“Over There” follows the fortunes of a crew of new recruits as they deal with the ever-present danger of firefights, checkpoint duty and bomb attacks by insurgents. It also tracks life on the home front: the infidelities, financial difficulties and stresses of single parenthood.

Mr Bochco is an accomplished entertainer, and the series certainly does not lack for slick delivery, eye-catching visuals and workmanlike acting from a young cast of unknowns. While the characters talk about their personal emotions, however, they emphatically do not stray into discussions of what they are doing in Iraq in the first place. Mr Bochco says this is the result of his decision to make the show “completely apolitical.”

....
But this refusal to engage with the controversies of the war has the side-effect of reducing the Iraqis to shadowy villains we learn to fear but never get to know. It also carries the implication that there is a fundamental dignity and honour in serving one’s country, whatever the cause. As a number of critics have pointed out, that is in itself a distinct political position.

Andrew Gumbel
“Iraq War Returns To Living Rooms, As TV Drama”
in *The Independent*, UK
July 30, 2005

During 1990 and 1991, some 696,778 individuals served in the Persian Gulf as elements of Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. Of these, 148 were killed in battle, 467 were wounded in action and 145 were killed in accidents, producing a total of 760 casualties—quite a low number given the scale of the operations.

However, as of May 2002, the Veterans Administration (VA) reported that an additional 8,306 soldiers had died and 159,705 were injured or became ill as a result of service-connected “exposures” suffered during the war. Even more alarmingly, the VA revealed that 206,861 veterans, almost a third of Gen. Schwarzkopf’s entire army, had filed claims for medical care, compensation, and pension benefits based on injuries and illnesses caused by combat in 1991. After reviewing the cases, the agency has classified 168,011 applicants as “disabled veterans.” In light of these deaths and disabilities, the casualty rate for the first Gulf War is actually a staggering 29.3%.

Dr. Doug Rokke, a former Army colonel and professor of environmental science at Jacksonville University, was in charge of the military’s environmental clean-up following the first Gulf War. The Pentagon has since sacked him for criticizing NATO commanders for not adequately protecting their troops in areas where DU [depleted uranium] ammunition was used, such as Kosovo in 1999. Rokke notes that many thousands of American troops have been based in and around Kuwait since 1990, and according to his calculations, between August 1990 and May 2002, a total of 262,586 soldiers became “disabled veterans,” and 10,617 have died. His numbers produce a casualty rate for the whole decade of 30.8%.

The health effects of DU munitions are hotly debated. Some researchers, often funded by the Pentagon,

argue that depleted uranium could not possibly cause these war-related maladies. A more likely explanation, they say, is dust and debris from the destruction of Saddam Hussein’s chemical and biological weapons factories in 1991 in the wake of the first Gulf War, or perhaps a “cocktail” of particles from DU ammunition, the destruction of nerve gas bunkers and polluted air from burning oil fields. But the evidence—including abnormal clusters of childhood cancers and deformities in Iraq and also evidently in the areas of Kosovo where, in 1999, the United States used depleted-uranium weapons in its air war against the Serbians—points primarily toward DU.

Moreover, by insisting on using such weaponry, the Pentagon is deliberately flouting a 1996 United Nations resolution that classifies DU ammunition as an illegal weapon of mass destruction.

....
In 1991, U.S. forces fired a staggering 944,000 DU rounds in Kuwait and Iraq. The Pentagon admits that it left behind a bare minimum of 320 metric tons of DU on the battlefield. One study of Gulf War veterans showed that their children had a higher possibility of being born with severe deformities, including missing eyes, blood infections, respiratory problems and fused fingers.

Rokke fears that because the military relied more heavily on DU munitions in the second Iraq war than in the first, postwar casualties may be even greater....

Chalmers Johnson
“**Dirty Weapons: Casualties From Iraq War Will Mount**”
on the *Pacific News Service*
posted on May 5, 2003



From www.undermars.com (online archive of soldiers photos). Photographer unidentified.

It is now clear that uranium has multiple toxicities.... By the early 1900s, uranium was well recognized to be a kidney toxin. By the mid-1940s, uranium was known to be a neurotoxin. By the early 1970s, uranium was recognized to be a carcinogen based on mortality studies of uranium workers and on experiments with dogs and monkeys. The first evidence that urany1 ions bind to DNA was reported in 1949 and by the early 1990s, uranium was shown to be a mutagen. Also, in the early 1990s, uranium was shown to be a teratogen, that is, an inducer of birth defects. The toxic effects of uranium on the kidney and on the nervous system typically occur within days of exposure and radiation probably plays little or no role in mediating these effects. In contrast, the carcinogenic effects of uranium have a delayed onset. The teratogenic effects of uranium might be due to exposure of one parent prior to conception as well as to exposure of the mother to uranium early in pregnancy.

Now let us briefly consider the routes of exposure to uranium. In the context of the dust particles derived from depleted uranium weapons, this means exposure to uranium oxides. By far the most dangerous route of exposure to uranium oxides is the inhalational or respiratory route. Absorption of uranium oxides through the gastrointestinal tract, the skin and the conjunctivae is possible but quite limited. Following impact with hard targets, uranium metal undergoes combustion releasing large quantities of very small uranium oxide dust particles into the environment. These dust particles derived from depleted uranium weapons are drastically different from the natural uranium that is normally present in rocks and soil. Soil particles contain uranium at very low concentrations, typically less than 5 parts per million; the vast majority of these soil particles, however, are too large to be inhaled deep into the lungs. In contrast, the dust particles derived from depleted uranium weapons contain very high concentrations of uranium, typically more than 500,000 parts per million; moreover, most of the DU dust particles are sufficiently small to be inhaled deep into the lungs. Thus, compared to the uranium naturally present in the environment, DU dust contains uranium in a form that is vastly more bio-available and more readily internalized. Urany1 ions bind to DNA; they bind in the minor groove of DNA. While bound to DNA, urany1 ions are chemically reactive and can give rise to free radicals which may damage DNA. Chemically mediated DNA damage of this type may contribute to the ability of uranium to induce cancers....

In February 1991, more than 300 tons (possibly much more than 300 tons) of DU weapons were used in Southern Iraq. After 5-6 year latent periods, increases in childhood cancers and birth defects were documented in the Basrah governate. The most recent data indicate a four fold increase in pediatric malignancies and a seven fold increase in congenital malformations compared to 1990, the year preceeding the war.... In 1990, two children under five were diagnosed with leukemia; in 2002, 53 children under five were diagnosed with leukemia. When we look at charts and graphs of leukemia cases, we can easily loose sight of the anguish that leukemia represents for each child and his or her family....

It is not possible to establish a direct cause and effect relationship between the contamination of many populated areas of Iraq with uranium oxide dust from depleted uranium weapons and the increased incidence of cancers, leukemia and birth defects in Iraq. Nonetheless, uranium is a known carcinogen and a known inducer of birth defects. Consequently, its dispersal into the environment in a form that is so readily internalized, is at the very least, profoundly reckless.

Thomas M. Fasy
“**The Health Effects of D.U. Weapons in Iraq**”
World Tribunal on Iraq
Fourth Session/The Invasion and Occupation of Iraq
posted on June 25, 2005

The current Department of Defense policy banning the admittance of the media at the arrival ceremonies of returning U.S. military casualties was instituted in February 1991, on the eve of Operation Desert Storm, the U.S. military’s name for the campaign to reverse Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990. In the directive issued by the office of the Secretary of Defense Crisis Coordination Center, “Media coverage of the arrival of the remains at the port of entry or at interim stops will not be permitted.” The Pentagon offered this reason for the directive: “Arrival ceremonies at the port of entry may create hardships for family members and friends who may feel obligated to travel great distances to attend them.” The directive continued with no reference to the family’s privacy. “This policy in no way detracts from the service member’s valor and sacrifice but, instead, permits the ceremony to occur at a location where the service member’s family and friends may more easily attend.”

A survey conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center in October 2004 found that U.S. military families, the very people the Defense Department claims to protect, do not agree with the Pentagon’s policy of banning these images. “The military sample also over-

whelmingly disagreed with the Pentagon policy of barring publication of photographs of flag-draped coffins being returned to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. Fifty-one percent of the sample said allowing photographs would increase respect for the sacrifices made by the military, and only 8% said it would reduce respect.” The survey polled 655 adults who had either served in the military between February and October 2004 or were family members of soldiers.

....

I believe the current Pentagon directive is an attempt to manipulate public opinion or make this war pass something that is called the “Dover test,” as the Pentagon itself has coined it. The Dover test dictates that the Pentagon should suppress images of coffins returning from overseas in order to prevent the American people from seeing the real sacrifices that are being made. The current policy has nothing to do with the privacy of the deceased or their families, as the administration claims. Rather, this policy has everything to do with keeping the country from facing the realities of war, shielding Americans from the high price our young service

people are paying.
– Democratic Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey
....

After several months of inadequate, strictly administrative responses (the government neither released any further images nor refused to release them), a lawsuit was filed against the Department of Defense and the Department of the Air Force on October 4, 2004. A response by the U.S. Air Force was not given until the end of November 2004 when 288 photographs, from the same images previously released to Russ Kick in April 2004, were re-issued. Since then, the Air Force has indicated it is continuing to search for additional images, and the Pentagon has said it is broadening its search. It is interesting to note that the change in behavior and responsiveness in the Air Force occurred after the Presidential election in November had already been determined....

Kelly Gast
“The Political Manipulation of War Images”
www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB152/gast_kelly
accessed on June 20, 2005



Robert Jackson. From thememoryhole.org (source: AP via cryptome)

In a summer dominated by the Bryant sex case, Arnold’s debut in California’s recall election and the killing of Saddam Hussein’s sons, no hordes of television cameras await the planeloads of wounded soldiers being airlifted back to the states, unloaded at Andrews Air Force Base, and stuffed into wards at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and other facilities. We see few photos of them undergoing painful and protracted physical rehabilitation, few visuals of worried families waiting for news of their sons or daughters. The men and women injured in Iraq and Afghanistan have become the new disappeared.

Source: Berkowitz, Bill. “Wounded, Weary And Disappeared.” TomPaine.com, 28 Aug 2003. Posted 18 Sept 2003.

Explosions shatter and sever legs and arms. They char flesh and drive debris deep into the soft tissue that remains. Unattached muscles, nerves and tendons dangle. Red-hot shrapnel sometimes punctures torsos below waist-length body armor, ripping bowels and bladders. Concussions bruise skulls and brains. Soldiers

thrown into the air are injured again when they hit ground.

Source: Wood, David. “Amputees Returning to Duty.” Times-Picayune, 12 Oct 2003. Link. Posted 20 Oct 2003.

“They come here 19, 20 years old and when I see them leaving, missing limbs—I’ve seen up to three limbs gone off people, and I don’t think in our generation we’ve seen this amount of harm done to young people,” [Maj. Gen.] Delaune says.

Source: Zdechlik, Mark. “U.S. soldier injuries mount in Iraq.” Minnesota Public Radio, 14 Sept 2003. Posted 18 Sept 2003.

He hung on through 14 surgeries, a serious bout of pneumonia and the depression that threatened to swamp him when he learned that he was blind, then later that his left leg had been amputated and that he was partially deaf....

At a military hospital in Rota, Spain, and later at Walter Reed, doctors found that shrapnel had nearly sheared off Ross’ left leg, leaving it gangrenous and forcing them to amputate it. Debris also had torn through his right calf, leaving a fist-sized hole....

His eyesight was gone in one eye; the other registered only light and darkness despite surgeries to re-attach his retinas and transplant a cornea. His left eardrum was punctured, his skull was fractured and his sinuses were smashed. His skin looked like Swiss cheese, pierced in dozens of places by more splinters of shrapnel....

Source: Lash, Cindi. “Blinded by bomblet in Iraq, Fayette soldier battles back.” Post-Gazette (Pittsburgh), 17 Aug 2003. Posted 08 Sept 2003.

“US Military Personnel Wounded in Iraq & Afghanistan: A Running Log”
The Memory Hole
<http://www.thememoryhole.org/war/wounded>
accessed on June 20, 2005



April 7, 2004, Kuwait International Airport. Photo: Tami Silicio

Photo released by Pentagon, April 2005 (source: http://www.thememoryhole.org/war/coffin_photos/dover/)



To produce what will constitute the public sphere, however, it is necessary to control the way in which people see, how they hear, what they see. The constraints are not only on content—certain images of dead bodies in Iraq, for instance, are considered unacceptable for public visual consumption—but on what “can” be heard, read, seen, felt, and known. The public sphere is constituted in part by what can appear, and the regulation of the sphere of appearance is one way to establish what will count as reality, and what will not. It is also a way of establishing whose lives can be marked as lives, and whose deaths will count as deaths. Our capacity to feel and to apprehend hangs in the balance. But so, too, does the fate of the reality of certain lives and deaths as well as the ability to think critically and publicly about the effects of war.

....

In the Vietnam War, it was the pictures of the children burning and dying from napalm that brought the U.S. public to a sense of shock, outrage, remorse, and grief. These were precisely pictures we were not supposed to see, and they disrupted the visual field and the entire sense of public identity that was built upon that field. The images furnished a reality, but they also showed a reality that disrupted the hegemonic field of representation itself. Despite their graphic effectivity, the images pointed somewhere else, beyond them-

selves, to a life and to a precariousness that they could not show. It was from that apprehension of the precariousness of those lives we destroyed that many U.S. citizens came to develop an important and vital consensus against the war. But if we continue to discount the words that deliver that message to us, and if the media will not run those pictures, and if those lives remain unnameable and ungrievable, if they do not appear in their precariousness and their destruction, we will not be moved. We will not return to a sense of ethical outrage that is, distinctively, for an Other, in the name of an Other. We cannot, under contemporary conditions of representation, hear the agonized cry or be compelled or commanded by the face....

Judith Butler
Precarious Life:
The Powers of Mourning and Violence
2004

The first thing you got was the tie.

You lost the importance of the press conference. You lost the fact that Bush had only done two of these prime time gigs in his entire term, and

that he hates them because he isn’t good at them. You lost the fact that the 9/11 Commission had been punching him and his administration around the room for the last couple of weeks. You lost the fact that September 11 had been demystified, that the going wisdom now says it could have been stopped by an administration that was actually paying attention. You lost the fact that almost 80 American soldiers and something like 900 Iraqis had been killed in the last month of fighting, that almost 700 American soldiers have been killed since the invasion was undertaken, and that, oh by the way, there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

You lost all of that and were left with the tie around Bush’s neck, the gray spotted tie that was flashing and heliographing in the camera’s eye like something out of a Hunter S. Thompson fever dream, the mesmerizing swirl of reds and yellows and purples and blues that left the whole press conference behind in a hypnotizing, dazzling, inebriating swirl of flummoxed technology which almost certainly caused Americans from sea to shining sea to lean towards their televisions and exclaim, “Holy Christ, Marjorie, look at the man’s necktie!”

William Rivers Pitt
in *Truthout/Perspective*
posted on Thursday, April 15, 2004

Bibliography

Ahmad, Eqbal. “On Terrorism,” Talk at the University of Colorado, Boulder, October 12, 1998.

Ahmad, Eqbal. *Terrorism: Theirs and Ours*, Open Media Pamphlet Series, New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001.

Aldama, Arturo. “The ‘Reality’ Video Game of War: Loose Reflections on the Invasion of Hope,” *Bad Subjects: Political Education for Everyday Life*, Issue #63, April, 2003.

Bourke, Joanna. “The Pornography Of Pain,” *The Guardian*, May 9, 2004.

Brison, Susan. “Torture, or ‘Good Old American Pornography?’,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 4, 2004.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, New York: Verso, 2004.

Butler, Judith. “Guantánamo Limbo,” *The Nation*, April 1, 2002.

Chalmers, Johnson. “Dirty Weapons—Casualties From Iraq War Will Mount,” *Pacific News Service*, pacifica.org, May 5, 2003.

Chmiel, Mark, and Wimmer, Andrew. “Down the Memory Hole: Hearts and Minds, Revisited,” *Counterpunch*, counterpunch.org, January 12, 2005.

Clover, Charles. “Natural-born Killers Will Never Win Hearts and Minds,” *Financial Times*, June 26, 2004.

Cohen, Andrew. “Extraordinary Rendition,” CBS Broadcasting Inc., February 18, 2005.

Docena, Herbert. “‘Shock and Awe’ Therapy,” World Tribunal on Iraq: Economic Colonization, worldtribunal.org, accessed on July 18, 2005.

Elich, Gregory. “Spoils of War: The Antiquities Trade and the Looting of Iraq,” Centre for Research on Globalization, http://globalresearch.ca/articles/ELI401A.html, posted on January 3, 2004.

Fasy, Thomas M. “The Health Effects of D.U. Weapons in Iraq,” World Tribunal on Iraq: The Invasion and Occupation of Iraq, worldtribunal.org, posted on June 25, 2005.

Fisk, Robert. “Library Books, Letters and Priceless Documents Are Set Ablaze in Final Chapter of the Sacking of Baghdad,” *The Independent*, UK, April 14, 2003.

Fuchs, Cynthia. “The War Show,” *Bad Subjects: Political Education for Everyday Life*, Issue #63, http://bad.eserver.org, April 2003.

Gast, Kelly. “The Political Manipulation of War Images,” University of Delaware, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB152/gast_kelly.pdf, accessed on July 20, 2005.

Goodman, Amy, with David Goodman. *The Exception to the Rulers: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media That Love Them*, New York: Hyperion, 2004.

Gumbel, Andrew. “Iraq War Returns To Living Rooms, As TV Drama,” *The Independent*, UK, July 30, 2005.

Hedges, Chris. *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, New York: Public Affairs, 2002.

Hersh, Seymour M. *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*, New York: Harper Collins, 2004.

Holston, Noel. “A Commanding Drama on Iraq,” *New York Newsday*, July 27, 2005.

Jamail, Dahr. “An Eyewitness Account of Fallujah,” *Dahr Jamail’s Iraq Dispatches*, dahrjamailiraq.com/hard_news/archives, posted on December 4, 2004.

Kellner, Douglas. *Media Spectacle and the Crisis of Democracy: Terrorism, War and Election Battles*, Boulder: Paradigm, 2005.

Kellner, Douglas. “Spectacle and Media Propaganda in the War on Iraq: A Critique of U.S. Broadcasting Networks,” http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/, accessed on June 18, 2005

Lelyveld, Joseph. “Interrogating Ourselves,” *The New York Times Magazine*, June 12, 2005.

Levi Strauss, David. “Inconvenient Evidence: The Effects of Abu Ghraib,” *The Brooklyn Rail*, January 2005.

Lloyd, Robert. “Baghdad Blues,” *The Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 2005.

Manguel, Alberto. “Lost in Iraq: Our First Words, Written in Clay, in an Accountant’s Hand,” *The New York Times*, April 20, 2003.

Mayer, Jane. “In Gitmo: Amy Davidson talks with Jane Mayer,” *The New Yorker Online*, Posted on July 6, 2005.

McDaniel, Mike. “Soldiers Walk the Walk, Talk the Talk: In *Over There*, Bochco Delivers Something More Real Than Any Reality Show,” *The Houston Chronicle*, July 27, 2005.

Meek, James. “People the Law Forgot,” *The Guardian Unlimited*, December 3, 2003.

Memory Hole, The. “US Military Personnel Wounded in Iraq & Afghanistan: A Running Log,” thememoryhole.org, accessed on June 20, 2005.

Pitt, William Rivers. “George and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamtie,” *Truthout/Perspective*, truthout.org, posted on April 15, 2004.

Posted by Parker. “Scenes From a War,” *This is Rumor Control*, www.thisisrumorcontrol.org, posted on March 16, 2005.

Ratner, Michael and Ray, Ellen. *Guantánamo: What the World Should Know*, Vermont: Chelsea Green, 2004.

60 Minutes.“CIA Flying Suspects To Torture?,” CBS News Special Report, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/03/04/60minutes/main678155.shtml, posted on March 6, 2005.

Sontag, Susan. “Regarding the Torture of Others,” *The New York Times*, May 23, 2004.

Soyinka, Wole. *The Climate of Fear: The Quest for Dignity in a Dehumanized World*, New York: Random House, 2005.

Stanley, Alessandra. “A Real-time War Drama,” *The New York Times*, July 29, 2005.

Stevens, Dana. “War (in a General Sense) Is Hell: Steven Bochco’s *Over There* can’t see the quagmire for the trees,” slate.com, posted on July 27, 2005.

Talvi, Silja J.A. “Torture Fatigue,” *The New York Times*, June 28, 2005.

Walsh, David. “US media applauds destruction of Fallujah,” World Socialist Web Site, www.wsws.org, posted on November 17, 2004.

Wright, Evan. *Generation Kill*, New York: G.P Putnam’s Sons, 2004.

Fair Use Notice

This project contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. I am making such material available in an effort to advance understanding of political, human rights, economic, social justice and environmental issues. I believe this constitutes a ‘fair use’ of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the U.S. Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, this project is distributed without profit for research and educational purposes. For more information go to: http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/ 17/107.shtml. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this project for purposes of your own that go beyond ‘fair use’, you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.