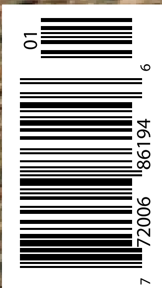
Plus: Good-bye Southam News. Hello CanWest News Service.

MEDIA

LIFE AND DEATH DURING THE AMERICAN INVASION OF IRAQ

How much of the real story did journalists covering the conflict really obtain?



THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS SPRING 2003 • VOLUME 10, NUMBER 1 • $3.95 L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES JOURNALISTES

MEDIA INSIDE

DEPARTMENTS

4 **First Word**
Did the truth take a beating during the Iraq conflict?
By David McKie

5 **JournalismNet**
Ever wonder about the individuals responsible for controversial Web sites? There's a way to satisfy that curiosity.
By Julian Sher

COVER STORIES

6 **To Embed or Not to Embed**
The recent Iraq conflict raised ethical questions about the independence of journalists who were allowed to get close to the action — really close.
By Stephen J.A. Ward

8 **It Isn't a War**
The Iraq conflict was really an American-Anglo invasion.
By Lesley Hughes

10 **Minding the Mind**
The trauma of covering wars can be too much for some journalists to take, in which case a visit to the counsellor is nothing to be ashamed of.
By Saleem Khan

13 **Getting it Wrong**
The way Alberta's antiwar protesters were portrayed in media reports exposed disturbing misperceptions about the country's regional differences.
By Mark Lisac

15 **The Story Behind the Pictures**
Photographer, **Phill Snel**, gives the low-down on some of the most infamous photographs during the American-led invasion — including a doctored image that led to the dismissal of an *L.A. Times* photographer.

FEATURES

18 **The Article of Dissent**
The political leaders in China want to bring down the hammer with a law called Article 23, which, if implemented, will severely restrict press freedom in Hong Kong.
By Robert Scalia

20 **Article of Dissent – Part Two**
Journalists in Hong Kong may abandon investigative journalism in favour of government-friendly, innocuous stories.
By Joel Ruimy

21 **You're Biased. No, You're Biased**
The age-old debate over coverage in the Middle East has arisen once again, this time with the spotlight trained on the CBC.
By Karim H. Karim

23 **Talk Back**
The former CBC Television Middle East correspondent, **Neil MacDonald**, takes on his critics.

DEPARTMENTS

24 **Diary**
CTV Newsnet anchor **Ellin Bessner** was settling in for a nice vacation in Florida — that is, until the space shuttle exploded.

27 **Computer-Assisted Reporting**
CAR is gaining momentum.
By Fred Vallance-Jones

28 **Books Briefly**
A new novel about life in the newsroom delves into some uncomfortable truths.
Reviewed by Gillian Steward

29 **Review**
The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth Maker from Crimea to Kosovo, Phillip Knightley and John Pilger. **Reviewed by Gillian Steward**

30 **The Last Word**
Tim Creery, former Southam News employee, uses the service's last night of existence to reminisce.

Spring 2003
Volume 10, Number 1

Publisher
Nick Russell

Editor
David McKie

Books Editor
Gillian Steward

Legal Advisor
Peter Jacobsen
(Paterson McDougall)

Designer
Bonanza Printing & Copying Centre

Printer
Bonanza Printing & Copying Centre

Editorial Board
Chris Cobb,
Wendy McLellan,
Sean Moore,
Catherine Ford,
Elaine Shein,
Michelle MacAfee,
Linda Goyette,
John Gushue,
Carolyn Ryan

Advertising Sales
John Dickins

Administrative Director
John Dickins
(613)526-8061 Fax: (613)521-3904
E-mail: caj@igs.net

MEDIA is published three times a year by:
Canadian Association of Journalists St. Patrick's Building, 316B Carleton University 1125 Colonel By Drive Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1S 5B6

Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is strictly forbidden

Media is a publication of the Canadian Association of Journalists. It is managed and edited independently from the CAJ and its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of the Association.

Subscriptions: $14.98
(GST incl.) per year,
payable in advance

Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index.
Canada *Post* Publications Canadian Mail Sales Product Agreement No. 182796
ISSN 1198-2209

Cover Photo
REUTERS/Stephen Hird

BY *DAVID MCKIE*

Taking Stock

The recent conflict in Iraq raised some age-old questions about the truth and how accurately it gets reported

As soon as it became clear that the U.S.-British military intervention in Iraq had led to the easier-than-expected downfall of Baghdad, discussions seemed to intensify about the way the conflict was covered. Journalism listservs in Canada and the United States crackled with criticisms and opinions about the nature of the conflict. Was it a war? What was the real purpose? Were the Americans ever serious about finding chemical weapons, or were concerns about weapons of mass destruction just decoys, designed to distract citizens from George W. Bush's real aim: ridding the world of Saddam Hussein, a task his father failed to accomplish the previous decade.

This conflict was so inevitable that critics felt safe enough to speculate about the effect the American-led invasion would have on journalists and their pursuit of truth, or, at least, reliable information. In her analysis entitled *Will the Truth Again Be First Casualty?*, Jacqueline E. Sharkey, whose stories on U.S. policy in the Central American region sparked questions and an investigation of Lt. Col. Oliver North's private Contra network, used historical precedent to cast doubt on the motives of George W. Bush and his fellow warmongers.

Citing the 1991 Persian Gulf War, when George Bush Sr. tried to take out Saddam Hussein, Sharkey notes that journalists poised to cover the second Gulf War were doomed to endure similar restrictions. She notes that there was congressional testimony by a former Pentagon official that the U.S. Defense Department "doctored" statistics about the success rates of weapons systems during the first Gulf War to increase public support for controversial weapons systems. Evidence emerged from Operation Desert Storm — as it was called back then — that most of the bombs that fell on the enemy were actually "dumb" bombs that had no precision guidance systems. And George Sr. gave international public relations firm, Hill and Knowlton, $10 million to "sell" the American people on the need for U.S. military intervention. Do any of these observations sound like they could apply to this most recent conflict?

Sharkey also argues that journalists back then were, in part, authors of their own misfortune. "Instead of rebelling against a system in which they were obliged to be confined in 'pools,' they fought among themselves for pool slots and turned in colleagues who tried to work outside the pool system."

Sharkey's analysis is instructive because it echoes some of the same concerns that are sure to emerge in discussions about the ways in which the recent Iraqi conflict was stage-managed. For instance, in his piece for *Media*, Stephen J. A. Ward focuses on the contentious issue of embedding: that is, allowing a select group of journalists to travel with the soldiers for a birds-eye view of the carnage. As he explains, embedding was the American military's attempt to deal with criticism; it used pools during the first Iraqi conflict to unduly restrict the movement of journalists. While the idea of embedding is as old as war itself, the idea nonetheless sparked a lot of discussion among journalists. In his piece, Ward notes: "Embedding adds information that might otherwise not be obtained…But embedding can undermine journalistic independence and erode media credibility. It can lead to unbalanced, de-contextualized journalism."

Ward's argument is advanced by another critic who sounded off about the coverage of the Second World War. As his target, this critic, writing for a different publication years ago, chose the dispatches of American novelist, John Steinbeck. The American novelist's dispatches were published in 1958 as a collection called *Once There Was A War.*

> ***It's important for media outlets to balance reports from embedded reporters with stories that contain dispassionate analysis and context.***

"They are period pieces," the critic observes, "the attitudes archaic, the impulses romantic, and, in light of everything that has happened since, perhaps the whole body of work untrue and warped and one-sided." The acid-tongued critic was none other than John Steinbeck himself who, along with other correspondents, covered the second war to end all wars from the privileged position of an "embed." Steinbeck's criticisms of his own writings sound fresh, although they were aimed at a different war.

He felt that his dispatches idealized the American soldiers as people incapable of cowardice and violence. And no commander was "cruel or ambitious or ignorant." Steinbeck wrote that the small view each reporter had of the war offered too narrow a window for any nuanced understanding of some of the larger questions about the nature of the conflict that eventually became fodder for the history books and history buffs.

Against the backdrop of this criticism, it's interesting to note that in his piece for *Media* magazine, Ward suggests that during conflicts, it's important for media outlets to balance reports from embedded reporters with stories that contain dispassionate analysis and context for which Steinbeck so hungered.

The criticisms of Steinbeck and Ward are not meant to imply that all stories from embedded reporters were tainted. Indeed, some of those dispatches have given us useful glimpses into the true and nasty nature of war. In his articles, it was observed that Steinbeck offered useful observations and touching stories about military life and the exploits of incredible men such as the U.S. Navy officer in Italy who tricked a garrison of German soldiers into surrendering.

Fortunately, there is more to our coverage of the Iraq conflict than the pros and cons of embedding. There have been real concerns that media outlets don't do enough to help their correspondents deal with the emotional stress that war can induce. The sight of dead bodies, such as the Reuters photo featured on *Media*'s cover page, the loss of colleagues and friends, and the fear of death are enough to play tricks on anyone's psyche. In his piece about the psychological aspects of war, Saleem Khan quotes Anthony Feinstein, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Toronto, who notes that: "There's the whole myth of the war correspondent as someone who is immune to the psychological consequences of trauma. No one is immune."

A part of the conflict that also received some attention was the antiwar protest. As the conflict drew nearer, protests seemed to increase in intensity. That was evident from demonstrations across the country. Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and other large cities seemed to be focal points for much of the media coverage, which makes Mark Lisac's observations rather poignant. From his vantage point in Edmonton, he witnessed a peace protest that became one of the largest anti-establishment demonstrations held in Alberta's capital. And yet, the event went largely unnoticed in the rest of Canada.

"Truth may be the first casualty of war," writes Lisac, "but the truth of regional identity in Canada has been among the walking wounded for many years. That's why the reporting of Alberta's opinions on the war should spark a much wider reassessment."

We hope you enjoy our assessment of a conflict that held the world's attention for a brief moment in time.

As usual, if you have any thoughts about what you read or what you think we should be writing about, please feel free to contact me at: *david_mckie@cbc.ca*

Bye for now.

BY JULIAN SHER

The Credibility Test

There are ways to identify the individuals running certain Web sites

Journalists want to find useful Web sites, but even when you find one you also want to be sure it is credible. Or at the very least, you want to know who is really behind a Web page.

In many cases it is obvious — Monsanto runs the Monsanto Web site, Greenpeace runs its Web site. Most Web sites have a "Contact us" or "About us" link – but sometimes the information can be sparse. And even then, can you always be sure it is accurate? You might stumble across an obscure or controversial Web site and you want to know who is really paying the bill.

Fortunately, there are tools to help you out. Every Web site has to be registered and the companies that do this want to be sure they get paid. So the owner or "registrant" has to give certain details and those details are stored in databases. Of course, someone could simply be acting as a front for a group — but at least you have a real name and usually a phone number or address.

FOR MAJOR WORLD SITES

A small, but efficient tool is BetterWhoIs at *www.betterwhois.com.* The site gives you results only from the major domains — .com, .org and .edu – that is, the main commercial and American sites; U.S. educational sites and all the world's non-profit sites.

Type in the name of any Web site under these three domains. You will get a page that says, "RESERVED," meaning someone has bought the Web domain. Scroll down and usually there is an administrative contact (the person who runs the Web site) and a technical contact (the Webmaster).

(A technical note: Sometimes with Betterwhois, you get a page that says access has been restricted to a two-step process. These are pages registered through a firm called Network Solutions. But there is a note that says, "click here" — do that, and you'll get through.) For example, if you visit the site of *Earthliberationfront.org*, you will find news and bulletins from one of the more radical ecological groups in North America. U.S. authorities call them "eco-terrorists;" their defenders call them heroes. The Web site gives out no names, just a generic email address. But a search with Betterwhois or AllWhois shows the site is registered to a Canadian, Darren Thurston on Commercial Drive in Vancouver.

If you visit the controversial site of Holocaust-denier Ernst Zundel at *www.zundelsite.org*, you will find a contact page that lists his wife's name. But a BetterWhoIs search also gives you a phone number.

FOR SPECIFIC COUNTRIES

If you want to check the ownership of a site from a specific country — for example, .fr for France or .za for South Africa — the best place to start is the AllWhois database at *www.allwhois.com.* This Web site monitors all the domains, although the results can sometimes be hard to decipher.

For Canadian sites – that is, sites registered with a .ca domain – you are best to use the Canadian Internet Registration Authority at *www.cira.ca*. The search box is at the top left. Simply put in any address — but be sure NOT to put in the "www" at the front. Out pops an easy-to-read results page.

For example, if you want to check on the Coalition for Gun Control at *www.guncontrol.ca*, the group's Web site is owned and managed by the same people identified on the site. The phone number of their registrant matches the contact number on their Web page.

> ***You might stumble across an obscure or controversial Web site and you want to know who is really paying the bill. Fortunately, there are tools to help you out.***

ALEXA.COM

There is one site that combines several useful features for investigating a Web site: *www.alexa.com*. Alexa tells you how popular a page is and how it ranks on the Web. It uses a complicated formula that analyzes reach (how many people see the page) and page views (how many pages they visit on the site). For example, of the six billion-odd Web pages, JournalismNet ranks about 93,000; the CAJ Web page ranks about 250,000 and the Vancouver province ranks 156,000. It also tells who else links to the site and other sites people visit on the same topic. There is also a contact information box, which tends to be the registrant. And the beauty is this site does any of the Web domains for you -- .com, .org, .ca, or any other country.

These tips work only for paid sites. Personal Web sites, hosted by universities or "freebie" sites at *geocities.com* or *aol.com* cannot be searched, since the domain belongs to the company, which simply gives out Web pages on its server. You can identify a personal, free site by the tilda — the Spanish sign that looks like "~" — in the address. For example, *www.geocities.com/~myvacation.htm*

For these and other resources on finding who is behind a Web page, see Jnet's Web page devoted to this topic at *www.journalismnet.com/people/whois.htm*.

GOOGLE STILL TOPS

None of this means you should abandon Google as your primary search tool. Though don't get lazy — learn how to master Google's basic search function and its advanced search tricks. (For more on this, take a look at the article on this at *www.journalismnet.com/tips* or in *Media,* Summer 2000, vol.7,No2)

There are also some new tools at Google you might not be aware of. Google News (at www.news.google.com) is one of the best ways these days to do a news search. It searches only news, not general Web pages from major international (English-only) news sources, though only a few Canadian media outlets. You can read the previous week's news by topic, or use the search box with the usual powerful Google tricks for accuracy (minuses, quotations, etc).

Google's Web Directory *(at http://directory.google.com)* allows you to search by category.

Google Labs — the department that keeps coming up with improvements for Google — offers you a peek at a new site they are developing called Google Glossary *(at http://labs.google.com/glossary)*.

Need a quick definition, not just of a word, but of a concept or an issue — for example, "ozone layer" or PCBs? You get several links to the best web pages that give you a snapshot of the phrase, its meaning and context. An excellent quick reference guide.

And finally, you can attach some instant Google features such as Google search buttons *(at http://www.google.com/options/buttons.html)* and a mutlitask toolbar directly to your browser *(at http://toolbar.google.com)*. More on these and other gadgets in an upcoming column. M

Julian Sher, the creator and Web master of JournalismNet (www.journalismnet.com), *does Internet training in newsrooms around the world. He can be reached by email at* jsher@journalismnet.com.
This article and many other columns from Media *magazine are available online with hot links on the JournalismNet Tips page at* www.journalismnet.com/tips

BY STEPHEN J. A. WARD

In Bed With the Military

Embedding is a new term for an ancient practice

I was an "embedded reporter" long before U.S. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld first uttered the barbarous phrase. As a CP correspondent during the Bosnian conflict, I attached myself to Canadian peacekeepers based on the outskirts of Sarajevo. I rode in their armoured vehicles. I ate in their mess. I had a beer in their bar. I interviewed commanding officers. I accompanied soldiers as they patrolled tense villages or cleared mine-infested fields. Sometimes, I filed a story over the base's fax machine.

Was I really embedded in the style of Gulf War II? I don't think so. I was informally 'attached' to (or assigned to cover) a military unit. But I was not formally part of the unit, and I didn't train with the military prior to deployment. I wore no uniform. I signed no agreement restricting what I could report. On the contrary, I wrote critical stories that made me persona non grata among some commanding officers. I paid my own way, and came and went as I pleased. I considered myself to be independent.

Independent war reporting is a relatively modern notion. Embedding — the formal attachment of reporters to military units — is a new term for an ancient practice, as old as the "messengers" who traveled with Alexander the Great as he marched on Persia. Embedding, with censorship, was standard reporting practice in the two world wars. Journalists have been so closely identified with armies that it was not until 1977 that the Geneva Conventions recognized journalists as civilians. With the Vietnam War, journalists began to see themselves as independent observers — even critics — of their country's war effort. After the Vietnam debacle, generals vowed that never again would journalists be free to roam across the battlefield, undermining their propaganda.

In the first Gulf War, Dick Cheney confined most of the news media to slow-moving pools and hotel-room briefings, enlivened by videos of smart bombs. In response to post-war criticism, major news organizations promised they'd never get into bed with the military again. In the next war, they would operate independently. Then came Gulf II. Rumsfeld tempted many news organizations back under the tent of military supervision. The strategy offered potential benefits for the military. Embedded reporters could cover the campaign, but they wouldn't endanger operations. It seemed likely that embedded reporters whose lives depended on military units would identify with their fighting comrades, and send home positive stories. Embedded reporters would counter any Iraqi propaganda or false atrocity stories. Also, embedded reporters would be so busy dodging bullets and filing reports that they'd barely have time to think, or criticize. The Pentagon bet that news organizations, in a competitive media environment, would not turn down access to the front lines — access that was safer than going it alone. The price? The old rules of reporting restrictions and censorship. Embedding was back, in spades.

IMAGES OF WAR: ***An Iraqi family flees for safer territory*.**

PHOTO CREDIT: *REUTERS/Chris Helgren*

But technology made embedding in 2003 different from embedding in 1943.

Thanks to handheld cameras and satellite connections, we could watch war "live," or almost live. Embedded reporting brought us both fascinating and infuriating forms of journalism. We virtually rode along with the high-tech coalition warriors as they encircled Baghdad. This is nothing to sniff at. Part of good war reporting is to be at the scene, up to your neck in the action. Nor can it be denied that seeing the battle unfold is valuable information. But too much coverage was "gee whiz" descriptions of military weapons or clips of exploding missiles. The networks' enhanced graphics and "interactive" maps made war appear to be a video game. There were so many white, male, war experts on my TV that it seemed the networks had embedded military generals.

Journalists have been so closely identified with armies that it was not until 1977 that the Geneva Conventions recognized journalists as civilians.

Too much of the embedded coverage was overly patriotic or uncritical. As a viewer, I bristled when U.S. anchors snidely dismissed Iraqi officials. I objected when journalists talked of the Iraqi army as "the enemy" and adopted the first-person plural to dramatize their reports. Sarah Oliver in the Mail on Sunday wrote: "We rode at dawn, the men of the 1st Royal Irish." I was baffled by embedded reporters who adopted the military jargon of AAVs (amphibious assault vehicles) and MOPPs (mission-orientated

protective posture). Laudatory interviews with field commanders made me want to throw rocks at my screen. I found myself cheering on the "unilateral" reporters, such as the CBC's Patrick Brown in northern Iraq. On the other hand, I read with interest Matthew Fisher's embedded report for the *National Post* on the fall of Tikrit. I was fascinated by embedded video and print reports on towns seized, the reactions of Iraqis and the fate of POWs.

The danger of embedded reporting is that it elbows out other forms of journalism. In the excitement of war, we forget that journalism is more than breathless spot news. It is about explaining what one is seeing; it is about questioning and investigating; it is making sure that one's overall reportage has a diversity of voices and perspectives. Good reportage delves into causes and consequences. It reveals, as propaganda, the dubious claims and simplifications by both sides. Overwhelmed by the disconnected facts, I was driven from the frenetic American network coverage to the calmer unembedded networks, such as the CBC, which tried to put things in perspective.

The Iraq war didn't just revive embedding. It firmly established a model for war reporting, a model that has been emerging for a decade or two. On this model, the war reporter is not primarily a careful interpreter of information. He is a human conduit for the relentless flow of fragments of text, images, audio and hurried commentary. He is a journalistic vacuum cleaner that sucks up and transmits whatever information is available. Back home, TV anchors resemble desperate men and women struggling to say something meaningful about the war reporter's latest factoid, while standing in the middle of a swift-moving current of news.

For now, and the foreseeable future, embedding is part of the future of war reporting. I expect more wars like Gulf II, more American interventions in the name of fighting terrorism. So, news organizations need to debate urgent ethical questions such as: Was embedding worth it? Does the public really benefit from it? Would they embed the next time? Like all ethical questions, the issue of embedding is complex and involves a conflict of values. Embedding adds information that might otherwise not be obtained, and it is safer than sending unilaterals into the front lines. But embedding can undermine journalistic independence and erode media credibility. It can lead to unbalanced, de-contextualized journalism. Journalists should remember the words of CBC's Paul Workman as he expressed his frustration at coalition forces for preventing unilaterals from entering southern Iraq: "It is in fact a brilliant, persuasive conspiracy to control the images and the messages coming out of the battlefield and they've succeeded colossally."

I have grave reservations about embedding. I think news organizations should avoid it, if at all possible. No journalist who believes in free and independent journalism should feel comfortable about accepting restrictions on coverage. However, if a news organization decides to embed, it should put in place editorial policies that reduce the potential negative effects of embedding. Embedding is irresponsible unless every precaution is taken to ensure accurate, comprehensive and diverse coverage.

IMAGES OF WAR: ***Iraqis topple a statue of deposed dictator Saddam Hussein.***

Some basic editorial provisions for embedded news organizations are:

Invest in non-embedded journalism: News organizations that embed must also assign unilaterals to the conflict.

Provide context: Explain the disconnected facts of embedded reports by using a diversity of sources and experts, including non-aligned analysts and experts who don't support the war. Emphasize the broader issues.

Edit skeptically: Question official reports and numbers from all sides. Seek out reports that contradict or balance the views contained in embedded reports.

Show the human face of war: Balance the technology of war with coverage of civilians who are killed, maimed or displaced by the fighting.

Avoid cheerleading: Hold embedded reports up to the same standards as other news reports: Avoid patriotic prattle, excessive jargon, fluff interviews with "heroes," and the biased language of "we" and "they." Seek hard-edged, independent reports.

Monitor embedded reporters: Consider rotating or removing embedded reporters who appear to be identifying too strongly with their military unit.

Transparency: Provide the public with transparent (and repeated) explanations about editorial restrictions and how these rules limit reports.

Publish everything: Publish all information that had been censored or restricted immediately after the conflict ends, if not sooner.

Support harassed unilaterals: Journalism organizations should join forces in opposing undue restrictions on independent reporting as they occur.

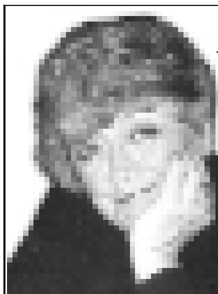
Aside from embedding, the most fundamental ethical question to emerge from coverage of the Iraq war is this: What is the future of patriotism in an age of global news media? It was disturbing to see how news organizations and journalists so quickly shucked off their peacetime commitments to independent, impartial reporting as soon as the drums of war started beating. In an age of global news media, where reports have an impact that transcends borders, a journalism of narrow patriotism not only does a disservice to one's own citizens, but to citizens around the world. In times of war, the public sphere needs the same independent, critical journalism it should receive in times of peace, no matter how unpopular that stance might be among segments of the population.

The patriotic drivel of some of the war journalism from Gulf II makes one pine for the days when reporters believed in old-fashioned objectivity, that much maligned concept. I propose that war correspondents, when asked what side they are on, should follow the ancient philosopher, Diogenes the Cynic. When asked by Athenians why he ignored local customs, Diogenes dismissed such questions.

"I am," Diogenes would retort, "a citizen of the world."

Stephen J. A. Ward is an associate professor at the UBC School of Journalism who teaches journalism ethics.

PHOTO CREDIT: *REUTERS/Goran Tomasevic*



BY LESLEY HUGHES

Good News or no News

The conflict in Iraq hovers like a poisonous cloud

April 11, 2003, Baghdad fell. Mainstream media outlets declared the war in Iraq to be over! But wait — in some reports the war is over; in other reports it isn't. Thousands of Canadians turned to their favourite, credible Web sites, only to read the war may not be over at all.

Whatever final dates are recorded in history, the question remains, did journalists ever have a hope of learning and reporting the truth about the war in Iraq?

Like the military, journalists had better, smarter, faster technology on their side than in any previous war in history. But superb equipment couldn't solve other serious professional challenges the conflict presented.

This story for *Media* magazine, for example, is already compromised by my use of American military language as directed by the White House. According to the Geneva Convention — there's no higher authority — the conflict wasn't a war; it was an illegal invasion. This is an important distinction supported by the United Nations Charter.

When Canadian media outlets almost universally ignored the difference and referred to "the war," they carelessly aligned themselves with supporters of the Anglo-American invasion. Nevertheless, ethical journalists persisted in efforts to get at the facts and the meaning of the story.

Was Saddam a survivor, or was that his body double? Were there a few hundred casualties, as reported on CNN? Or was it up to 10,000 killed and wounded, as expert opinion suggested on CBC Radio One's Sunday Edition? Were any of the frequent and speculative reports on chemical and biological weapon sites (alleged motivation for the invasion) ever backed up with solid evidence? These are fundamental questions still waiting for answers.

Saturation coverage and an abundance of information, whether words or pictures, could not ensure the public knew what was really happening. And no wonder, given the limits within which journalists were trying to do their work. The possibility of death on the job, for example, has a discouraging effect (Please see Saleem Khan's story on page 10).

In February, 2003, the Pentagon announced there would be zero tolerance for independent satellite uplink positions in the forthcoming battles in Iraq. In other words, no unauthorized live telephone or TV reports would get to air. When veteran BBC war correspondent Kate Adie challenged Pentagon officials on the consequences of their directive, they confirmed that the military would have orders to fire on such sites. "Who cares?" they asked her. "They (the journalists) have been warned."

The "who cares" policy, as well as the concept of covering the war with "embedded" (integrated) media (Please see Stephen J.A. Ward's article on page 13) was internationally disputed by senior journalists like the *New York Time's* Sydney Schanberg, veteran of the Vietnam conflict celebrated in the film The Killing Fields. The policies received repeated coverage in mainstream media outlets; journalistic resistance to embedding received less coverage.

Whether the military had orders to fire on other media sites is still to be determined. At least13 journalists died covering the three-week war. Two of them were killed in their Baghdad hotel by American forces who declared, unconvincingly, that the deaths were accidental. Their deaths occurred just one day after American soldiers killed an Al-Jazeera journalist and wounded another working in their headquarters in Baghdad, a site well known to the Pentagon.

David Miller, U.K.-based media analyst at Stirling University, called the media management of the invasion nothing short of "public relations genius." The coalition press information centres in Kuwait and Qatar agreed on an acceptable spin, which went to the

> ***According to the Geneva Convention — there's no higher authority — the conflict wasn't a war; it was an illegal invasion.***

FOG OF WAR: ***Saturation coverage and an abundance of information, whether words or pictures, could not ensure the public knew what was really happening.***

PHOTO CREDIT: *REUTERS*

Office of Global Communication in Washington, where it was polished for the White House and the public. The result, says longtime war correspondent John Pilger of the Daily Mirror, was "You got good news or no news." So, for an endless number of days, the news seemed the same: U.S. forces were within a few kilometers of Baghdad. It was apparently during this time that the elite Republican Guard divisions were wiped out from the air — a massacre not meant for public consumption. No pictures, no story.

The terms for embedded reporters were severe: every story was checked by a media liaison officer, run by a colonel, and then went through brigade headquarters. CBC Radio and Television opted out, but Radio Canada "embedded" Luc Chartrand for a marine perspective of the war with mixed results. "We put him in context with other things, with facts on the ground. Certainly we got more visuals. But always, control determines coverage," recalled CBC foreign correspondent Céline Galipeau during a radio interview about the conflict.

Journalists trying to interpret the war in Iraq from their desks in Canada faced particular challenges. Skeptical of both information from official sources and from a censored battlefield, many faithfully researched a constant flow of contradictory information from the Internet where a starkly different, unsanitized war emerged.

Al-Jazeera's English-language Web site and raw video clips from Reuters, available at *www.robert-fisk.com*, exposed the suffering of the dead and dying on both sides in the American-led conflict.

Journalists' efforts to file neutral reports of events in Iraq encountered serious editorial bias. In the long run-up to war, Canadian citizens turned out in record numbers to challenge the right of a superpower to a pre-emptive attack on another country whose crime was strictly a perceived threat. But, in varying degrees, Canadian media owners (and by extension, their publishers and editors) sided with the hawks in the Bush administration. Some of them, the *Globe and Mail*, for instance, permitted vigorous debate from rebel columnists (Geoffrey Simpson, Paul Knox, Rick Salutin, et al.) but these columnists were peaceful tourists in hostile territory.

"If they could see what we see, people would know there is no just war. We (journalists) couldn't cope with it, except for the job and the deadlines every day. The shock comes later."
– Céline Galipeau, CBC foreign correspondent

PHOTO CREDIT: *CBC*

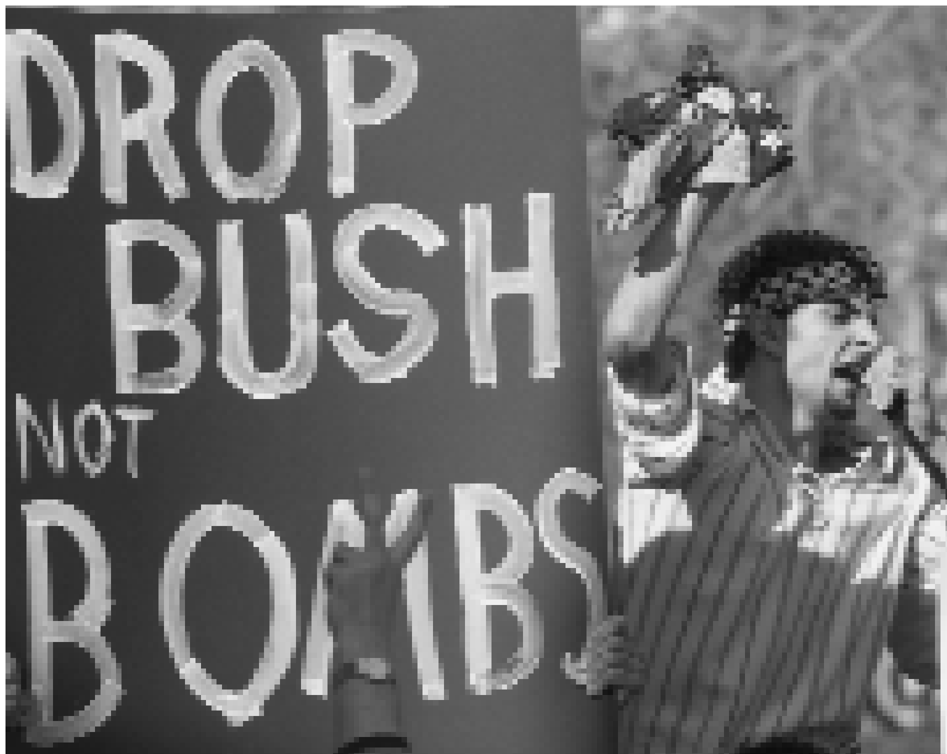


PHOTO CREDIT: *Adrian Wyld*

Others, like the War Desk at CanWest Global Television network, were unabashedly enthusiastic at the prospect of real live war. "War whores," as Nicholas von Hoffman indelicately named such enthusiasts in the *New York Observer*, "tingling with happy excitement as they strain to infect their viewers/readers with their enthusiasm for the looming death and disfigurement of others."

Ironically, in this war, it was possible to die getting a story few people trusted: could readers be expected to accept as absolute fact a story appearing under a daily banner like that of the *National Post*, (tanks rumbling forward under the Stars and Stripes) or the *Winnipeg Free Press* (Saddam Hussein shown squarely in the sight of a gun)?

Judging by the number of unanswered questions, the conflict in Iraq meets the classic definition of what media literacy experts call "the dysfunctional story" that actually damages the community it was intended to serve. It remains a somebody-done-somebody wrong story, told in a manner impossible to resolve; it hovers over the community like a poisonous cloud, dividing and demoralizing those who would know the truth, but remain frustrated because they can't decide what it is.

In the public's view, the writers, photographers or broadcasters of such stories are the irresponsible parties. Despite governments, military spindoctors and biased employers placing obstacles to the truth, journalists are the ones who lose credibility and take most of the blame for the messy contradictions of war coverage.

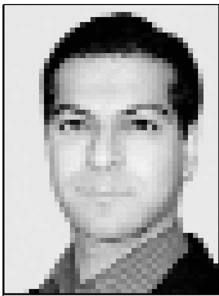
The biggest contradiction is that, although wars get more high-tech and generals claim less and smarter damage on enemy and civilian populations, the public has yet to see the true reality of that damage and judge its acceptability.

Canadian citizens turned out in record numbers to challenge the right of a superpower to a pre-emptive attack on another country whose crime was strictly a perceived threat.

"If they could see what we see," says Gemini Award winner Céline Galipeau, "people would know there is no just war. We (journalists) couldn't cope with it, except for the job and the deadlines every day. The shock comes later."

Nothing in the coverage of the war in Iraq suggests that ordinary people will see, hear, or read about the reality of war any time soon. In the meantime, more urgent questions arise. How long will it be before journalists begin to fight for their collective integrity? And how, exactly, can such a war be won?

Lesley Hughes is a Winnipeg-based writer, broadcaster and columnist.



COVER STORY

BY SALEEM KHAN

Dangerous Minds

Journalists who covered the conflict against Iraq could become hidden casualties

"It's a bad time for reporters," muses Philip Castle, a journalism professor at Australia's Queensland University of Technology.

Three days after America's attempt to assassinate Iraqi President Saddam Hussein with a barrage of dozens of cruise missiles, Castle was in Toronto researching psychological trauma in journalists. He previously studied the experiences of journalists who covered the Bali bombing, the war in East Timor and a tsunami in northern Papua, New Guinea, which killed more than 2,500 people. Now he's contemplating what journalists likely witnessed in the war against Iraq — scenes "most of us try to avoid even describing or thinking about.

"Limbs blown off, stomachs, innards and pieces of brain scattered — it's the very worst of a multiple car pile-up multiplied by a thousand times. There's wreckage, there's groaning, there's people who have died in agony, there's burnt flesh — that's what war is about," Castle says. He also predicts more of the "brutality at a level we saw a little bit of in Afghanistan, where prisoners were locked in (shipping) containers and suffocated to death."

Those kinds of images and experiences will have a profound psychological impact on journalists who covered the death and destruction inflicted by the combination of U.S. and British massive firepower and Iraq's response to it, Castle predicts. And he would know. Castle served two years with the Australian military in Vietnam before he became a reporter who covered the death-and-dismemberment beat — violent crimes including murders and assaults, suicides, bloody road and air accidents, natural disasters — and politics. From 1986 to 1995, he was director of communications for the Australian National Police, a job that exposed him to horrific crime scenes more disturbing than those he saw as a reporter.

Castle's experiences caused him to grow concerned about journalists' mental health. As a result, he became a founding member of Newscoverage Unlimited, a support organization for journalists where he helped shape trauma intervention methodology and its application.

Part of the reason journalists covering the war are at risk of developing psychological problems — possibly more than soldiers — is the fault of journalists themselves, Castle says. He's not alone in that view.

TRAUMA STUDY

"There's the whole myth of the war correspondent as someone who is immune to the psychological consequences of trauma," explains Anthony Feinstein, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Toronto. It's a myth they encourage at their own risk, he says. "No one is immune."

Feinstein published the first psychiatric study of war correspondents in the September, 2002, issue of the *American Journal of Psychiatry*. He found that both male and female war journalists had significantly higher rates of alcohol consumption than colleagues who do not cover war, were more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depression, and were more likely to abuse drugs. As many as 28.6 per cent suffered from PTSD, 21.4 per cent developed major depression, and 14.3 per cent abused drugs, including alcohol.

The study also found that the prevalence of PTSD during the course of war reporters' lifetimes was similar

DEADLY IMAGES: ***"Those kinds of images... will have a profound psychological impact on journalists who covered the death and destruction inflicted by the combination of U.S. and British massive firepower."***

– Philip Castle, journalism professor

PHOTO CREDIT: *Aaron Ansarov, PH1(SW), USN, FLTCOMBATCAMGRUPAC*

to rates for military combat veterans, and as much as four times that for police officers, whose rate of PTSD is between 7 and 13 per cent. The rate of major depression among war journalists (a predominantly male profession) exceeded that of the general population in the U.S. — around 17.1 per cent — and was nearly double the 12 per cent rate for men in the U.S. Yet, journalists were not more likely to receive treatment for their problems and often went untreated, the study found.

"There's this macho image attached to the profession," Feinstein says. Along with that image comes what he describes as the outmoded way war journalists and their bosses have tended to think about psychological difficulties: "You don't talk about these things and you have to have the right stuff. And if you don't have the right stuff, you should get out because you can't be a good journalist, which I think is a load of rubbish."

NEWS CULTURE

Feinstein speculates that this culture of silence within the industry may be a key reason why virtually no research on trauma in journalists exists. While most news organizations have accepted the idea that they must provide their staff with hostile environment safety training before going into conflict zones, they have been slower at providing similar training to prepare for psychological trauma, he says.

"It's much easier to close your eyes, send someone into harm's way and assume they're going to be fine," Feinstein says. "If you start doubting that assumption, it becomes a very difficult thing to do."

In spite of that difficulty, he says news organizations are starting to break the old taboo and the "culture is definitely changing," a point Gerry Smith agrees with.

Smith is vice-president of organizational health at Toronto-based Warren Shepell and Associates, which runs confidential employee assistance programs (EAP) for over 2,000 companies, including media organizations.

"It's only in the past couple of years that we began to be invited in to do training with media companies," Smith says. "The fact that I'm actually invited in now, to train media companies in the effects of post-traumatic stress is a huge step forward. It means that the media companies themselves are actually recognizing the need."

He says while there isn't a great need for psychiatric or counseling services among journalists at the moment, he expects the demand to increase, especially as some continue returning home from assignments in Iraq.

"When they're back and begin to consider what they've actually been through, they recognize the dangers their life has been placed in, and that's when they begin to experience some of that stress more," Smith says.

SIGNS AND TREATMENT

Some of the symptoms journalists suffering from PTSD can expect to experience include flashbacks, nightmares or intrusive thoughts that plunge them back into scenes or experiences from the war; sleeplessness, a tendency to starve themselves or binge on food or drink, and changes in bowel function such as a rapid case of severe diarrhea they can't explain. Other symptoms include feelings of anger, distrust, and disillusionment with the state of their lives.

Smith notes that a phenomenon known as "vicarious trauma," accounts for the fact that journalists who are not on the front lines covering the war can become just as traumatized as those who were. Journalists in a newsroom, edit suite or on the desk can develop PTSD simply by seeing the pictures that are sent back, or by hearing about their colleagues' experiences in the war zone.

THE UNFORGETABLE IMAGES OF WAR: ***It was not hard to find disturbing images that brought home the brutal reality of war that threatened to throw the Bush administration off its message track. News organizations such as the BBC made images like this one of an Iraqi man on his way to hospital readily available on their Web sites. This picture was one of many on the BBC's gallery which it entitled: "Human cost of war." For more information, please go to:*** **http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/photo_gallery/2935669.stm**

> ***Journalists in a newsroom, edit suite or on the desk can develop PTSD simply by seeing the pictures that are sent back, or by hearing about their colleagues' experiences in the war zone.***

The treatment for both groups is the same: a resumption of normal activities and routines, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, social activities with friends and family, and contact with society at large, Feinstein says. Or, as Smith summarizes it, "Food, water, air, rest, exercise and sex -- not necessarily in that order."

Talking about feelings and experiences with a counselor, friend, family member or religious leader is an important aspect of recovery, but journalists tend to have difficulty talking about their emotions, Smith says.

"They tend to be a bit more closed in on themselves, so we encourage them to write about their experiences," Smith says, emphasizing that those writings are meant for private use, not publication. "That's something journalists tend to be good at, and that gives them an idea of how they're doing."

While journalists can recover without professional involvement, Smith advises anyone who has symptoms of PTSD for longer than three or four weeks to see a doctor for professional help.

DANGEROUS PROFESSION

"It's something that news organizations must take seriously," says Sandy McKean, director of CBC News staff development. "The rules of the game are much different out there than they have traditionally been."

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists conservatively counted 20 journalists killed in the line of duty last year. But there are 13 other

Continued on Page 12