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**The Alistair Berkley Memorial Lecture
held at the LSE on Friday 21st May 2004**

“Media, the Law and Peace-building: from Bosnia and Kosovo to Iraq”

JO BEALL (DESTIN, LSE):

Nik Gowing is one of the UK's most widely respected journalists and since February 1996 has been a main programme anchor for the BBC World 24 Hour news channel which is broadcast across 253 million viewers in 200 countries. He is now a main presenter on that news programme and moderator of the Sunday News and analyst on the programme Dateline London. He has an illustrious history as a reporter of conflict and war. He received a BAFTA for his reporting and coverage of martial law in Poland in 1981. In 1989 he broke the news that the Russians were going to leave Afghanistan. He received an award from the New York Television Festival for his analysis of the 1991 Gulf War. And since 1991 he has reported regularly from Yugoslavia. His 1993 Channel 4 documentary *Diplomacy and Deceit* was welcomed with wide acclaim and it was his confronting of the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadjic in 1992 which led to the discovery of the death and detention camps there.

NIK GOWING:

Can I just explain to you, as we just heard from Jo, it always embarrasses me listening to all that stuff. I have a lot of experience in war coverage, as does Jonathan who I first met back in Moscow and also in Afghanistan in those dreadful times in the mid 80's. You don't see anything that I do in Britain because I broadcast around the world to an enormous audience.

Crises are my daily diet. Sadly, some of what we broadcast on BBC World doesn't get seen in this country -- not because there is any censorship but because the global demand and the global appetite for information is somewhat different at times, globally, compared to what it is here.

I think it is important to underline that I come here to give you some thoughts today with a very different and distinct baseline experience about where war has gone, where it is going and particularly where it has gone in the last year. I have not been in Iraq in the last 18 months. Jonathan has and maybe one or two others of you that I don't immediately recognise. I sit in a studio here in London most of the time. I used to be at Channel 4 News where I was a Diplomatic Editor who went to war.

My reflections today are on a job which sitting in a studio in London allows me to challenge and question, and really to take no sides. [This is] rather than being a journalist where in the moment the challenge is to get information as accurately and as balanced as possible. The core challenge is about basic information.

Let me just underline that Simon - who I have known for 10 years since we first met in Bosnia, and I paid tribute to a lot of what he did when he was [with UNPROFOR] in Bosnia - staying on there after he left the royal marines. So even if you have a perception of what is going on in Baghdad, just remember that a lot of good work has been done in building media in many of these post-conflict areas. Bosnia is a post-conflict area, and I speak also as a governor of the Westminster Foundation which funds some of these operations.

My job is to talk about real-time crises, and I am going to talk for about 45 minutes before Simon takes over. I will focus particularly on what I see now are new real-time tensions. I don't expect you all to agree with me. But what I want to do is highlight some of the things we have just heard and go into much more detail to hopefully provoke you for the discussion coming up.

I think that overall I want to highlight a dramatic sharpening of a fundamental new tension. I speak for a large number of news organisations, many of whom are not really talking publicly about this at the moment. But you have to understand that my colleagues in the field have every right to be there, whatever the risks. The proliferation of images which I am going to explain to you emerge in the most instantaneous real time, often before the official machinery of government, or the military structure, even knows anything has happened. This creates what I have described as this fundamental and ominous new tension.

What that reveals often leaves our democratically elected governments and leadership under challenge, and often reeling in the way you have just heard from that protest statement. We have a right to be there. But the trouble is that a lot of the military -- particularly the American and the Israeli military -- do not want us there. And they make it very uncomfortable for us to work. And I think that this -- and I am giving you headlines here -- is leading to security forces in some instances feeling it is legitimate to target us with deadly force and with impunity.

We heard that figure of 12 journalists shot dead. I don't know if that is the latest or if it is accurate, but it is about the right figure at the moment. What has happened -- particularly the targeting of journalists -- has occurred despite the Geneva Convention and the laws of armed conflict. And I think we have to underline that we have deep concerns, particularly regarding the American and the Israeli attitude to this. I am not taking sides here but I am

telling you the way it is for many of my colleagues. And not just my British colleagues but international colleagues and particularly colleagues in journalism who are doing great work in a place like Iraq from the Arab world as well. And we are facing a failure to investigate and bring to justice.

I would have been telling you this 3 or 4 weeks ago if we had been having this session. But obviously what has been happening in Abu Ghraib, and the images from Abu Ghraib and also the *Daily Mirror*, has only enhanced the point I am trying to make. I speak as an activist in the International News Safety Institute that was set up a year ago to try and change the mindset, particularly of the American military, about this problem. We are making progress but it is damn slow.

What we are talking about here -- and I am talking very starkly -- is essentially a clash of principles of free speech and access which is enshrined in democracy that allows someone like me to stand up here and say something like this -- and the priorities of security. Whether in intense war fighting, peace enforcement or perhaps here in London itself with the looming horror of WMD, the attack in our own cities on our own doorsteps. It is something we have yet to test. It may be tested tragically and horrifically sometime in the future. I think what you are seeing on the front page of The Guardian, and it is not just because Jonathan is in the audience here, what happened with the bombing two days ago of the wedding gathering and the shooting in the air which is a normal celebration in Iraq up in the North-Western corner in a small village near the Syrian border -- is illustrative of exactly what I am saying. And then you get the Commander of the First Marine Division quoted this morning as saying '*I have not seen the pictures but bad things happen in wars, I don't have to apologise for the conduct of my men*'.

The thrust of what I am going to tell you today is that images like that, with the small photo of children on two hands, is what we are about as journalists. We are there to reveal where it has come from and how important and significant it is in any zone of conflict.

This is why I am talking about a new vulnerability and fragility in the democratic process. Look at what has happened in Abu Ghraib. It has upheld democracy in many ways -- because of the speed with which Rumsfeld (was summoned to Congress along with] two Generals summoned back from Baghdad as well. [It is about] the speed with which the Senate Committee demanded their presence to know why they had not been told about those images from Abu Ghraib.

It is the same new vulnerability and fragility which we also saw here in Britain almost four years ago during the fuel crisis. Then, for three days, the Cabinet Office didn't know what was happening in the north-west, and the economy of this country almost came to a halt. The same with the foot and

mouth crisis in February and March of 2001. And I think this is meaning that there are sharpened tensions which are being created by the pressing needs of resilience and homeland security. We are seeing dramatic increasing tension and we are finding that our voice as news organisations is simply, particularly across the Atlantic, not being recognized.

Let me underline one thing, a main reason many of you may feel passionately against the war, and especially what has happened in the last year, is because many of my colleagues in the BBC, ITN and Sky and many of the international channels and European channels and particularly the Arab channels have taken great risks so that you are able to make a judgement of what has happened. Virtually in real-time you are able to see what is happening in Iraq because of the risks, the accessibility and the transparency which has been created by my colleagues, some of whom have paid the ultimate price.

I think it is important. You heard Jo mention that I was in Warsaw 23 years ago during martial law. None of you were born; well some of you were born at the time. But most of you sitting in the further back rows won't even know what I am talking about with martial law in Poland. There has been a dramatic exponential change in our business, which I must underline, in terms of the way we are doing our work.

We are now just a few days from the 60th commemoration of D-Day. I was asked a few days ago to give a speech about what the new technology might have meant. How would we have covered D-day in 2004 were something like that were to have happened. I said to those who were inviting me, frankly my speech will be 2 minutes long. It [D-Day] would have never remained a secret and we would have been in an acute state of tension with you throughout.

Imagine what happened in Exercise Tiger in April of 1944 on Slapton Sands. It is now all coming out. People are reminding us of what happened then. This was a major exercise before D-Day down off the Devon coast which took place in secret. Can you imagine that with mobile phones email and everything else: how could that could have remained secret today? Totally impossible. But 750 people were killed in that D-Day exercise and we now know why they were killed. They were killed because the soldiers on the beaches of Devon were not issued with blanks: they were issued with live ammunition as the American soldiers staged a mock landing. But 750 were killed in that D-Day exercise and that information did not emerge for 50 years.

For all of you who consume News 24, Sky or whatever channel you watch -- even if it is only the 10 o'clock news at night or if you get it online as many of you do as well -- you would be lucky if it was 50 minutes before that news

came out in the current real-time environment in which we are working. 750 killed then and no one knew for 50 years.

In Iraq, we now know something like 780 American soldiers have been killed, Simon you may have the latest figure, 780 soldiers have been killed in Iraq since last year. That is therefore the comparison we have to make. What kind of environment are they working in? They are working in this environment where there are digital media eyes virtually everywhere, like here on a Baghdad street. Something which is a random event. It is the kind of thing that can happen anywhere, digitalized then transmitted everywhere at any time. (*film*) And that is simply a reflection of the proliferation of those out there who are not just providing real-time imagery but are reporting in real-time. It is what I called in the study I did ten years ago at Harvard *The Tyranny of Real-Time*. Because what we are talking about here - the vulnerability and the tension I am trying to point towards -- is what tyranny really means. [It is] the cruel and arbitrary nature of real-time coverage which is now creating this immense political problem for the British government, and the American government in particular. [It is the problem also being faced by the Israeli government in Rafah. At the moment they are determined and robust about what they are doing. But we are seeing [witnessing] what is happening down in Rafah. And it is polarising very distinctly impressions about what is happening.

What I'd like to do over the next half hour is really to address issues like this. The tyranny of real-time -- which I just mentioned -- and the issue of truth. That reporting about what is happening at the moment, or what happened 2 days ago at the wedding ceremony up in the northwest of Iraq. We are still trying to unravel the truth. Truth is an absolute phrase. We are trying as journalists in real-time to give you the best version possible within the limitations we have. It is quite possible that those pictures you saw of the 42 bodies being buried and the mass graves, were taken by someone who simply had a camera who [therefore] is a member of the media as well -- but NOT a member of a media organisation.

We are talking about the implications of information transparency. What happened during that wedding ceremony created that transparency. This camera, a camera like this [*holds up digital camera*], £300-400 worth of camera, creates a new transparency in these areas of war, peace-building, peace-enforcement and peace-keeping -- although there is less of that at the moment.

Thirdly, the real tension is because of the new technology versus the new security realities. Overwhelming force can fight a war very successfully as it did in three weeks last year. But it is much more complex when in the last year there has been this new transparency, and the new technology that

allows us to broadcast even from within a place like Fallujah which is under bombardment by the Americans.

Fourthly, we are talking about the battles of public perceptions here, [It is] the rumours versus whatever passes as close as it can be for truth. I always want to deal in truth and the nearest we can do it in real-time when I am broadcasting as a presenter.

What I want to focus you on here is the public perception. The three images coming out of Abu Ghraib have polarised public perceptions in a way I don't think we have seen in a long time in our business, partly because of the fact there is a proliferation of these digital images around. For those of you who might think that the military is insensitive to this -- certainly in Britain -- I don't think they are. It is important to distinguish now between the British and American forces. I am repeating here what I heard the Director General of Development and Doctrine [for the British Army] -- a two star British General -- say at a conference back in October of last year to the Royal United Services Institute. He put up a slide similar to this (*an image of an ostrich with its head in the ground*) saying 'beware you in the military; you in the security field: don't go around with your head in the sand'.

The reason I am showing you this is because he then went on to say the "omnipresent media will act as a moral and leading conscience on the shoulders of any commander who must expect every decision to be subject to open scrutiny and legal audit". And that is what we are now beginning to see over Abu Ghraib rather retrospectively. That there is a serious problem within the American military about how they are treating their doctrine and also their rules of engagement, and their respect (or lack of it) for the laws of armed conflict and also the Geneva conventions.

I also think we have to ask the question: do we really understand, do governments really understand what the media are? It is tempting to say it is The Guardian, the BBC, all the big brands you know out there. But it is not just about that at all.

I realize I am speaking to a pretty young audience here. You take all this for granted. But there are people who still find it very difficult to engage with what the media is these days. Anyone can now do information.

(shows rohack journalist with a satellite dish) This was a warning from five years ago about the way our business would be. Today replace the satellite dish with the mobile phone, replace the clunky camera with a digital camera like this and then you have the capacity for virtually anyone to do information. *(shows a short video of people arriving in the room prior to the start of the programme)*. This is just to underline to you the speed with which we are

working. This is the image I took at about twenty five past nine [this morning] as some of you arrived.

Just to underline: that [camera] provides a digital image in ways that many of you probably take for granted. This memory stick is the way that we can record it and somehow get it to a place where it can be uploaded into a media platform. And remember if you are in a place like Jenin or Fallujah you can stick that in your shoe, or you can stick it somewhere around your person, or you can stick it in unpleasant places as well. And the chances are high that you'll get through a military roadblock and get around all the attempts to control us.

I have been talking about the impact on the democratic process and on governments. Now let me go into a little more detail. This is an image that emerged in the Seattle Times a couple of weeks ago, before the Abu Ghraib (abuse-of-prisoner) crisis. It is interesting how in the last three or four weeks there has been a proliferation of examples which really have underlined warnings I have certainly been giving about the way we would be putting governments under pressure.

This image of coffins being loaded onto a C17 Globe Master at Kuwait airport on April the 7th was not taken by a member of the media, but by a 50 year old Washington state lady loadmaster employed by a commercial company contracted to the Pentagon. She used a camera like that, sneaked the images of the coffins and this appeared in the Seattle Times. That enraged the White House as there is an absolute order that there will be no images of any coffins returning to America, no images of any coffins inside the theatre of conflict, and they are determined that none of this will be seen except perhaps at the family funerals wherever they will be held in the US.

But this had a polarising impact on the American government. They were enraged. And then at the same time a website called Memory Hole got hold of 361 images of all the coffins being returned to Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. It reproduced them having obtained them under the Freedom of Information Act. That again enraged the Pentagon: they did not want these images seen. But people out there [- members of the new media matrix-] had been resourceful enough to get around it.

It was similar, of course, with Lynndie England and an image like this. Someone with a digital camera - and remember what I started out saying, the vulnerability and fragility of governments faced with the power of that similar image from a memory stick. And it is interesting. . . . okay we now know that specialist Jeremy Sivitz was found guilty in a court martial two days ago. He is now being dismissed from the service and put in jail for a year. But the damage has been done in ways that you understand as well as I do. It exposed flaws in what really could be described as a self-serving

political culture and a military doctrine really in defiance of the Geneva conventions and the international laws of armed conflict. The power of that image has been enormous. We are seeing it time and time again. At the moment in Iraq we are seeing it; in Afghanistan, in the Philippines; we are even seeing it in places like Zimbabwe. We are seeing it in many of the areas naturally you might assume it is very difficult to get images.

Darfur [the violence and humanitarian crisis in Western Sudan] is a serious problem for us, partly because of how rugged it is. We have yet to crack how to cover the fact that 1 million people are starving there, according to MSF yesterday. And we have yet to crack coverage of an area where some governments are warning “genocide” is looming as in Rwanda 10 years ago.

So it is not a perfect matrix I am describing to you. But let me just underline to you that everyone is out there doing media. (*a picture of a man on holiday with a digital camera*) Someone like this. I don't know who he is. I met him on holiday using a camera. There are now 3 million people in Britain alone who have digital cameras and digital devices of some kind. They have become members of the media. So too in his own way did Jeremy Greenstock who, when the provisional constitution was being signed on the 8th of March, was in the audience. And there he was providing his own version for his own use of what was taking place (*image of Jeremy Greenstock with a digital camera*). But imagine if something dreadful had taken place there. We might have actually had to go to him to get the video. But obviously that is a bit extreme as there were other cameras there.

We are seeing a proliferation of information coming even from a place like Iraq in ways that I am sure Jonathan [having just returned from there] can describe later. But let me give you one example of why I say we are dealing in a much more transparent environment in these hostile areas. This is Karbala on the 2 March just before the bomb attacks and the mortar attacks. These are the BBC pictures which were remarkable because [before these days] we never had a satellite dish or anything down in Karbala because under Saddam we were never allowed to go there.

And then this [*Video of explosions from BBC camera*]. This was the first of a number of explosions that led to large numbers of people being killed. In other words that was the stuff you'd expect from the BBC and from the kind of coverage where we would assign people. But there were other cameras [even] in a place like Karbala. You take this for granted [or never have to consider where images come from]. But for us in the media and in television certainly it is a very different matrix. Even in the last few months everything has changed.

Here is [video material of the same incident taken] by an amateur camera. I am giving you examples here to make a point that quite often there are

cameras there and coverage well before -- and Simon might want to address this point -- those in government, those in power however you want to describe them, even know an incident has taken place.

Here for example, the downing of a Black Hawk helicopter on 8 January. Someone from close by, an Iraqi working for one of the agencies on a freelance basis I think, used a camera that is worth probably no more than £1000 or £800. The kind of thing you can buy down on Tottenham Court Road. You can see how ropery [the images are]. But there he was on the ground as the search and rescue helicopters arrived. Nine US service men were killed that day. This is the kind of thing that makes the military feel deeply nervous. When they see someone trying to record something. And our experience is -- and I have checked this with many of my colleagues before saying this publicly -- that they don't want us around even though we are there trying to bring you the images of what is happening in as accurate, balanced and as fair a way as possible.

But the important thing about something like this which is happening day in and day out is that those images will be out there in the global village probably an hour after being taken. Sometimes half an hour. Maybe 15 minutes in the centre of Baghdad. And sometimes it's live. Pick up the phone to the Green Zone and you will find that they don't even know the incident has taken place.

Into this mix is now coming something more sinister in these zones of conflict and tension. Others are out there and are equally good at being members of the media like the Taliban. The Taliban, after all, were in power in Afghanistan. They had believed that video images or any images were heretic. Now they -- like the insurgents in Iraq -- have latched on to the power of that little camera that digital eye. This is a video that emerged towards the end of last year with no date on it -- although there is no snow on the ground so we don't know when it was which makes us feel nervous. We don't know the provenance of this video. It appears to show the Taliban ambushing an Afghan soldier. It is badly shot. We don't even know whether the incident has taken place. It has the feeling of being staged frankly. We decided to broadcast it with heavy warnings [in the] script lines. We are not sure if this is an ambush. But it shows that the Taliban are now in the information game out there.

The same is happening, as Simon will probably talk about, in Iraq as well, with the image, for example, of the surface to air system which apparently felled a DHL cargo plane as it was taking off from Baghdad airport [in December 2003]. The number of attacks where video is being used to actually record what is taking place: it is not just about Osama bin Laden. [that video increasingly] is emerging. And somehow we in the news business have to act as the gatekeepers, the filters, the discriminators. We have to make

judgements about whether it is good or whether we have been conned in ways that are [most certainly] happening [more] at the moment. You have to remember that it is not just us who are out there [as the media]: it is maybe the insurgents and maybe the Taliban.

I haven't put this up [on the screen] necessarily to remind you of the *Daily Mirror's* disaster in publishing the hoax pictures. More interesting for the purposes for this address is that inside this Warrior armoured vehicle there is a British soldier who is also using a digital camera. In other words we are talking about everyone out there creating this transparent environment -- including the US that is also providing military video including of some pretty disgraceful events, some which have already been seen on Channel 4. If my understanding is correct, [during] the Queens Lancashire Regiment investigation after the *Daily Mirror* publication, the Commander down in Cyprus demanded that all his soldiers surrender every single digital image they had taken during their 6 months in Basra, because of the fear of what they may have revealed -- whether it be pictures for sending home to their family or something much more insidious. Remember it is a camera like this, that helped to reveal what happened in the wedding disaster a couple of days ago in north-western Iraq.

In this environment we [in the real-time news business] are facing a troubled time, everyday, every hour, every minute. And I speak as someone that has been on the air through 9-11 for 6 hours, through Diana's death through the pulling of Saddam Hussein out [of his hole] in the middle of December. We go through this wrestling with how good the information is day in and day out.

The tension I am trying to highlight is best illustrated by this. Reuters has made public for the second time this week what happened to three of their Iraqi staff in the beginning of January. They were pulled in -- and maybe Simon you would like to talk about this later -- [and] were threatened with sexual abuse, and were also offered sex by the American forces. They were held for at least three days and the Americans say there was no case to answer. We simply cannot believe that. It's a Reuters problem. But it is also an industry problem for us. This after what happened outside the Abu Ghraib prison coincidentally on 17th of August last year. Mazan Dana, a Reuters cameraman, a Palestinian who had been hit 60 times by the Israelis on the West Bank, was given permission to take these pictures next to this American roadblock. An American tank comes along. It's here in slow motion. The machine gunner doesn't like what he sees and kills Mazan Dana. The Americans will not admit responsibility for that.

We understand that a camera sitting on the right shoulder of a camera man can perhaps sometimes be mistaken by soldiers who are nervous for a rocket system. But this is happening too often. Similarly, why are we still getting

problems like what happened -- and I am just telling you the way AP reported it when it came out in the middle of April -- [to] two employees of the US funded Al-Iraqiya television station, "shot dead by US troops", said the station.

"US troops shot to death two employees of a US funded television station, Al-Iraqiya and they wounded another in the central city of Samara. The correspondent, the cameraman was wounded as well, the station announced after American forces opened fire on them while they were performing their duty".

It could have also been the cameraman that shot [the video of the] the Black Hawk helicopter just after it had crashed. It could have been a nervous machine gunner sitting on one of the helicopters or humvees arriving that didn't like the sight of that camera sitting by the side of the road recording what was going on.

Similar is what happened to this Italian [stills] cameraman in Ramallah. It was two years ago now, but it is very much a *leitmotif* of many of our fears about why we are being targeted, for what reason as well as what the aspiration is and the military system is that allows this type of thing to take place. He was killed when he pulled a small video camera out of his pocket in the same way that many of you do when you are in a place like that -- as happened with [the photographer] Tom Handell for example -- might pull a camera out of your pocket, cargo pants or backpack and think 'I want to take a snap of that'. You [thereby] become a member of the media. But in a situation like this you become vulnerable as well.

At that point, as we say time and time again, and as the International Press Institute said: the shooting "seemed to be part of a concerted strategy by the Israeli Army to control the press and the recent surge in armed hostilities in the region".

It's not me who's saying that. Let me just play you a bit of video that relates the story of Jimmy, a BBC Palestinian cameraman, and my colleague Orla Guerin, when they went out just simply to report a demonstration by peace activists. What is the media threat in an environment like this?

MUSIC

"Five minutes from his house, Jimmy is sent to cover a rally of European peace activists protesting the Israeli reoccupation of the territories. The report becomes a significant one as the shots are now fired at the camera man.

SHOTS SOUND— Jimmy yells 'okay okay we are going, we are going in the car' The soldiers shooting, he saw us, he knew that we were press. I had the camera and he looked at us and he shoot at us. I don't know what you can tell... 'Don't shoot don't shoot' (film runs)

Jimmy-'I don't think that there is no mercy for anyone, not the press, anyone. Kill I think that that was the order'

That is a very tough for anything for any of my colleagues to say 'kill that was

the order’.

Whether it was from the BBC or any other news organisation I think it is important to remember as well what happened to James Miller on 2 May last year [2003 on the very day that a significant number of broadcast news organisations] were in Brussels launching the International News Safety Institute (INSI).

[Video in Rafah next to the Egyptian border]

This is James Miller and Sira Shah, my former colleague at Channel 4 News, a brilliant award winning documentary maker working for HBO the American channel. They were there, as you can see, fully equipped with Kevlar helmets and Kevlar jackets. They had been to hostile environments before. They are working in Rafah, which is now the scene of the most terrible things happening. And they were being observed by the IDF from an observation posts for many hours. This is imagery taken by APTN who also had a camera with James Miller.

You can see the kind of things -- and we are talking about a year ago -- that are happening now. Many of you know the story probably. But late in the evening they [James Miller and his remaining team of three] decided it was time to get out. So Sira and James walked forward appealing to the IDF to get through.

FILM- Sira and James are screaming ‘hello- we are journalists’ and then some shots...James Miller is killed..

That was the shot that killed James Miller -- the second of seven shots. Had we not had that video it would have been a much less easy case to make [against the IDF].

I am merely reporting to you, I am not involved in it in any way. But still I am aware of how difficult it has been for James Miller’s family to even get a basic investigation done. That is a year on. We still don’t know why James Miller was shot -- why when they knew he was there, they knew he was unarmed, wasn’t a Palestinian and didn’t have a shoulder fired [weapon] system [of some kind]. Why was he shot when he wasn’t even carrying his camera at that point?

These are the worries that we have in our business because it is creating an impression of a culture of [military] impunity – [even] when our job is to take the kind of risks that James and Sira took, and Rafael Cirriello and Mazen Dana took in a place like that.

It is maybe difficult for you to understand the kind of tensions my colleagues are going through, even on a daily basis when you watch the news. We in

many ways make it easier for you to watch as we don't show you the problems of getting the material from the most difficult of areas. There's one further example which really for me crystallises much of the tension that we are now facing. It took place in November of 2001 up in Mazar-e-Sharif. This has been provided to me by German television ARD award winning correspondent Arnim Stauth.

[Video]

This was Mazar-e-Sharif when the Northern Alliance was trying to secure the fort from the Taliban. The Taliban fighters were putting up an amazing resistance inside the fort. Some of you may remember some amazing footage of British Special Forces fighting inside that fort. But this shows there are no frontlines for us as journalists. We take risks. And we know the risks we are taking. But when you come up against American Special Forces, British Special Forces and the CIA agents, you have a camera, they have guns – [then] it can be a very tense moment and you wonder quite where it is going to end up. Listen closely to the dialogue here over the next minute and a half:

American soldier- come on, come on, stop moving... Americans. . . . ut that camera down or I'll fucking shoot you don't stop. Turn the cameras off, turn the cameras off... turn the camera off... go, go.

Journalist- you're not in the United States.... You have no right, no authority here. You are not from that territory okay.

American- put that in your notes, put that in your notes...

So you have the American Special Forces officer, the others on camera, you have got British Special Forces officers from Hereford who were in the Land Rovers. I know I am speaking publicly here. But I want to underline just in case you didn't pick it up 'I'll fucking shoot you' that is a clear warning. 'or I'll fucking shoot you'.

This is a CIA agent. His colleague Johnny Spamm was later killed by the Taliban inside the prison. One interesting side issue here is that that CIA agent when he was inside the prison -- and there was a very intense fire fight that lasted many hours -- the German correspondent got inside as well. Such was the difficulty they were under from a security point of view that the CIA agent had to use the German television crew's satellite phone to call in an air strike. We're at the front line in something like that.

Other issues I need to raise with you: something like this [in Kabul, Afghanistan on 12 November 2001]. What happened to the Al Jazeera bureau? By the way, we at the BBC and many broadcasters have enormous respect for Al Jazeera. But of course it is not politically convenient, as Simon may describe to you. In Baghdad they have Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya and Abu Dhabi television. They are in many ways tremendous news organisations, sometimes often taking more risks than us in ways that I'll explain in a moment.

[Video]

But this is what happened to the Al Jazeera bureau on the night before the Northern Alliance came in to Kabul. The 12th of November. The Americans decided to drop two 500 pound bombs into the Al Jazeera bureau. This was the kind of damage. Why was a media office targeted though? Why were two 500 pound bombs put into the Al Jazeera bureau? They may have had an interview with Osama bin Laden, they showed great skill in getting access to some of al Qaeda and the Taliban. Taysir Aloumi, [the correspondent] who is now under arrest, under detention, interestingly in Spain for other problems related to the kind of work he was doing there. But why was this media office targeted?

Now I want to share with you what happened 3 weeks later in the exchange of letters that took place between Al-Jazeera and the Pentagon. This is the letter from Victoria Clark, the Assistant Defence Secretary for Public Affairs. The reason I'm showing you this letter was because they said that what they struck was a known al Qaeda facility- according to what intelligence told them. Well, why should a journalist organisation that interviewed Osama bin Laden and has close connections to the Taliban be classified as a known al Qaeda facility? There were no indications that this or any other nearby facility was used by al Qaeda. The building that was used by al Jazeera had been their office for twenty months. It had satellite dishes. American planes flying around and American human intelligence on the ground would have known precisely what was happening inside that building because they didn't hide the fact that they were a news organisation.

But of even more concern is this one phrase at the end of that letter: "we will continue to target those facilities and locations that have military significance". That raises a very powerful, problematic area for us. Does that mean we as journalists, and our colleagues out in the field taking the risks, are seen by the Pentagon now as having 'military significance'??

Let me in my final 5 minutes, let me just share with you what happened in Fallujah just a few weeks ago which led to the disastrous events which took place there in the Sunni Triangle, and the attacks that took place with the American operation. Let me remind you what happened on one particular day in Fallujah.

(video clip)

A cameraman was in Fallujah, and you will see him driving up to the horrendous events. . . . I am simply not going to show you everything it is too ghastly There he is driving up to the vehicles – the two vehicles that are on fire. He is the member of the media there that day, not knowing what was going to happen that day providing the most horrific images of charred

bodies of the four civilian security contracts and then what happened next. This in its own way, in this asymmetric way we were talking about, had an enormous impact on certainly the American public opinion, seeing four Americans being slain in this way. It became the reason why Fallujah happened, why the American operation happened in Fallujah a few days later.

I'm not going to show you the rest it is simply too awful. But this will be a reminder of the kind of images we saw back in March, the way it was interpreted and reported by our colleagues certainly in the written press and the problems we had in deciding whether to show the mutilated charred bodies being strung from the bridge in Fallujah.

These images in their own way had a powerful polarising effect in a time of crisis creating even more tension and acting on the political process and maybe Simon can talk about this later. Interestingly when we pixilated many of the pictures here in Britain, the New York Times and the Washington Post did not. That was how they published (*shows images of the front pages*). You'll be familiar with what happened next but I would really just like to share with you how an operation, a military operation which we could get access to in theory suddenly became very open very quickly. Let me just share with you how a correspondent in Baghdad shared it with me on air:

BBC broadcast:

Nik: Welcome back lets just pick up what is happening now in Fallujah and other places in Iraq. I'm joined here with Richard Lister who joins me from Baghdad. Richard, how much clear information is coming out of Fallujah?

Richard: Not very much, Nik, it has to be said there are very, very few journalists there and they are not always able to write back with what they've got.

Nik: Now that was Richard in Baghdad saying very few journalists there....

At about that same time we suddenly started getting images like this, coming out of a video phone. Yes, the quality is not very good. But it shows how far technology has come. And in this asymmetric environment -- this information environment we are now working in -- what this is doing is confirming that the American operation, in the first hours of it, was producing casualties in an area that was technically closed to journalists.

More problematic, and we can discuss this later, certainly for someone sitting in London, were these images. Because we began to get reports that a mosque turret, a minaret, had been hit which of course is not something that any military commander would want to do as it sends a dramatic message to the Arab world. These images started emerging and we weren't sure if it meant

there was confirmation that the minaret had been hit or whether it was just smoke rising. But the convergence of that mosque and the smoke sent a very powerful [worst-case scenario] image as did the pictures of Abu Ghraib in the last two or three weeks. Other images started emerging very quickly as well which went on to help confirm that yes there were casualties. Al Jazeera was providing much better quality pictures inside Fallujah and were taking the risk of smuggling themselves in.

What I hope I've done in the last 45 minutes is highlight to you how much in any zone of conflict -- except Darfur at the moment -- there is an extraordinary level of transparency and access. What we are seeing I think overall is what I would usually call a Race for Space. It sounds like a competitive edge and I don't mean that. We're talking about a Race for Space because someone out there will be providing images during a time of crisis whether those trying to control the situation like it or not.

The second conclusion: We are talking not about a digital divide -- and these are in areas quite often where people don't even have water or electricity. But we are talking about the power of that memory stick and that digital image to create a massive asymmetry in these conflicts where military security government structures have the most incredible systems of sensing and analysing -- what they detect from their sensing platforms planes, human intelligence, signals intelligence and so on.

We are talking about the power of that image to challenge it head on in a very timely way, and challenge the credibility of those in power -- and we see it time and again certainly with digital images coming out of Afghanistan and other parts of Iraq. How the Pentagon has been put on that back foot. It is not just an issue of Abu Ghraib: it is much broader than that.

Overall I think what we are talking about here is a transparency. [It is a] a transparency that is doing two important things in our work and also putting that additional pressure on governments. [First] it is catching unaware and therefore putting immense pressure on policies. And secondly, it surprises with what it reveals.

Let's stop there.