

American “Media Objectivity”: “Israel Bombs Syria” Becomes “Israel Is Only Defending Itself”

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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An Israeli plane bombs a target in Syria. The news is passed along first to Fox News, (huh?) by someone in the Administration.. It happened on a Thursday, but we find out about it late on Friday. The New York Times assigns three reporter to cover the story that goes up on the website in the middle of the morning on Saturday.

Earlier that day, President Obama, speaking in Costa Rica, said there will be no US ground troops on the ground in Syria. Now, the Administration says it is considering “military options.”

Saturday’s New York Times chose this story for the first page: “ISRAEL TIGHTENS BORDER DEFENSE AS SYRIA ERUPTS.”

And so, the story is reframed with Israel the defender, not the aggressor. The bombing makes it into the third paragraph on page 1 but refers only to the bombing of “a target.”

“American officials did not provide details on the target but, instead, referenced an earlier attack attacking a Syrian military supply effort to Hezbollah.” Unmentioned is that the original report understated the extent of the damage caused by the bombing.

Reuters was better informed, “Israel has carried out an air strike targeting a shipment of missiles in Syria bound for Hezbollah in neighboring Lebanon.”

The New York Times does not mention the reaction by Lebanon which issued a statement carried by BBC denouncing the attack as illegal and a violation of their air space.

CNN reported,

” U.S. and Western intelligence agencies are reviewing classified data showing Israel most likely conducted (emphasis mine) a strike in the Thursday-Friday time frame, according to both officials. This is the same time frame that the U.S. collected additional data showing Israel was flying a high number of warplanes over Lebanon.

One official said the United States had limited information so far and could not yet confirm those are the specific warplanes that conducted a strike. Based on initial indications, the U.S. does not believe Israeli warplanes entered Syrian airspace to conduct the strikes.

...The Lebanese army website listed 16 flights by Israeli warplanes penetrating Lebanon’s airspace from Thursday evening through Friday afternoon local time.”

The Times of Israel later confirmed the strike, adding, “The officials said the shipment was not of chemical arms, but of “game changing” weapons bound for the terror group Hezbollah. One official said the target was a shipment of advanced, long-range ground-to-ground missiles.”

A day later, on Saturday, suddenly Iran was dragged into this with the New York Times reporting: “Israeli aircraft bombed a target in Syria on Thursday,,,to disrupt the pipeline of weapons from Iran to Hezbollah.”

Last January 31, the last Israeli bombing attack on Syriawas met with this reaction: “Israel will regret its attack against Syria, a top Iranian official has warned.. The Telegraph reported, February 4, “Syria only received these missiles from Russia over the last couple of months.... Then, after the strike, Iran’s deputy foreign minister warned of “grave consequences for Tel Aviv.”

Already, American right-wing politicians are cheering on the story:

Politico reports, “South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham told a crowd here Friday night that Israel has bombed Syria.

Graham, a Republican who serves on the Senate Armed Services Committee, was addressing the South Carolina Republican Party’s annual Silver Elephant fundraising dinner. He mentioned the attack in passing, amid a longer discourse on U.S. national security policy.

“Israel bombed Syria tonight,” Graham said flatly, before moving on to a longer, dire discourse on the threat of a nuclear Iran.”

You can just smell the aroma of more escalations and of a wider war to come. US news organizations are waffling and accepting Israel’s version even as Israel seems to be leaking it, rather than fully disclosing it.

There are two aspects of this: what the real endgame is—and why it seems to be more about preparing for war on Iran rather than on Syria?

In 2007, Seymour Hersh wrote about what he called a “redirection” of Israeli strategy:’

“To undermine Iran, which is predominantly Shiite, the Bush Administration has decided, in effect, to reconfigure its priorities in the Middle East. In Lebanon, the Administration has coöperated with Saudi Arabia’s government, which is Sunni, in clandestine operations that are intended to weaken Hezbollah, the Shiite organization that is backed by Iran. The U.S. has also taken part in clandestine operations aimed at Iran and its ally Syria. A by-product of these activities has been the bolstering of Sunni extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam and are hostile to America and sympathetic to Al Qaeda.”

Adds Tony Cartalucci on ICH:

“Indeed, Israel’s explanation as to why it struck neighboring Syria is tenuous at best considering its long, documented relationship with actually funding and arming the very “terrorist groups” it fears weapons may fall into the hands of.”

And the second issue is the question of the reliability of news reporting, including accounts by human rights groups who may be under pressure from funders to go easier on Israel than Syria. Scott, Long, a former manager at Human Rights Watch explains the nature of the bias in a recent report:

Notes the Electronic Intifada:

“Long’s account indicates that HRW observes a sort of fake balance in which it must artificially generate criticism of Palestinians just in order to offset criticism of Israel’s much greater and more frequent human rights abuses and crimes:

Writes Long:

“Human Rights Watch, where I worked for many years, strains all its muscles to be completely objective on Israel/Palestine — an effort that has never gotten it a scintilla of credit from the militant pro-Israel side. Its releases on Israel and Palestine are the only ones in the entire organization that are routinely edited by the executive director himself. An informal arithmetic dictates that every presser or report criticizing Israel has to be accompanied by another criticizing the Palestine Authority or Hamas— or, if that isn’t possible (the PA barely retains enough authority to violate anybody’s rights) at least one of the surrounding Arab states.

A mathematical approach to objectivity may help accountants detect embezzlement or captains keep ships afloat, but that kind of balance looks ridiculous in the political world, where the incessant fluidity of action disrupts the illusions of double-entry bookkeeping. (The call for an “embargo on arms” to “all sides” is an excellent example of “objectivity” that benefits one side much more than the other.”)

So there you have it: a breaking story, but news that is filtered to keep the outrage on alleged human rights abuses by countries Washington dislikes.

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