

Media Disinformation and the Use of “Words”

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

Global Research, April 26, 2012

26 April 2012

The mainstream media utilize many words and phrases in reporting that have been specifically chosen, either by the media or a source, to misrepresent or distort the contexts to which they are applied. Unfortunately, the alternate media often picks up those words (or phrases) and uses them in their own reporting, without due consideration for the perpetuation of the distortions and misrepresentations.

Examples include:

“Rubber bullets”

The image presented to the public is one of nice, rubber balls banging into protesters, creating stinging pain for use in crowd control. This is not at all the case, though they are generally categorized as “less lethal”, if used correctly e.g. no head shots. For a good perspective, see here [1]. At minimum, these should be called rubber-coated bullets. But even the use of “rubber” causes distortion. Better might be “hard-coated steel bullets”. I would also observe that with enough muzzle velocity (which the firing rifles usually have) and at close enough range, just about any material can be lethal. The best example would be tornados ramming straws into tree trunks and lumber through building walls.

“Tear gas”

Though “tears” may have been the main human reaction to this gas when it was invented, the toxicity of the current CS gas [2] is considerably more advanced, causing all sorts of negative reactions in a human’s breathing system, eyes, skin, etc. Its “non-lethal” characterization has also been shown to be often untrue. CS gas is the most commonly used and “CS-gas” could be used instead of “tear gas”, or perhaps even better, “toxic CS gas”.

“Settlers”

This term is most often used by Israel to characterize Israelis taking over land owned by Palestinians, without any compensation. By this definition, one could move into one’s neighbor’s house while they were on vacation, claiming legal and moral protection as a “settler”. The purposeful use of this term had early beginnings in the U.S. as the Europeans took over Indian lands in the westward movement, with the implication (often freely stated) that the lands were totally “unsettled” and populated only by “savages”. More proper terms might be “land thieves” or “land grabbers” or “carpetbaggers”.

“Terrorists”

Technically, in order to be a “terrorist”, one must purposely create or set about creating

terror in a population. But the term has become totally prostituted by governments, individuals and organizations using the term to their own advantage, especially since 2001. A government agency can merely claim an individual or group or organization is/are terrorists. But “terrorism” is in the eyes of the beholder. Afghans likely would be terrorized by night raids of their home by NATO soldiers, but Westerners don’t call NATO a terrorist organization. Another example might be that Gaza and the West Bank seem to be supposedly loaded with terrorists, while Israel appears to have none, even though Israel has killed many more Palestinians than the reverse. This is a tricky one to find better terminology for, so maybe use of an adjective should always be encouraged, such as “US-claimed terrorist”, “covert terrorists”, etc. Or just minimize the use of “terrorist” and find more appropriate characterizations such as soldier, etc.

“Defense”

The U.S. military used to be the War Department. Now it is the Department of Defense” (DOD) even though it can be well-argued that it should be more appropriately titled the Department of Offense”. Any militaristic endeavor is usually better painted as defensive rather than offensive, for its better image, depending on the source. For instance, Syria’s military and security functions may be operating defensively (against mercenaries) but mercenary supporters will labels all such Syrian government moves as offense e.g. “attacks on their people”. Better terms than “defense/defensive” could often be “offensive”, “suppression”, “oppression”, etc. A more neutral term might be used such as “reactive” or “in reaction to”. The DOD should be the DOO, as should the Israeli IDF be the IOF.

“Smart”

Used more and more often as time passes, such as in “smart bomb”. The definition of smart inherently includes or assumes intelligence, but intelligence can only be attributable to animals, especially humans (though the “smartness” is often questionable). In most cases, the “smart” term is applied to an object that contains a computer in some form. But computers cannot think and aren’t intelligent... they are simply code-driven machines. A “smart bomb” is an immoral attribution of the adjective. Why aren’t all other bombs defined as “dumb bombs”? A “guided bomb” would be more correct, at least in the context that one could question how well it was guided, while “smart” seems to have taken on a binary acceptance i.e. either smart or not (dumb?).

“Protesters”, “militants”, “insurgents”, “activists”, “rebels”, “extremists”, “radicals”, etc.

Since all these words are generally based on characterizations of what one is doing, it gets quite confusing to, say, call one a militant if one is instead being just a protester that day. Being an Iranian or a man or a Christian, (etc.) are not action characterizations; you can’t be “Iranianing”. Thus, by definition, such characterizations, beyond being (often purposefully) fuzzy and confusing, could be correct one day but incorrect next week. And a protester could very well be at a given time a militant protester activist. It’s too bad there isn’t one word to cover all of these. Again, use of adjectives can be of help: protesters becomes more clear as “peaceful protesters”, insurgents gains clarity as “poorly armed citizen insurgents”, etc.

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Notes

[1] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTx4vbTYr-w>

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/CS_gas

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