

## Recipe for Terror: Kill The Truth, Kill the Journalists

Assassination of Reuters Cameraman, who had uncovered evidence of Mass US Casualties in Iraq

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First published on Global Research in November 2003, this article by **Felicity Arbuthnot** reveals how journalists in Iraq were killed and threatened for revealing the truth:

**thirty major news gathering outlets wrote to the Pentagon complaining of intimidation, arrest, destruction of note books, video tape, recorders and film.**

The circumstances of the death of ITN’s Terry Lloyd and disappearance of his colleagues is still obscured by the US Administration as has been the US tank attack on the Palestine Hotel with deaths of three journalists. Journalists’ protection, under the Geneva Convention is absolute.

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If **Tony Blair** is making a list of topics to discuss with President Bush, ‘accountability’ should be well near the top. The lack of it, at US Administration level, is stunning.

“It is just not worth characterizing by numbers”, said **Brigadier General Vincent Brooks**, when asked how many Iraqis had died during the invasion. But from Guantanamo Bay to America’s own casualties, ‘life, liberty’ – yet alone the ‘pursuit of happiness’ has become frighteningly endangered under the neo-cons pulling George W’s strings.

At the recent World Uranium Weapons Conference in Hamburg, **Dr Doug Rokke**, former senior Pentagon advisor charged with the 1991 uranium clean up of Kuwait, described how injured US troops are being flown ‘in their hundreds, in the dead of night’ back to US bases

'throughout Europe', in order to disguise the magnitude of casualty figures. Public photographs of coffins of the dead have been proscribed and in stark contrast to the public honoring and grief of the Italian nation for their nineteen soldiers and carabinieri, killed in a suicide bombing in Nassiriyah, southern Iraq last week, the US military shuffles its fallen as quietly as possible into their final resting place.

With the death toll of US soldiers having exceeded, in just seven months, that of the first three years of Vietnam it is worth asking if even these figures are the full truth. Many of those who have joined the military in Iraq, do not hold American passports, but were, broadly, promised that they would be given them on return, for their efforts against the 'war on terrorism'. According to Dr Rokke, should they die, their deaths are not factored in to 'U.S.' casualties. Further, Mazen Dana, the Award winning Reuters camera man, shot dead by US troops whilst filming outside Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison in August - with full permission and press accreditation from the US Authorities in Baghdad - told his brother Nazmi, a chilling tale days before he died.

"Mazen told me by phone few days before his death that he discovered a mass grave dug by U.S. troops to conceal the bodies of their fellow comrades killed in Iraqi resistance attacks," Nazmi said.

"He also told me that he found U.S. troops covered in plastic bags in remote desert areas and he filmed them for a TV program. We are pretty sure that the American forces had killed Mazen knowingly to prevent him from airing his finding."

"All international and local news agencies sent cables of condolences to his family, lauding his ..... determination to uncover the truth wherever it was", recorded veteran Middle East correspondent Awed Al Ragoub.

Truth is becoming increasingly difficult for journalists to record in Iraq. Last week, reported the Boston Globe, thirty major news gathering outlets wrote to the Pentagon complaining of intimidation, arrest, destruction of note books, video tape, recorders and film. The circumstances of the death of ITN's Terry Lloyd and disappearance of his colleagues is still obscured by the US Administration as has been the US tank attack on the Palestine Hotel with deaths of three journalists. Journalists' protection, under the Geneva Convention is absolute.

Iraq is now a vast Guantanamo Bay, with the disappeared unaccounted for, which was why Mazen Dana was filming outside Abu Ghraib. Even prisoners under Saddam, were more accounted for. The full number of both prison camps and prisoners are simply unknown. With the bombing of the Red Cross building in Baghdad and resultant pull out of staff, the last shred of accountability for the detained has been removed. The Red Cross is enshrined in the Geneva Convention as the neutral body who can interview and account for prisoners in war, held as hostage or in conflict zones. The tragedy of the Red Cross attack had a coincidental convenience for a U.S. human rights time bomb.

The Geneva Convention also has emotive words regarding environmental destruction. Viet Nam with Agent Orange, torching of villages, rapes and even the decapitation of a baby by a US soldier to steal her necklace, has been recently chillingly revisited by a stunning, painstaking two year investigation by journalists at the extraordinarily committed but relatively small town Toledo Blade newspaper.

‘Will this be another Viet Nam?’ has been a frequent haunting, relating to American body bags. Maybe. But little addressed is : environmentally, it is. Distraught reports have come out of Iraq of fauna, flora, wheat, barley, agriculture, bushes being torched by US soldiers with, like Viet Nam, music blaring and redolent of Palestine’s olive groves, Iraq’s great dates palms being mown down. Iraq has maybe six hundred different kinds of dates, is the worlds biggest producer. Nothing is wasted: sugar syrup is made, the stones are polished and made into beads, the fronds become anything from brooms to intricate, evocative bird cages. The date harvest (about now) is a vivid, beautiful celebration; towns and cities display them in markets in their vibrant colors: from sand and gold to brown and near vermillion, in great, intricately woven baskets – made of the fronds. Date palms are near sacred. Asking the way to a home, people will deliberate the location of the house and then , invariably say: “the garden has the tallest (smallest, most twisted etc) palm ...”

The full horror and lack of accountability is outside the scope of an article, but was starkly outlined by an Iraqi academic – old friend, rabidly anti- Saddam – I met recently. She told me of a beloved alter-ego, the sister she never had, who had gone to find medication for one of her two children. The two kids were in the back of the car and she trawled the pharmacies for the medicine. (Hospitals are now , say Iraqi doctors, worse equipped than after the 1991 war, but under the new freedom no journalists are allowed to visit to record.) Finally, she found what she was needing. Driving back over the 14th of July Bridge (hugely emotive and named after another revolution against the British) she was shot at by US troops, the car burned out and she and her children burned to the unrecognizable. Baghdad, being a village of five million people, her husband quickly learned what had happened and ran across the town with friends and blankets, to cover and succor them in death. They were shot at, as they returned repeatedly, for three days, by the troops as wife and childrens’ remains stayed in the car, before they could be collected and interred.

“For telling you this, I await the knock at the door, any day, like all academics do who speak out in this occupation”, said my friend. Academics are being disappeared at stunning speed in Iraq. “You know” she said quietly, her eyes meeting mine: “many of us say we want Saddam and our country back.”

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Featured image: US Embassy in Iraq under siege. Credit: Creative Commons

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