

Lying Journalists: Some Other Tall Tales NBC's Brian Williams Might Want to Apologize For

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

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Not getting shot down in Iraq is just the beginning of things Brian Williams needs to correct.

NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams has apologized for falsely claiming (NBC, 1/30/15) that “during the invasion of Iraq...the helicopter we were traveling in was forced down after being hit by an RPG.”

“I made a mistake in recalling the events of 12 years ago,” he told his audience on February 4 (Stars & Stripes, [2/4/15](#)). “I don’t know what screwed up in my mind that caused me to conflate one aircraft with another.”

Now that he’s cleared that up, there are some other tall tales that Williams might want to take back. Take his recounting of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans (Dateline NBC, 8/22/10; Extra!, [10/10](#)):

You know, I’ve been around a lot of guns and a lot of dead bodies, and a lot of people shooting at people to make dead bodies. But you put them all together and you put it in the United States of America, and boy, it gets your attention....

It was clear already there weren’t going to be enough cops.... Everywhere we went, every satellite shot, every camera shot, we were at the height of the violence and the looting and the—all the reports of gunplay downtown. Well, who’s bathed in the only lights in town? It was us....

We had to ask Federal Protection Service guys with automatic weapons to just form a ring and watch our backs while we were doing Dateline NBC one night.... State troopers had to cover us by aiming at the men in the street just to tell them, “Don’t think of doing a smash and grab and killing this guy for the car.”



As long as he's in a confessional mood, Williams might as well admit that he didn't see "a lot of people shooting at people to make dead bodies," nor would people have killed him for his car if he hadn't been surrounded by feds—none of which appeared in his [original reporting](#). The New York Times ([9/29/05](#)) cited a state medical officials' tally that "six or seven deaths appear to have been the result of homicides" in the wake of the storm. As the New Orleans Times Picayune ([9/26/05](#)) put it in a Pulitzer Prize-winning story a month after Katrina:

As the fog of warlike conditions in Hurricane Katrina's aftermath has cleared, the vast majority of reported atrocities committed by evacuees have turned out to be false, or at least unsupported by any evidence, according to key military, law enforcement, medical and civilian officials in positions to know.... Four weeks after the storm, few of the widely reported atrocities have been backed with evidence. The piles of bodies never materialized, and soldiers, police officers and rescue personnel on the front lines say that although anarchy reigned at times and people suffered unimaginable indignities, most of the worst crimes reported at the time never happened.

Or perhaps Williams would like to withdraw his remark (9/27/13; FAIR Action Alert, [9/30/13](#)) that Iran was "suddenly claiming they don't want nuclear weapons"—and acknowledge that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (NBC Nightly News, 7/28/08) had told him personally in an interview five years earlier: "We are not working to manufacture a bomb. We don't believe in a nuclear bomb." And that that was a repetition of what Ahmadinejad (NBC Nightly News, 9/19/06) had told him two years before that: "We have said on numerous occasions that our activities are for peaceful purposes.... We are against the atomic bomb."

Williams could also make clear that when he relayed claims (4/2/03; Media Beat, [7/9/07](#)) that the invasion of Iraq was "the cleanest war in all of military history," that was [total nonsense](#). Or that when he said that in Iraq, "the civilian toll is thought to range from 17,000 to nearly 20,000 dead and beyond" (3/18/05; Action Alert, [3/21/05](#)), the best available estimate (Lancet, 10/29/04) was that 100,000 civilians had already died.

And despite what Williams claimed on March 8, 2005 (Extra!, [6/05](#)), the invasion did not actually spark a wave of democratization in the Middle East that made "even the harshest critics of President Bush...admit maybe he's right about freedom's march around the globe." Nor did George W. Bush provide "an example of presidential leadership that will be taught in American schools for generations to come."

He might want to clear that up.

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