

CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE:  
**THE IRAQ WAR AND THE MEDIA**

*A Diary of Claims and Counterclaims*

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## INTRODUCTION

IPI monitored press freedom violations and other media-related stories during the war in Iraq, 18 March-14 April 2003. We have compiled reports from news agencies, statements made by press freedom organisations and other sources in this document, which takes the form of a diary. Based upon the information provided, we conclude our findings with regard to the threats posed to press freedom in the present and in future conflicts.

More than 3,000 journalists covered the Iraq War as war correspondents, more than have covered any war in the past. At least 15 journalists and media workers died while covering the war.

On 3 March, the US Armed Forces announced that "About 800 members of the press - including 20 percent from non-U.S. media - will be assigned slots in specific ground units, aviation units, ships and headquarters throughout the combat zone. They will remain 'embedded' with those units as long as they wish and are supposed to have what these Pentagon ground rules describe as 'minimally restrictive' access to U.S. forces throughout their stay." Eventually, around 150 reporters were embedded with British forces, 660 with US forces.

The assignment of journalists stretched across seven countries in the Gulf region and at least 50 cities. The *BBC* sent 200 of its staff to the region – its largest ever assignment. *CNN* sent a similar number. *ITN* sent several dozen reporters, and the major US networks – *CBS*, *NBC* and *ABC* – reportedly had 500 staff between them in Kuwait alone. *Reuters* assigned around 140 journalists to cover the conflict in text, TV and news pictures. 55 journalists and photographers from British national newspapers joined the Ministry-of-Defence embedded pool, with a further 120 "floating" in northern Iraq, Kuwait and Jordan. The *New York Times* sent 30 people to the region.

In a nod to the war industry, the "Hub", a mobile production facility set up by UK broadcasters, was in operation and sent all the footage from the embedded crews. Reporters collated their reports to send them via satellite trucks in the desert. The latest video phones,

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capable of providing high-quality digital images, were made available to reporters. The list of equipment used to cover the war was vast – bullet-proof vests, armoured land rovers, self-inoculation kits, chemical and biological warfare suits, Kevlar helmets, gas masks and even generators were all part of the inventory. *CNN* sent 500 people on hostile-environment courses costing 2,500 GBP per head. *SKY* spent 500,000 GBP on similar training and equipment. Both *SKY* and the *BBC* revealed that their budget for covering the war was “several millions.” *CNN* was rumoured to have invested \$1 billion in reporting on this war. It was estimated that the media would be carrying around \$15 million in cash to pay its way to Baghdad.

The Israeli media was banned from Kuwait, the ban preventing even foreign journalists based in Kuwait from passing information on to the Jewish state.

In contrast to the 1991 Gulf war, Arab viewers now had three broadcasters to turn to for news which some said was packaged to appeal to regional fury at the US-British invasion. The networks – Dubai-based *Al Arabiya*, Qatar’s *Al-Jazeera* and *Abu Dhabi TV* – had big operations in Iraq that broke news with footage and reports which were picked up by other news agencies and household names like *CNN* and the *BBC*. Precise figures are not known, but it was estimated that at least 100 million people had access to satellite networks that carry more credibility than the region’s state-run media. Experts said that some of the Arab networks appeared to be treating the war as a conflict between the West and the Arab world, and often deliberately blurred the line between objective and subjective reporting. It is alleged by some that *Al-Jazeera*, one of the only networks that had an office in Baghdad long before the war started, was purposely airing Iraqi propaganda to win the ratings war. “We show news. We don’t have an agenda,” said *Al-Jazeera* news editor.

*Al-Alam* (The World), a Tehran-based Arabic television news station opposed to the US-led invasion of Iraq, drew increasing numbers of viewers in Baghdad, where it offered an alternative to the government’s official propaganda on Iraqi state television. *Al-Alam* broadcasts on terrestrial air-waves, allowing Iraqis to watch the latest news. Satellite dishes were banned in Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, and Iraqi state television only broadcasted heavily censored news reports and towed the official government line, showing military spokesmen

and featuring nationalist and pro-Saddam songs. *Al-Alam* provided a news bulletin every hour round the clock, and hosted on its talk-shows dissidents and exiles opposed to President Saddam Hussein. It carried international agency reports and footage, including extensive clips of wounded Iraqi civilians in hospitals or lying dead in the streets. The coverage of the war operated under the slogan “War for Control,” and portrayed US and British troops as invaders.

## **JOURNALIST AND MEDIA WORKER DEATH TOLL**

1. **Paul Moran:** 22 March, Gerdigo Checkpoint, Halabja, freelance cameraman on assignment for the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*
2. **Terry Lloyd:** 22 March, Southern Iraq, Basra, *ITV News* correspondent
3. **Gaby Rado:** 30 March, Northern Iraq, Sulaimaniya, *Channel 4* correspondent
4. **Kaveh Golestan:** 2 April, Kifri, freelance cameraman on assignment for *BBC*
5. **Michael Kelly:** 4 April, Baghdad Airport, editor at large of *Atlantic Monthly*, columnist with the *Washington Post*; the first embedded journalist to die in the war
6. **Kamran Abdurazaq Muhamed:** 6 April, Mosul, *BBC* translator
7. **David Bloom:** 6 April, Baghdad, embedded *NBC* correspondent
8. **Christian Liebig:** 7 April, Baghdad, *Focus* magazine (Germany) reporter
9. **Julio Anguita Parrado:** 7 April, Baghdad, *El Mundo* correspondent
10. **Tarek Ayoub:** 8 April, Baghdad, *Al-Jazeera* cameraman
11. **Taras Protsyuk:** 8 April, Baghdad, *Reuters* cameraman and journalist
12. **José Cuoso:** 8 April, Baghdad, *Telecinco* (Spain) cameraman
13. Iraqi interpreter (name as yet unknown): 12 April, Baghdad, *The Sun* (Malaysia), *New Straits Times*, *Malaysian State Television*
14. **Mario Podesta:** 14 April, Baghdad, *America TV* (Argentina) reporter
15. **Veronica Cabrera:** 14 April, Baghdad, *America TV* camerawoman

## **JOURNALISTS MISSING**

1. **Fred Nerac:** *ITN* cameraman - Missing since 22 March
2. **Hussein Othmann:** *ITN* translator - Missing since 22 March

## **IRAQ WAR AND MEDIA DIARY**

**Tuesday, 18 March 2003**

*Having presented Iraqi President Saddam Hussein with an ultimatum to leave the country or face war, US President George W. Bush warned journalists to leave Baghdad “immediately” ahead of the attack. Baghdad was considered a more dangerous place to be for journalists than it was at the start of the first Gulf War, as the Iraqi capital had now become a primary military objective of US forces. Journalists operating in the area faced the risk of being taken hostage or falling victim to possible civil unrest that may erupt. ABC and NBC teams left Baghdad in a rush.*

Major US TV networks, including CBS, ABC, NBC, and the cable networks CNN, Fox News Network and MSNBC agreed to cooperate and to share video footage in the first 24 hours of war. This act of solidarity had been in evidence only once before, namely in the aftermath of the 11 September terrorist attacks. The Fox News correspondent, **Greg Palkot**, was expelled from Baghdad in February after the USA expelled the state-owned Iraqi News Agency INA’s correspondent Mohammad Hassan Allawi, assigned to the United Nations, after accusing him of activities “considered harmful to US national security”.

Fox would get its access to news through Sky, its British affiliate satellite and cable network. The agreement applied to video feed only, and not to the correspondents, nor to footage shot by other British partners, such as the BBC or ITN.

CNN spokeswoman **Megan Mahoney** said that CNN and other western news organisations were seeking permission from the Iraqi government to allow their reporters to do their jobs outside the Iraqi Ministry of Information building in central Baghdad, where they had been required to base their broadcasts. The building later became a target of US attacks.

**Wednesday, 19 March 2003**

*The US named 30 countries which were prepared to be publicly associated with the US action against Iraq. In a press conference Secretary of State Colin Powell said, "We now have a coalition of the willing that includes some 30 nations." United States-led coalition forces in the Gulf took up battle positions for an invasion of Iraq. Huge convoys had been moving across the Kuwaiti desert towards Iraq, as President George W Bush's deadline for Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq by 0100 GMT on Thursday approached. Amid dramatic scenes in the House of Commons, Prime Minister Tony Blair won Commons backing to send UK forces into battle with Saddam Hussein - but also suffered a major backbench rebellion from within his own Labour party. Opponents of the use of force against Iraq, notably Germany and France - restated their objections at a meeting of the UN Security Council in New York. UN chief weapons inspector Hans Blix in a briefing to the Security Council expressed "sadness" that it had not been possible to produce the assurances needed about Iraq's arsenal. The secretary general of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, said military action against Iraq would be in breach of international law.*

Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) called on the United States not to obstruct the media in its reporting on the war in Iraq. The organisation was concerned that the US military might censor those journalists officially "embedded", and others working independently that were not to be protected. Warnings by the US military and emphasised by the White House that journalists who chose not to be incorporated into US military operations would be in danger, induced RSF to ask for a guarantee that independent journalists would be permitted to do their job freely and safely, and that they would receive adequate access to military information. As military unit commanders retained the final word on whether something may be reported or not by the embedded journalists, US officials were also asked not to enforce these rules too strictly. RSF also called on the US to avoid targeting the transmitters of Iraqi radio stations and media offices, including those used to broadcast propaganda.

The International Press Institute (IPI) published a press release concerning the US-led "Coalition of the Willing", in which IPI condemned the inclusion of countries deeply prejudicial to press freedom in the coalition for the impending war against Iraq.



According to media reports, US State Department officials had identified 30 countries that lent their support to the war in Iraq - a so-called "coalition of the willing" whose sole criterion for inclusion was that the country wanted to be publicly associated with the idea that Iraq is immediately disarmed.

The list included: Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Azerbaijan, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, Britain and Uzbekistan. Based on the comments of State Department officials, an additional 15 countries, while willing to lend their support to the conflict, wished to remain anonymous.

Commenting on the list, IPI said, "This is more a list of the 'coalition of the sinning' rather than of 'the willing'. It contains many governments that have done their utmost to suppress and stifle the independent media in their countries. They should not even be mentioned in the same breath as the other democratic countries named on the same list who continue to espouse the principles of a free press. Moreover, at a time when the United States and Great Britain are promising to introduce democracy to post-war Iraq, it is troubling to see them aligned with so many authoritarian states."

Regarding the wider implications of such an alliance, including governments exhibiting flagrant and grave violations of press freedom, IPI stated, "This coalition appears similar to that created in the War against Terrorism. By lining up with such countries, the United States and Great Britain are not only damaging their own human rights records but also explicitly condoning the actions of these countries. It is extremely damaging for democratic countries to be seen acting in concert with repressive regimes and it will only serve to create the impression that Western countries are prepared to jettison human rights when it is expedient to do so."

#### **Day 1: Thursday, 20 March 2003**

*At 0534 local time (0234 GMT), the start of the US-led campaign to topple Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was marked by heavy explosions that rocked the capital, Baghdad. According to US*

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*officials 2000-pound (900-kilogram) precision-guided bombs were dropped from F-117 Nighthawk stealth fighter-bombers. More than 40 Tomahawk cruise missiles were also fired from six US Navy vessels, stationed in the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf.*

As cable and broadcast networks began their coverage of the war against Iraq, returns showed that in the competition among the three major American cable news networks, *Fox News Channel* had been granted the early victory, claiming an average of 5.8 million total viewers between Wednesday and Thursday, as compared to 5 million for *CNN* and 2.3 million for *MSNBC*. Cable and broadcast networks agreed to extend for 24 hours an agreement to share their footage from Baghdad. Reporters like *CNN*'s medical correspondent **Sanjay Gupta** in the Kuwaiti desert, and *Fox News Channel*'s **William LaJeunesse**, were sighted frequently on air. Much of the reporting was done with satellite or video phones, which made possible a kind of mobile reporting that was not technologically feasible in the last Gulf conflict. *Reuters* reported that, "as the war began to accelerate, the networks conceded what many had already suspected, that their embedded reporters were not completely free to say what they liked." *ABC*'s **Peter Jennings** said of the embedment procedure: "Our reporters do not say things on air that they do not clear with their local commanders." **Dan Rather** of *CBS* added "the essence of a free and democratic country is that citizens are entitled to information that might irritate them, in response to criticism that networks should not report news like Iraq's requests for assistance from the UN Security Council." **Geraldo Rivera** was on location, as was Iran Contra scandal figurehead **Colonel Oliver North**, both reporting for *Fox News Channel*.

### **Day 2: Friday, 21 March 2003**

*Bombs rained down on the Iraqi capital, as well as on Mosul and Kirkuk, as the US unleashed what it calls its "shock and awe" strategy. US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said the scale of the assault was intended to show the Iraqis that Saddam Hussein was finished. US-led ground forces advanced about 160 kilometres (100 miles) into Iraq, moving towards the second city of Iraq, Basra. The advance on the city came after US Marines reached Iraq's only deep-water port at Umm Qasr in the south-east. According to*

*Admiral Sir Michael Boyce, "Umm Qasr has been overwhelmed by the US Marines and now is in coalition hands."*

Iraqi officials expelled the US news network *CNN* from the capital, Baghdad. Correspondents **Nic Robertson** and **Rym Brahimi**, as well as producer **Ingrid Formanek** and cameraman **Brian Puchaty**, were ordered to leave the country and departed in the evening for Jordan. *CNN* did not immediately release a comment about the reason for the expulsion. Meanwhile, the four-person *CNN* crew that Iraqi officials expelled arrived safely in Jordan on Saturday afternoon. Iraqi officials had complained that the network was "worse than the American administration," according to *CNN* reporter **Nic Robertson**.

### **Day 3: Saturday, 22 March 2003**

*The US military said the vanguard of the coalition force was now beyond the city of Nasiriya, after taking control of two key crossing points on the Euphrates river and the nearby airfield of Tallil. Iraqi TV reported fighting with US troops on Saturday evening near the town of Najaf, 160 kilometres (100 miles) south of Baghdad. Despite coalition claims that up to 2,000 Iraqi soldiers had surrendered, American and British troops in and around both Basra and Nasiriya continued to meet stiff resistance in some areas.*

**Paul Moran**, an Australian freelance reporter for the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)*, was killed by an alleged Kurdish suicide bomber in Iraqi Kurdistan. The attack took place at a checkpoint outside the village of Khormal, close to the Iranian border. According to RSF, "the journalists were waiting to enter the village to talk to refugees, when a taxi appeared behind them and exploded." The area is allegedly a stronghold of the Kurdish Islamist group, Ansar al-Islam, and had been attacked by US missiles the previous evening. It is not known whether the car bomb was aimed at journalists in the area. *ABC* correspondent **Eric Campbell**, who accompanied Paul Moran, was wounded in the attack.

A group of three journalists, including a photographer and a reporter from *Newsweek* magazine, were caught in gunfire on the way to Basra. No one was injured and they were escorted away from the scene by US forces.

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News reports emanated that three *ITN* journalists went missing during the allied incursion around Basra. *Reuters* reported that **Terry Lloyd**, the leading journalist of the British *ITN* team that went missing, was suspected, with his colleagues, of being the victim of US-British gunfire in Iman Anas near Basra, south Iraq. Cameraman **Fred Nerac**, a Frenchman, and **Hussein Othman**, a Lebanese translator, were also missing and were feared dead. **Daniel Demoustier**, a French cameraman travelling with the same group, was injured and hospitalised. He appeared, visibly shaken, in an interview broadcast across the spectrum of western media outlets and confirmed Lloyd's death. Demoustier said that the television team had been fired upon after they were approached by a group of Iraqi soldiers who were attempting to surrender. The group was allegedly mistakenly fired upon by American troops. Another account stated the mishap as being the result of being caught in the crossfire launched by British troops. The circumstances of the attack still remain unclear.

**Terry Lloyd** was an award-winning journalist who had reported from Iraq, Cambodia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Notably, **Lloyd** had reported from Halabja in 1988 after President Saddam Hussein's forces launched a chemical weapons attack. "I am sustained that he died doing what he did best, at the peak of his powers and at a time when he was personally and professionally the happiest I have seen him," said **David Mannion**, editor of *ITV News*.

### **Day 4: Sunday, 23 March 2003**

*In what commanders called the "sharpest engagement" of the war so far, US Marines, battling Iraqi forces in and around the southern city of Nasiriya, reported at least six of their soldiers dead and 14 wounded. The US military also confirmed that a six-vehicle supply convoy was ambushed in the area by Iraqi troops, and that 12 of its personnel were missing. US General Abizaid described the broadcast of footage of dead and captured American soldiers, carried round the world by the Arabic television news channel Al-Jazeera, as "disgusting".*

RSF sharply criticised the US government for what it called an "insufficient" response to demands for a probe into the disappearance of the two journalists who went missing on the

previous day – French cameraman **Fred Nerac** and Lebanese interpreter **Hussein Othman**, both from the British television network *ITN*. RSF complained of a lack of respect for the victims in the replies sent by the Pentagon.

Amnesty International urged Iraq not to mistreat its US prisoners of war, and called on the media to respect the dignity of captives on both sides of the conflict. Iraqi state television aired interviews with five US soldiers captured in southern Iraq and showed the bloodied remains of eight of their comrades. US President George W. Bush reacted immediately, saying that any Iraqis who mistreated Americans would be treated as war criminals. Amnesty International declared that the captured soldiers should be afforded protections under the Geneva Convention and “should not be subjected to any form of torture or ill treatment.”

Iraqi officials expelled a Croatian free-lance journalist from Baghdad after he conducted a live interview with *CNN*, which had been banished from Iraq two days earlier. **Robert Valdec**, who had been in Baghdad for three weeks reporting for the *Croatian Commercial Network*, the *Serbian Independent Network*, the *Bosnian Independent Network*, and a variety of other Balkan news outlets, was reprimanded and told to leave the city after speaking on air with *CNN* from his hotel room on 22 March. According to Valdec, armed Iraqi officials arrived at his Baghdad hotel room within 20 minutes of the *CNN* interview. Valdec said he was not in the room at the time but could see the armed guards at his door from an adjacent room.

#### **Day 5: Monday, 24 March 2003**

*The US military commander, General Tommy Franks said there had been “rapid” and “dramatic” progress by coalition forces seeking to take control of Iraq. He also said that coalition forces had reached the holy city of Karabala. Iraqi elite Republican Guards between Karbala and Baghdad were subjected to sustained air attacks throughout Monday. Iraqi TV showed a videotape of two men it says were the crew of a US Apache helicopter forced down by Iraqi ground fire. White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said, “the United States has credible evidence that Russian companies have provided assistance of prohibited hardware to the Iraqi regime.”*

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The body of **Terry Lloyd** was being held in a Basra hospital under Iraqi control.

The British daily *The Independent* carried a news report with a warning from the Pentagon that urged “media restraint”, which gave as its reason that independent reporting increased the likelihood of casualties. More likely, however, as CPJ stated, was that the free relation of reporting and information was threatened under the standards imposed by “embedment”. “It is not possible to get a complete picture relying solely on embeds. The non-embedded reporters are able to interact with Iraqi civilians and people on the other side”, said CPJ.

*Newsday* reporter **Matt McAllester** and photographer **Moises Saman** went missing, according to CPJ. **Molly Bingham**, a freelance photographer, was also missing. There were reports that Iraqi officials took the three journalists from the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad, telling them they were being expelled from the country, allegedly because of visa problems. Some journalists in Baghdad reported that the journalists were put on buses headed for Damascus, Syria. Others said the bus was headed to Amman, Jordan.

The US daily *Newsday* appealed to the Red Cross and the Vatican for help in finding its two Baghdad-based journalists, the newspaper’s editor said. **Matt McAllester**, *Newsday*’s reporter and former Middle East Bureau Chief, alongside photographer **Moises Saman**, were last heard from on Monday, prior to a witness statement that they were rounded up with eight other foreign-based journalists for expulsion from Iraq. As the Vatican and the Red Cross had offices in Baghdad, all available channels were being used in order to locate and retrieve the journalists. Iraqi officials at the United Nations agreed to help locate the two men through official channels, as the team was accredited by the Iraqi Ministry of Information. Both are experienced in war-torn environments, having spent time covering the war in Afghanistan in 2001-2.

### **Day 6: Tuesday, 25 March 2003**

*The chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, General Richard Myers, acknowledged that bad weather was slowing down the advance, but*

vowed that it would not be stopped. However, the weather had not prevented US B-52 bombers from dropping huge payloads of bombs south of the capital, targeting the Medina division of the elite Republican Guards, digging in for what both sides agreed would probably be a decisive encounter. Major General Peter Wall, British chief of staff, said that it appeared an uprising had taken place in Basra, but that it was in its infancy and British troops were "keen to exploit its potential". From the outskirts of Basra, British troops bombarded Iraqi mortar positions in the city in an effort to support the uprising.

**Ali Montazeri**, an Iranian journalist and Tehran correspondent for the Arabic *LBC* satellite channel and the pan-Arab *al-Hayat* newspaper, went missing in the Faw peninsula. It was suspected by Lebanese *LBC* television that he had been arrested, although reasons were not forthcoming as to why that may have been the case. "We don't know who arrested him. If he was truly arrested by security forces, whose security forces? We have absolutely no information," an *LBC* source told *Reuters*. "I am trying to raise all the contacts we have in the region to try to know at least what his fate is, where he is now." It was believed that Montazeri was arrested after he crossed into Iraq from Iran to cover hostilities in Faw, which controls access from the Gulf to Iraq's coast. The possibility that Montazeri had been turned over to British forces could not be confirmed. *LBC/al-Hayat* had about 10 journalists in Iraq and an additional number in the Gulf, including some who were embedded with US and British forces and others working independently.

The New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) revoked the credentials of two reporters from the Qatar-based news channel *Al-Jazeera*. According to NYSE spokesman Ray Pellecchia, the press accreditation of *Al-Jazeera's* Ammar Shankari and his colleague Ramzi Shiber was cancelled on 24 March. Pellecchia denied that the move was related to *Al-Jazeera's* recent war coverage but confirmed that *Al-Jazeera* was the only news organisation that had its accreditation revoked. He added that they might be able to reapply. "We are deeply troubled by this development," said CPJ. "The timing of this action raises concerns that it may have been taken in retaliation for *Al-Jazeera's* coverage of the Gulf war. Any effort by NYSE to prevent journalists from doing their jobs because of their news organisation's editorial policy damages the NYSE's standing as a forum for the open exchange of news and information."

*Reuters* reported “a Florida-based Web hosting company knocked a small news site off-line after it posted controversial photos of captured American soldiers, stoking accusations that private firms are censoring free speech. For several hours, [www.Yellowtimes.org](http://www.Yellowtimes.org) was dark, carrying the message “Account for domain YellowTimes.org has been suspended.” Later in the day there was sporadic access. The move stoked fears that as more grisly images and accounts of war surfaced, independent news sites trying to establish a name for themselves were forced to tone down their coverage so as not to alienate readers and the companies that keep their sites alive.” Accordingly, **Erich Marquardt**, editor of *YellowTimes*, explained that “I think we were the first web site to show the images...But the site was down a few hours later, without any warning.” He went on to say that *Vortech Inc.*, an Orlando, Fla.-based Web hosting company, had first grounded the site on Sunday night after he posted six photos of American Prisoners of War taken from news footage first aired by *Al-Jazeera*. “No TV station in the US is allowing any dead US soldiers or POWs to be displayed and we will not either. We understand free press and all that but we don’t want someone’s family member to see them on some site. It is disrespectful, tacky and disgusting,” read the email explanation sent to **Marquardt**. *Reuters* also reported “small web-only news purveyors that promise a distinct brand of “unsanitised” news reporting are encountering more and more publishing constraints as their readership swells. Similarly, Israeli army censors said they were working with Web site publishers and the country’s ISPs to ensure that sensitive, war-related information, including the whereabouts of potential missile landings, was not published online.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) demanded a “full and immediate inquiry” into allegations that three foreign journalists were arrested, accused of espionage, beaten up and detained for 48 hours by US forces in Iraq on 25 March. The journalists, **Dan Scemama** of Israel’s *Channel 1 TV*, **Boaz Bismuth** of the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonot*, **Victor Silva** and **Louis de Castro** of *Radio Television Portugal* were travelling alongside American convoys but were not officially “embedded” with the troops. Relatives and colleagues said that the journalists were forced to stop on Tuesday because of sandstorms beside six tanks. They were advised by the Americans not to move because they would be impossible to identify in the dust. Early on Wednesday morning, they were then woken up by US soldiers at gunpoint, taken away and



accused of espionage. Accordingly, the reporters were told to lift their shirts and let down their pants to prove they were not carrying bombs. They were then kept in a closed jeep for 36 hours. The Portuguese journalist who asked to phone home was allegedly beaten; his bones were broken and he was later admitted to a hospital. One of the Israeli journalists was also beaten. *Yediot Aharonot* asked the Pentagon to help find the lost journalists. After 48 hours, a helicopter flew the reporters to an American military base in Kuwait, where they were returned their cell phones and released. The Sindicato dos Jornalistas, the IFJ affiliate in Portugal, protested over the incident. "This appears to be an outrageous failure of military discipline, and those responsible must be investigated," IFJ said.

The Newspaper Guild in the United States said it was also taking up the case with the Pentagon.

In a April 7 letter addressed to Gen. Tommy Franks, CPJ protested the incidents on 25 March concerning the mistreatment of the four journalists at the hands of US forces. The latter had accused the journalists of spying and detained them for more than 48 hours without food before flying them to a military base in Kuwait. In the letter CPJ described the incident as follows. "The journalists reported that men they believed to be military police ordered them to lie on the ground face down. Castro alleged that the police kicked the journalists' hands, kept them on the ground for more than 30 minutes, and accused them of being terrorists or spies. Their cameras, phones, and car were confiscated, and they were later forced to stay in their car for several hours. At one point, Castro asked the troops if the journalists could phone their families. In response, the soldiers threw him to the ground, placed their feet on his hands, neck, and back, and then one of the soldiers kicked him in the ribs. He was then handcuffed, brought near a truck in the troop encampment, and forced to sit on the ground before being returned to the group. Castro said a first lieutenant by the last name Shaw later apologised, saying, "Try to understand, my men are trained like dogs – they just know how to attack. No hard feelings. God bless you." When the journalists arrived in Kuwait, their material was returned to them and they were allowed to leave after several hours."

CPJ protested: "While we recognize that embedded journalists have been given special access to coalition troops, we are extremely

concerned by these reports of harassment and violence against independent journalists. As a non-partisan organization of journalists dedicated to defending press freedom worldwide, we call on you to launch an immediate and thorough investigation into these incidents and to make the findings public. We reiterate our call that U.S. troops allow journalists to fulfil their professional duties freely, without hindrance.”

**Day 7: Wednesday, 26 March 2003**

*At least fourteen civilians died and another thirty were injured in Baghdad when a shopping area was hit during an air raid by US-led coalition forces, according to the BBC. Two days later, BBC confirmed that at least 50 people had in fact died in the attack. US Marines came under sporadic guerrilla attack around Nasiriya, with Iraqi snipers firing at them from the cover of buildings, trees and bushes. Iraqi guerrilla tactics and sandstorms slowed the advance of US Marines south of Baghdad. US forces were halted again - this time at the town of Ash Shatrah, about 40 km north of the city of Nasiriya. US Marines also came under sporadic guerrilla attacks around Nasiriya. US Central Command in Qatar said coalition cruise missiles and bombs struck Iraq's main television station in addition to key telecommunications targets.*

**Steve Gorman** reported in a *Reuters* article that veteran war correspondent **Peter Arnett** was back in Baghdad reporting the US bombing of Iraq's capital, but not censored and not with *CNN* as he was 12 years ago. Arnett gained international fame and notoriety in 1991 by remaining in Baghdad with his *CNN* crew after other reporters had left at the outset of the Gulf War. A Pulitzer Prize winner for his reporting from Vietnam, Arnett was *CNN*'s man in Baghdad during the 1991 Gulf War, but left the network under a cloud four years ago in the fallout over the retracted documentary “Operation Tailwind.” The documentary alleged that the US military used the nerve gas *sarin* against American defectors in the Vietnam War. It was strongly denied by the Pentagon. *CNN* then fired him after 18 years of service. While *CNN* was expelled from Baghdad last week, Arnett remained one of the few broadcast correspondents still working there for US networks, reporting for *NBC* and its cable outlet *MSNBC*, which is linked to his current employer, National Geographic Explorer. “Of course it is ironic, particularly that *CNN* is

not here," he said in a call with a small group of reporters on Tuesday. "I do get a perverse pleasure out of it because, after all, CNN did dump me four years ago, I thought unfairly." "I think 'Tailwind' was almost a death blow to my career as a correspondent. I felt that being hit like that for 'Tailwind,' it was something I had to dig myself out of. And actually, in the four years since, I've been trying to find a way how best to redeem myself. About his role in Baghdad, he said: "They (The Iraqis) are requiring no censorship at all... There are no minders around us when we broadcast. I'm sitting here in the hotel and... we can talk on the phone freely." Although he assumed his calls were being monitored, Arnett said that at no time while in Baghdad had Iraqi officials questioned him about his telephone contacts or about the contents of his stories. Still, he said he and other correspondents in Baghdad worked under restrictions, being permitted only to transmit TV footage from Iraq's Ministry of Information building and expected to attend daily briefings by government officials. "The ministry has made it clear that if you do not attend those press briefings, they get very unhappy," he said. Having survived the "shock and awe" air assault on Baghdad unscathed – "it was thunderous, horrendous and frightening, but it was all half a mile away" – Arnett said his biggest worry was the ground invasion on its way. "The battle is coming right to the heart of Baghdad, so as far as I'm concerned the worst is yet to come," he said. "If it turns out to be a vicious battle here and many civilians are hurt, I don't think there will be much happiness about the Americans' arrival," he said.

In a letter dated 28 March to US Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, IPI strongly protested the 26 March air and missile strikes against the main Iraqi state-run television station by the US and UK allied forces. As a result of the attacks, the station was forced to stop broadcasting, but it was later able to return to normal programming. Replying to questions by reporters about the attacks, military officials apparently claimed that the attack had been instigated because the television station was part of a "command and control center." Military officials said that the television station was housed in "a key telecommunications vault" for satellite communications. IPI stated that, irrespective of these claims, the attacks on Iraqi television were an unwarranted violation of Article 52 of the Geneva Convention, which states that "Attacks shall be limited strictly to military objectives", and in flagrant breach of Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states it is the right of

everyone to "seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." IPI said that the inevitable result of these attacks is to blur the distinction between civilian and military activities during conflict, thus making it more likely that in the future the destruction of a country's news-making facilities will become a central military aim in any conflict. If this were to happen, the media would face deliberate targeting from either side and the risks to journalists would be greatly increased.

In a 16 May 2003 reply to IPI's protest, David Howard, Head of Communication Planning at the Royal Ministry of Defence, wrote: "You suggest that attacking Iraqi Television was an unwarranted violation of Article 52 of the Geneva Convention which states that attacks should be limited to military objectives. International law defines such attacks as those which, by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action. It is common knowledge that Saddam's regime used the TV network for military command and control purposes. The network thus became a legitimate military target. . . Finally, I can assure you that the UK fully supports the free press and all that it stands for."

IFJ said that the US/UK bomb and missile attack on Iraqi television was "an attempt at censorship and may have breached the Geneva Conventions." "We have every reason to believe this is an act of censorship against media that US politicians and military strategists don't like," IFJ said. It added that there was no military justification for the raid, which was a timely reminder of NATO's bombing of *Radio Television Serbia* during the Kosovo war three years ago, which left 16 media workers dead.

Amnesty International suggested the raid may even constitute a war crime, stating that "the bombing of a television station simply because it is being used for the purposes of propaganda is unacceptable and illegal under international law...attacking a civilian object and carrying out a disproportionate attack are war crimes".

Human Rights Watch chimed in, stating that, "although stopping enemy propaganda may serve to demoralize the Iraqi population and to undermine the government's political support, neither purpose offers the "concrete and direct" military advantage necessary under international law to make civilian broadcast facilities a legitimate military target."

RSF condemned the US bombing of Iraq's television station and accused Washington of violating the Geneva Convention by targeting it. "Military bombing must be limited to strictly military targets...The Americans cite the Geneva conventions when it comes to pictures of US Prisoners of War in Iraq but then immediately forget them when they bomb a TV building which is civil property and therefore protected under those conventions," RSF said in a statement. "In 2001, the US army bombed the offices of *Al-Jazeera* in Kabul. It should be careful not to give the impression of routinely targeting media that oppose it," it added.

*Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)* reported that American media had a distinctly different perspective on matters: prior to the bombing, *Fox News Channel's* **John Gibson** wondering aloud on air that not enough concern was being shown concerning the targeting of Iraqi journalists: "should we take Iraqi TV off the air? Should we put one down the stove pipe there?", to which *Fox* colleague **Bill O'Reilly** agreed: "why haven't they taken out the Iraqi television towers yet?" **Andrea Mitchell** of *NBC Nightly News* provided the insight that "the television headquarters is in a civilian area. Bombing it would infuriate the Arab world," without referring to the Geneva Conventions. Reporters, such as *CNN's* **Aaron Brown**, displayed satisfaction after the facility was struck, and *CNN* correspondent **Nic Robertson** defended the attack by stating that bombing the TV station would "take away a very important tool from the Iraqi leadership – that of showing their face and getting their message across to the Iraqi people, and really telling them they're still in control." *Fox's* **Gibson** even claimed credit for the bombing, suggesting that "*Fox's* criticism about allowing Saddam Hussein to talk to his citizens and lie to them has had an effect." Against the odds, Iraqi television began broadcasting verses from the Koran as usual on air at around 9 AM (0600 GMT), and state radio was also broadcasting, before Information Minister **Mohammad Saeed Al Sahaf** took to the stand to announce Iraq's success in defending herself and to take questions from foreign journalists.

*FAIR* raised the issue that reporters should be sceptical about the Pentagon's claims concerning "precision bombing." Reports such as that of Pentagon correspondent **Jim Miklaszewski** routinely included comments such as "More than a thousand bombs and missiles were dropped on Baghdad (in the first two evenings of the war), three times the entire number from the entire Gulf War. And this time, they're all precision-guided, deadly accurate, designed to

kill only the targets, not innocent civilians.” *FAIR* pointed out that when allegations were made about civilian deaths and destruction from the bombing, they were treated with extreme scepticism by the US media and were attributed to manufactured items by Iraqi officials. “Yet it is plain that some bombs are going off course. Syrian civilians in a bus in Northern Iraq were killed in one attack, two cruise missiles have landed in Turkey and several missiles have reportedly hit south-western Iran,” *FAIR* said. Reporters working from within Baghdad supported this claim. **John Daniszewski** of the *Los Angeles Times*, for instance, reported that “the deaths and injuries from misdirected or errant bombs, or from shrapnel and fragments that spray into nearby homes even when the munitions find their intended target, are making more and more people believe that the United States is heedless of the Iraqi public.” *FAIR* also expressed concerns about *Associated Press*’ interchangeable usage of the terms “pro-troops” and “pro-war”, a practice it said distorts the views of anti-war demonstrators and “contributes to the media marginalization of the peace movement.” Correspondingly, *AP* used “supporting the troops”, meant by the peace movement to imply bringing them home out of harm’s way, as a synonym for “supporting the war”, and used the “pro-troops” epithet as a shorthand to describe rallies that are explicitly pro-war events. A point in case was the utterance by *CNN*’s **Jeff Flock** on 22 March: “Perhaps you see police arrayed in riot gear keeping apart the pro-troop rally and the anti-war rally.”

It was alleged by Czech security services that Iraqi agents plotted an attack on the Prague headquarters of US-run *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* to halt its Arabic-language broadcasts to Iraq. “One of the scenarios was also to carry out a terrorist attack,” said Jiri Ruzek, director of the Czech Secret Services, without giving any further details. This represented the first time a top Czech official had publicly confirmed rumours that *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, financed by the US Congress, may have been the target of an attack. Ruzek added that Iraqi intelligence activity in the capital of Prague was the reason underlying the expulsion of five Iraqi diplomats in the past week, leaving only one at the Iraqi embassy.

The British daily, *The Guardian*, reported that “subscriptions to the Arabic language television network *Al-Jazeera* have doubled since the war on Iraq began last week, signalling a significant demand for an alternative to western media coverage. The broadcaster said it

had signed up to 4 million subscribers in Europe since last Wednesday.” This indicated a large shift in public opinion away from accepting the increasingly official coverage of the war portrayed in the western media. Plans for an English-language version of the increasingly popular and trusted *Al-Jazeera* channel were reportedly also underway in order to redress the imbalance of news interpretation in the western world. Notably, it had drawn little more than 100,000 subscribers in the United States.

*Al-Jazeera* received an award for its resistance to censorship from the British-based *Index on Censorship* for its “apparent independence in a region where much of the media is state-run.” *Al-Jazeera* has been credited with a reputation for credible news, and, as *Index* explained, “that same quality has enraged Arab governments and the United States.” The United States has accused the channel of inflaming anti-American sentiment in the Middle East, particularly by carrying the speeches of Osama Bin Laden, widely blamed for masterminding the 11 September 2001 attacks on the USA, before they can be processed by State Department operatives for media airing. In related news, *Al-Jazeera* defended its controversial coverage on the war and demanded the United States come to its aid in the name of a free press. “There has to be a national effort to protect the freedom of the press even more...we appeal to authorities to pay attention to this,” said *Al-Jazeera* spokesman **Jihad Ballout**, as US Secretary of State Colin Powell countered that “*Al-Jazeera* has an editorial line and a way of presenting news that appeals to the Arab public. They watch it and they magnify the minor successes of the Iraqi regime. They tend to portray our efforts in a negative light” in an interview with *National Public Radio*. He appeared on *Al-Jazeera* for an exclusive interview a few days later.

#### **Day 8: Thursday, 27 March 2003**

*Baghdad came under renewed bombardment from coalition war planes, with powerful blasts reported in both the centre and outskirts of the city. UK raids destroyed transmitters in Basra, taking state radio and television of the air and effectively cutting off communications with Baghdad. US troops and members of Iraq's Fedayeen units fought a major battle in the town of Samawah, the site of a crucial bridge on the way to Baghdad. Separately, hundreds*

*of American troops parachuted into northern Iraq in the first big US deployment north of Baghdad - which one unnamed US defence official called "the beginning of the northern front". The British military conquered the local radio and television stations in Basra, a city of over one million, despite fierce resistance from Iraqi troops and civilians.*

UNESCO urged all parties in the war to ensure the safety of journalists and the free flow of information. **Koichiro Matsuura**, UNESCO Director-General, said that journalists working in areas of armed conflict should be considered civilians under international law. "In a war that also includes a fierce media battle, the task of seeking independent information is especially vital if world public opinion is to avoid being the target of manipulation and propaganda," Matsuura said.

The bodies of two dead soldiers that were shown by *Al-Jazeera* were declared to be British, as the US Defence Ministry declared itself "shocked and appalled" that the Iraqis had released the pictures, and urged media organisations to refrain from becoming "tools for Iraqi propaganda" by showing them to domestic audiences. British Minister of Defence Geoff Hoon added that the airing was a "flagrant and disgraceful breach of the Geneva conventions". The headline carried by London daily *The Times* summed up the popular interpretation of events: "British bodies lie in the dust as mob exults".

The US State Department broadly accused the Arab media of misconstruing events and of being "inflammatory" in its reporting, and insisted that Washington get a "fair treatment." The example that State Department spokesman **Richard Boucher** gave was of the missile that hit the market place in Baghdad on the previous day that killed at least 15 people. Despite the obvious deduction that this may have been a US missile, the State Department tried to diffuse such notions by suggesting that it was in fact an Iraqi missile that hit the marketplace. As US Brigadier General **Vincent Brooks** told reporters that Iraq was "firing old anti-aircraft missiles without radar guidance", he suggested that it "might" have been a deliberate attack by Iraq on its own people. The Pentagon put considerable efforts into suggesting that it was waging a "humanitarian" war, and that it should have been considered that such revelations were naturally highly damaging to its projected profile of "humanitarian benevolence".



*Al-Jazeera* was accused by State Department officials of “biased” and “inflammatory” material as it aired Iraqi television footage of US Prisoners of War. With regard to *Al-Jazeera* having had two of its reporters barred from making live reports from the New York Stock Exchange floor in the previous days, the NYSE stated that, “credentials were only for networks that provided “responsible” coverage.” *Al-Jazeera* was also denied a request to broadcast live from New York’s Nasdaq exchange. The station had obtained rare interviews with US Secretary of State **Colin Powell** and US National Security Adviser **Condoleezza Rice**. Britain’s top Gulf commander Air Marshal **Brian Burridge** added his ire to the fire by accusing *Al-Jazeera* of making “injudicious editorial choices” and warned, “it could be playing into Baghdad’s hands.” *Al-Jazeera* correspondent **Jawad Omari** fired back that his network “was an independent news-gathering organisation committed to showing the human cost of the US-led war.”

*Reuters* reported a pronounced support for Iraqi resistance efforts on behalf of neighbouring Iran’s official media. Despite the war of enmity that persists between the two countries since the war of 1980-88, in which more than a million people died, coupled with a sustained popular hatred towards Saddam Hussein’s regime, Iran’s media openly displayed the entrenched anti-Americanism of the country and even went as far as to back the defensive efforts of the Ba’ath party regime. It is worth noting that despite the reforming efforts of President Mohammad Khatami, state radio and television continue to be run by the anti-American conservatives who wield power in Iran. Despite Iran’s official policy of “active neutrality” on the war, war coverage on state television is marked by a logo reading “War of Dominance”, and the broadcast media openly refer to the United States and Britain as the “aggressors” in the campaign. The public seemed divided on this development; mass demonstrations took place in the streets of Tehran in support of Saddam Hussein, but more guarded observers commented that “Iranian television has become like Iraqi television. Its reports about the war obviously take the side of the Iraqi regime”. The clerical establishment in Iran fears encirclement by pro-US countries and sees the current campaign as an effort to control the Middle East. It also fears being next on the US government’s “axis of evil” target list of regimes to be overthrown by military aggression.

*Reuters* reported that protests that passed through New York's 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, in which 200 people were arrested for various acts of civil disobedience, were partially due to an antagonism towards the American media coverage of the war, with protesters accusing "the corporate media of making profits off the war". It was also reported that complaints were made by anti-war advocacy groups that they were being blocked from airing anti-war advertisements on broadcast media dominated by giant corporations. The online advocacy group *TrueMajority.org* correspondingly stated that placing ads in the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal* had not been problematic, but that television networks such as *CNN*, *Fox*, *MTV* and even cable television *Comedy Central* were refusing to run spots featuring actress and notable war opponent **Susan Sarandon** discussing the war with government-aligned "experts", alongside spots in which young Americans discussed their opposition to the war with acclaimed documentary maker **Barbara Kopple**. With television off limits to war opponents, the anti-war message was also becoming correspondingly more difficult to hear on radio, where stations are increasingly owned by large corporations such as Clear Channel Communications. *New York Times* columnist **Paul Krugman** intoned that Clear Channel, which controls around 1200 US radio stations, was overtly helping to organise grass-roots demonstrations in favour of the war and was emphatically against the anti-war voices. Accordingly, Clear Channel organised a protest at which a tractor "smashed CDs, tapes and videos of the Dixie Chicks, after the Grammy-winning country music group told an audience in London it was embarrassed that Bush was from Texas." Besides calling Krugman's comments "pure fiction", Clear Channel spokeswoman **Lisa Dollinger** was unavailable for comment.

Correspondent **Phil Smucker** of the *Boston Christian Science Monitor* was expelled to Kuwait from Iraq by coalition forces for allegedly "endangering" the allied mission. The reason given was an interview Smucker gave to *CNN* last Wednesday in which he allegedly divulged military secrets pertaining to coalition location and strategy. Pentagon spokesman **Tim Blair** stated that Smucker had placed the US Marines at considerable risk. Smucker also reported in Cairo for the British *Daily Telegraph*.

**Day 9: Friday, 28 March 2003**

*The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution clearing the way for the oil-for-food humanitarian aid programme in Iraq to resume. US military spokesmen at Coalition Central Command said air strikes and cruise missiles had taken out a major communication centre and command-and-control facilities in Baghdad. Thousands more US troops moved in, backed by heavy artillery, to join the battle for the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah. On this day, the Muslim Holy day, the United States declared that a B-2 Spirit "Stealth" bomber had knocked out a major link in Iraq's communication network, the al-Alawiya civilian communications centre, with precision guided missiles in a pre-dawn raid over Baghdad. US missiles also hit government offices, including the ministries of information, planning and foreign affairs.*

RSF called on all parties to the Iraqi war to help find nine journalists who were missing in the war zone. Some of them had been missing since the beginning of the conflict. "Confusion on the battlefield and the ongoing fighting must not be used as an excuse for Iraqi and US/British forces to ignore the safety of reporters and cameramen who have come to cover a war that has already cost lives among the media," said RSF. It also reported that a cameraman from *Al-Jazeera* disappeared in Basra, after the four-man crew he was with came under fire from British tanks. The crew was in a civilian vehicle preparing to film food relief being distributed by Iraqi authorities when the British tanks opened fire. Three of the crew members managed to escape by foot, but the cameraman hid to preserve his equipment. The cameraman, **Akil Abdel Reda** was later found to have been held for 12 hours by US troops.

The two *ITN* crew members, **Fred Nerac** and **Hussein Othman**, who were with deceased journalist **Terry Lloyd** were still missing. Since 22 March, Syrian reporter **Wael Awad**, Lebanese cameraman **Talal Fawzi al-Masri** and Lebanese technician **Ali Hassan Safa**, all working for the *Al-Arabiya* television station, are missing. The station lost contact with them as they were passing between Al-Zubair and Nassiriyah. The Pentagon professed not to know of any journalists killed or wounded in the area. *Al-Arabiya* was not sure whether or not the journalists were embedded with the US army 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, as the Central Command military headquarters in Qatar said that they were not. However, they may have been accredited by

the army in Kuwait. The station broadcasted pictures of them almost incessantly in the hope that Iraqis would come forward with news about them.

The two *Newsday* journalists, **Moises Saman** and **Matthew McAllester**, were seen for the last time at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad on 24 March. Apparently, the Iraqi authorities were preparing to deport them and other foreign journalists for entering the country only on tourist visas, according to an Italian journalist. Several special correspondents in Baghdad said the authorities had wanted to expel them by road in a bus to Damascus. Freelance French-American photographer **Molly Bingham**, reported to be among the deported, was also missing.

RSF sent a representative to Iraq to investigate the amount of press freedom allowed to the hundreds of reporters embedded with US army units first-hand. **Tania Church-Much**, the head of RSF Canada and a journalist at *Global Television Network* of Canada, was sent to Iraq with a Germany-based US army unit, to report on how “embedding” was working. “No-one is questioning the merits of this embedding policy, which is giving journalists far greater access than they had in the 1991 Gulf War, but there are some controls that we aren’t happy about,” said RSF. Despite the frontline access, reporters attached to the invading troops had to work under restrictions such as observing embargoes and limits on certain images.

Concerned about the safety of its Baghdad-based journalists, Greek government spokesman **Christos Protopapas** asked reporters attending his daily news briefing to urge their 16 colleagues reporting in Iraq to return to Greece. “I ask you to convince your colleagues to leave in order to protect their safety, even their lives,” he said. He said that Greece’s press ministry had already contacted Greek journalists in Baghdad and had assured them that they would be provided with a safe return journey. “Many of them refused to leave,” he added. “I understand that they are performing significant work, and we congratulate them for that, but I think human life is above everything.” Protopapas said that the move was a Greek initiative concerning only Greek journalists and that he was not aware of similar efforts being performed in other countries.

Journalists and analysts lamented the dearth in correct, verifiable

reporting: "If the war spin is to be believed, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein may be dead, Iraq may have executed British prisoners of war while an Iraqi missile could be responsible for smashing up a crowded Baghdad marketplace. The reality may be quite different," reported journalist **Merissa Marr** for *Reuters*. "Each day, claims and counter-claims are flying from both sides in the Iraq conflict as Washington, London and Baghdad battle for airtime in a fierce war of words and images. In what is being branded the television war, media strategy is proving just as important as military tactics as Saddam, US President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair scramble to sway public opinion," she added. The result was a trail of confusion, with claims of dramatic developments reversing within hours. "With 24-hour rolling television news, often there isn't time for considered opinion and reporters are falling prey to blunders and propaganda. Take the fate of Umm Qasr. The southern Iraqi port fell numerous times according to reports from the frontline last Sunday. But the key entry point into Iraq was not firmly secured by US-led forces until Tuesday. Any modern war is a media war too. Not just for the ears and minds of Iraqi but for world opinion too," said **Jamie Cowling**, a research fellow at the Institute of Public Policy Research in London. "With all its capability and technology, western media in particular has fallen flat on its face," said Palestinian lawmaker and human rights advocate **Hanan Ashrawi**. "They have become monolithic, propagandistic and simplistic".

*BBC News* reported that websites of the *Al-Jazeera* television network came under attack by electronic hackers. So-called "service attacks" were launched against the websites, and visitor hijacks most notably happened courtesy of a group calling itself the "Freedom Cyber Force Militia", which sent visitors to different web-pages such as one emblazoned with an American flag and the inscription "God bless our troops" or, alternately, "Let Freedom Ring", and another featuring an American pornographic website. The attack constituted a vicious attack on press freedom and was indicative of western fears that they had lost the monopoly on news reporting. As the war began, *Al-Jazeera* overnight became the world's most sought after news resource in the world. As British *Al-Jazeera* journalist **Faisal Bodi** put it in an article in the British daily, *The Guardian*, "I do not mean to brag – people are turning to us simply because the western media coverage has been so poor. For although Doha is just a 15-minute drive from Central Command, the view of events could not be more different. Of the all the major global networks, *Al-Jazeera* has

been alone in proceeding from the premise that this war should be viewed as an illegal enterprise. It has broadcast the horror of the bombing campaign, the blown-out brains, the blood-spattered pavements, the screaming infants and the corpses. Its team of on-the-ground, un-embedded correspondents has provided a corrective to the official line that the campaign is, barring occasional resistance, going according to plan." A case in point was the widespread coverage of an alleged "uprising" against Saddam Hussein in Iraq's besieged second city of Basra, which was called by unaligned journalists to be a "non-event". The misinformation in this instance could be due to the notion that western media do not have a single journalist in the city, and receive much of their information during question time from US military commanders in Doha. British defence officials were allegedly so outraged by *Al-Jazeera's* footage of dead British soldiers that they issued an appeal on Wednesday for the network to stop screening footage of the two dead soldiers. Experts said both the Arabic site (<http://www.aljazeera.net>) and the English-language version (<http://english.aljazeera.net>) would probably not be reachable for 24 hours. The sites had been under constant attack since the English-language version devoted to the war was launched on Monday.

#### **Day 10: Saturday, 29 March 2003**

*Baghdad came under the most concentrated bombing in more than a week. US warplanes bombed a building in Basra, where about 200 paramilitaries loyal to Saddam Hussein were believed to have gathered. Baghdad warned that suicide missions against coalition forces would become "routine military policy", following a deadly attack against US soldiers on Saturday. As opposed to initial reports that 14 civilians had been killed in a Baghdad shopping area on 26 March, BBC now reported that up to 50 people were confirmed dead. US-led coalition forces were still trying to cope with stiff resistance in the southern city of Nasiriya.*

*Newsday reported that three Westerners who went missing from a Baghdad hotel turned up in Syria. A report quoted representatives of the peace activist group *Human Shield Action* as saying they had spoken with activist **Philip Latasa** of the United States, who was accompanied by two photographers, **Molly Bingham** of the United States, and **Johan Spanner** of Denmark. The Middle East program co-ordinator for CPJ, told *Reuters* that this information had not "been*

fully verified yet.” *Newsday* and CPJ said that there was still no word on *Newsday* reporter **Matthew McAllester** and photographer **Moises Saman**, who last made contact with the NY-based daily Monday. These latter two were believed to have been detained by the Iraqi government. *Newsday* editor **Anthony Marro** said in a statement that no one saw the pair being removed from the Palestine Hotel but that their room was empty, and Iraqi security officials allegedly asked other journalists questions about the pair’s activities. “We appeal to Iraqi officials to explain their whereabouts, to allow us to contact them directly and to allow their safe passage out of Iraq,” he said. *Newsday* is one of the largest daily newspapers in the United States, serving Long Island and New York City. It has won 17 Pulitzer prizes.

Seven Italian journalists who were previously apprehended by Iraqi soldiers in Basra were safe and sound in the Palestine hotel in Baghdad, one of them who was permitted to make contact told his offices in Rome. “We are being well treated,” **Francesco Battistini** of the daily *Corriere della Serra* assured his employer, according to Italian state television RAI. The other six worked for *Il Sole-24 Ore*, *Il Resto Del Carlino*, *Il Giornale*, *L’Unita*, *Il Messaggero* and *Il Mattino*. The seven journalists were not in danger of having their positions in Iraq compromised, but the Iraqi authorities first had to decide whether they would need accreditation to continue reporting from Baghdad. The seven journalists were brought from Basra to Baghdad on Friday under tight protection by Iraqi forces. “We are happy and relieved that nothing has happened to our colleagues. This proves that one can still work in Baghdad with a guaranteed position,” **Giancarlo Mazzuca**, the Editor-in-Chief of the Bolognese daily *Il Resto del Carlino* said, upon having spoken with his correspondent **Lorenzo Bianchi** by telephone.

*Al-Jazeera* also said that a cameraman had gone missing during a British artillery attack on Basra had rejoined his news team, and was in good health.

The Pentagon stepped up its offensive aimed at illustrating the “brutality of the Iraqi regime.” Chief Pentagon spokeswoman **Victoria Clarke** played videotaped clips of a news documentary showing the effects of Iraq’s use of chemical weapons against Kurdish villagers 15 years ago, alongside an interview of a woman who said her family was tortured by President Saddam Hussein’s government. Clarke

had no comment to a reporter's question whether she was showing the clips to counteract widely shown TV images of civilian deaths and casualties in Iraq as a result of allied bombing, but said that it had been "her decision to use those clips. I have met some of these people. And I have heard their stories. And I was just struck in the last couple of days hearing some people say, "Well aren't you surprised by the brutality of the Iraqi regime?" How could anyone be surprised?" she said. The decision to show these clips came as Pentagon officials investigated whether US bombs caused as much as 50 civilian deaths in Baghdad in two incidents in recent days. The excerpts shown were from a *BBC* documentary detailing the aftermath of the Iraqi government's use of chemical weapons on Kurdish civilians in Halabja in 1988. The footage also included a close-up of a Kurdish woman with a hideous facial disfigurement. Portions of a videotaped interview conducted by the Department of Defence in February with **Zainab Al-Suwaij**, an Iraqi woman living in Massachusetts were also shown. Al-Suwaij described the imprisonment, torture and killing that her family was submitted to after a teacher saw her 16-year-old cousin write "I don't like Saddam" in her notes at school. She alleged that the police took the girl, along with her parents, siblings, uncles, a cousin and an aunt to prison. She then read a letter which she alleged was written by the girl describing her treatment in prison: "And they also start using electrical shock on my fingertips and my lips and my nipples. Also they used to hang me from my feet, and they used to make me walk on broken glass. One day they took all my clothes off and they threatened my parents that they are going to rape me," Al-Suwaij alleged the letter stated. A Defence Department document identifies Al-Suwaij as the executive director of the American Islamic Congress, a "social organisation that is dedicated to building inter-faith and inter-ethnic understanding." She also participated in the 1991 uprising against Saddam Hussein after the Gulf war that was suppressed by the regime.

**Gaby Rado**, a British award-winning foreign affairs correspondent reporting for *Channel 4*, was found dead at a hotel in Sulaimaniya, a town in the Kurdish-controlled area of Northern Iraq. His death appears to have no direct connection to military action. "It is believed that Gaby fell from the roof of the Abu Sanaa hotel into the car park below, where his body was found," *ITN* said in a prepared statement. A witness saw him walking up to the hotel roof alone. *Channel 4* editor **Jim Gray** called Rado "a unique figure in television



journalism," and praised his extensive reporting from conflicts throughout Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Afghanistan. British daily *The Guardian* quoted Gray as saying that "Mr Rado's reporting and analysis of some of the world's most tumultuous events was always imbued with his uniquely cultured sensibility and perception... We loved Gaby very much and he will be deeply missed." Born in Budapest, Hungary. Mr Rado emigrated to England with his family when he was eight. He studied English at Christ's College, Cambridge, and started his journalism career in 1976 as a reporter on the *Kentish Times*, moving to *BBC Radio Leicester* in 1978 and *BBC Television* in 1979.

**Day 11: Sunday, 30 March 2003**

*B-52 bombers dropped massive payloads on Republican Guard positions in the southern outskirts of Baghdad, while laser-guided bombs struck communication facilities and government buildings inside the city. General Franks dismissed reports the coalition had been set back by unexpectedly stiff Iraqi resistance, saying: "We're in fact on plan. And where we stand today is not, in my view, only acceptable but truly remarkable." The Royal Marines who led an operation in the village of Abu al-Qassib and who were supported by other units said Iraqi fighters there had put up the hardest resistance they had seen so far.*

Syrian reporter **Wael Awwad**, Lebanese cameraman **Talal Masri** and Lebanese technician **Ali Safa**, all of whom went missing in Iraq on 22 March, resurfaced in Kuwait. "They arrived in Kuwait and are tired but in good health," an unnamed *Al-Arabiya* official told *Reuters*.

**Peter Arnett** gave an interview to Iraqi state television in which he stated that, "the first US war plan has failed." The Pentagon had no official comment on the Arnett interview; however, an unnamed official implied that the reporter had been manipulated. "Saddam Hussein's regime is cloaked in lies and manipulation and he has maintained his power not only through force and intimidation, but also through the manipulation of the media. It is important that the media accurately report to the world what is happening to Iraq," the US defence official said. "His impromptu interview with Iraqi television was done as a professional courtesy and was similar to other interviews he has done with media outlets from around the

world,” *NBC*, its cable outlet *MSNBC*, and *National Geographic Explorer* said in a joint statement. “His remarks were analytical in nature and were not intended to be anything more,” the statement said. In the interview Arnett said American war planners misjudged the determination of the Iraqi forces. “Now America is re-appraising the battlefield, delaying the war, maybe a week, and rewriting the war plan. The first war plan has failed because of Iraqi resistance. Now they are trying to write another war plan,” Arnett said in excerpts aired on some US cable television networks. He said there was a “growing challenge to President Bush about the conduct of the war and also opposition to the war. So our reports about civilian casualties here, about the resistance of the Iraqi forces there are all going back to the United States. It helps those who oppose the war, and who challenge the policy, to develop their arguments,” Arnett said.

Journalists at the US Central Command in Qatar were complaining that they get more spin than news, and that journalists were being withdrawn: “Why should we stay? What’s the value to us for what we learn at this million-dollar press centre?,” a reporter from *New York Magazine* asked openly at a briefing session, to the applause of colleagues. Journalists from Britain felt so starved of information that they put up a sign with a recurring remark uttered in briefings by British forces commander Air Marshal Brian Burridge: “We don’t do detail.” An official from a network put it like this: “They are playing catch-up sometimes and somehow that reduces the value.” Many of the 700 journalists accredited in Doha were becoming openly contemptuous of the daily proceedings that US General Tommy Franks called a “platform for truth.” Military commanders often gave as a reason for the placidity of their feedback that they “don’t want to divulge military secrets to the Iraqis.” However, journalists suspected that it was also a question of “political spin”. “At daily news conferences and private briefings, senior Central Command officials have been more determined to paint Iraqi forces in the darkest light possible than to shed light on the embattled progress of the military campaign,” journalist **Alan Sipress** reported from Doha in Saturday’s *Washington Post*. Reporters attributed this focus to the man in charge of the media centre, **Jim Wilkinson**, a former spokesman for the US National Republican Congressional Committee and a political appointee introduced by the Bush administration. In Doha, each briefing, held on a \$200,000 set designed by a Hollywood consultant, begins with a “bullish statement” about the state of the war and

videos depicting precision bombing by US forces. Questions on reports from the battlefield by senior US officers concerning stretched supply lines, troop numbers and Iraqi resistance went either unanswered or were contradicted in Doha by junior officers.

*Reuters* reported that US military commanders had banned the use of certain satellite phones carried by journalists attached to their units, fearing that the signal would give away location status to Iraqi forces. Several *Reuters* reporters embedded with US forces said that they had been told to switch their Thuraya satellite phones off. One said that his phone had been confiscated. Correspondent **Matthew Green** explained that "Officers have ordered me to hand my phone in and I am giving it to one of the officers. They say it's for security, that the Iraqis can use it to triangulate the signal and fire missiles." Questioned about the new rules, Major-General Victor Renuart explained at a news briefing at the US Central Command in Qatar that the order was not meant to restrict media coverage. "On the battlefield, operational security is critical and there are times and places on the battlefield in which you need to make sure no communications go out," he said. A Pentagon spokesperson said that this was not a "theatre-wide prohibition." Thuraya handsets can work on normal mobile networks or as satellite phones. They use a Geographical Positioning System (GPS), which is one reason for military concern. Thuraya's location-finding system is highly accurate – a user can be identified within 100 metres of where he/she is standing. A long-term ban on Thurayas could impair the ability of journalists to file real-time reports from the battlefields.

*Al-Jazeera* refused to censor the images it transmitted despite repeated calls from top western officials. "We're not catering to any specific side or ideology. What we are doing is our business as professionally as possible," **Jihad Ballout**, a spokesman for the Qatar-based channel, was quoted as saying. The images of bombed Baghdad buildings, bloodied and screaming Iraqi children and slain or captured US and British soldiers seen by millions of viewers angered Washington and London, which seek to portray the invasion as a heroic war of liberation executed on behalf of the Iraqi people. "If there's a perceived imbalance, it's purely a function of access," said Ballout, recounting that if the Americans and British would have given *Al-Jazeera* more access to their troops, "you would certainly find as much coverage on the ground from there as you would find from the Iraqi side." Subscriber figures doubled to eight million

homes in the first week of the war, mainly in countries with large Muslim or Arab populations, such as Britain and France. With many Arabs protesting bitterly at the US-led invasion, authorities in some Arab states also objected to *Al-Jazeera's* coverage.

**Day 12: Monday, 31 March 2003**

*Coalition bombs and missiles struck Iraqi presidential sites in central Baghdad and pounded Republican Guard divisions just south of the city in round-the-clock bombardment. The ground war moved closer to Baghdad, with fierce skirmishes between US troops and Republican Guard units at Hindiya, about 80 kilometres (50 miles) south of the capital. In an incident which would undermine coalition efforts to win hearts and minds, seven Iraqi women and children were killed by US troops when their car failed to stop at a checkpoint. The fighting at Hindiya, on the Euphrates river, was reported to be the closest engagement yet to the capital.*

As raids targeted the northern city of Mosul, a cruise missile struck Iraq's Information Ministry during a night time raid, damaging satellite dishes. *Reuters* reporters on the scene were denied access to the building to survey the damage. Domestic state television, routinely used by President Saddam Hussein to address the nation, was knocked off the air in the morning. Nonetheless, daily broadcasts began at around 12:30 p.m. (0930 GMT), four hours later than usual, showing pro-Hussein propaganda. Iraq's international satellite kept broadcasting while the domestic channel was off the air. This was the second attack on Iraq's official information headquarters. The blasts also triggered a fire near the Ministry complex. At daybreak, the Presidential Palace used by President Hussein's son Qusay, who controls the Republican Guard, was struck. "We jumped off our seats," *Reuters* correspondent **Samia Nakhoul** said. "We can see flames coming out of the palace." The raids also scored two direct hits on the city centre telephone exchange, destroying the six-storey building. The hit brought to six the number of exchanges knocked out in the bombings. There were around 20 exchanges in Baghdad, but already now making a telephone call became almost impossible without resort to satellite communications. Saturday's previous strike on the Ministry of Information damaged an annex where many foreign media organisations, including *Reuters*, had their offices; government news conferences were moved to a nearby hotel. US air

forces also struck a military communications site in the centre of Baghdad.

Veteran American war correspondent **Peter Arnett** was fired from NBC due to the interview he gave to Iraqi television in which he alleged that American military plans in Iraq were failing and echoed widespread scepticism over the Pentagon's strategy. The interview was replayed at least twice in Iraq and later screened on American television, prompting outrage from prominent politicians: "it is nauseating! It is incredible that he would be kowtowing to what clearly is the enemy in this way," Republican congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida bristled. *NBC* initially defended Arnett, but was pressured by an avalanche of protests in the wake of Arnett's comments. "It was wrong for Mr. Arnett to grant an interview to state-controlled Iraqi-TV, especially at a time of war," *NBC* spokesperson **Allison Gollust** later said. Arnett stood by his comments, insisting his views were not "out of line with what the experts think." He did, however, express regret for what he called a "stupid misjudgement" in granting the interview. Arnett was accused by the Pentagon of being a conveyor of Iraqi propaganda during the first Gulf War.

In the press release, "IPI Responds to *BBC* 'Friend of Baghdad' Accusations by UK Ministers" IPI condemned attempts by UK cabinet ministers to undermine the reporting of the British Broadcasting Corporation (*BBC*) on the war in Iraq. There were a number of instances of ministers criticising the *BBC* for providing 24-hour coverage which is allegedly distorting the public's perspective of the Iraqi war. Moreover, ministers alleged that the *BBC* was failing to properly distinguish between the Iraqi regime and the allied forces. Such accusations led to claims that the *BBC* was behaving as if there were a "moral equivalence" between the two sides in the war, a claim that led a 30 March article in the *Guardian* to quote a "senior" government figure as describing the situation in the following terms: "On the one side is a dictatorship that allows no scrutiny of what it does; on the other are democracies which have a policy of openness and allow themselves to be questioned."

Responding to the question of the 24-hour news cycle, IPI said, "The *BBC* has a both a right and an absolute duty to report on this war. It is vital to the viewing public that they receive a plurality of views in order to understand what is happening in Iraq. Politicians have assiduously cultivated the news cycle for their own benefit in peace

time and it would seem to me to be both wrong and irresponsible for politicians to criticise the media during a time of war purely because they do not like what they are seeing on their television screens.” On the subject of news reporting, IPI commented, “The UK government must accept the fact that the best people to decide news are not politicians, but the broadcasters themselves.”

**Day 13: Tuesday, 1 April 2003**

*At least 11 members of the same family - mostly children - were killed in a coalition air strike on a residential district in central Iraq. Hospital sources in Hilla, about 80 kilometres (50 miles) south of Baghdad, said they were among 33 civilians killed and more than 300 injured in the attack early on Tuesday morning. Correspondents travelling with advance units of coalition troops said they had already clashed with units of Republican Guards some 70 kilometres south of Baghdad. Iraqi Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan said more than 6,000 Arab volunteers were now in Iraq, and more than half of them suicide bombers.*

Fox News correspondent **Geraldo Rivera** was expelled from his embedded post with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division in Iraq for “violating the ground rules of the program that allows journalists to travel with military units,” the *International Herald Tribune* reported. “He was revealing tactical information and compromising operational security,” said Lieutenant Mark Kitchens, a spokesman at the Central Command headquarters at As Sayliyah, Qatar. “At one point, he actually revealed the time of an attack prior to its occurrence,” he said. Rivera was escorted back to Kuwait, and was not available for further comment.

The group of journalists who disappeared from a Baghdad hotel last week turned up unharmed in Jordan on Tuesday, saying that they had been held in an Iraqi jail but that they had not been physically harmed, *Reuters* reported. “We were in Abu Ghraib prison for seven or eight days. There were no specific charges. It wasn’t much fun but we were not physically hurt and we are very happy to be out,” **Matthew McAllester**, the *Newsday* reporter from Edinburgh, Scotland, said, speaking from a four-wheel drive vehicle in Jordan’s desert town of Ruweished. **Moises Saman**, the Peruvian *Newsday* photographer, was also in the vehicle, together with freelance

photographer **Molly Bingham** of Louisville, Kentucky, and Danish freelance photographer **Johan Spanner**. A fifth member of the group who was present declined to give his name. "We are just really tired right now," Saman said. "The single most important thing is that we understand that there were many people who were trying their very hardest to get us out, and I think I speak for everyone in saying that we are incredibly grateful," McAllester said. McAllester is the United Nations correspondent for *Newsday*, and has previously worked in the Middle East, covering the Israeli-Palestine conflict. Together with Saman, he also covered the US-led war in Afghanistan in October 2001. Molly Bingham, whose family founded two Kentucky papers, worked as an official photographer for former Vice President Al Gore during his successful, yet failed, Presidential bid in 2000 against George W. Bush, and has covered conflicts worldwide. The group insisted that they were not physically harmed, but that they had heard the sounds of other prisoners being beaten. "We could hear screams, especially at night," McAllester told a news conference in Amman. "We were in a cell block that had a corridor going down the centre, on either side were cells...opposite us were Iraqi prisoners," adding that he would lie down facing away from the corridor at night. "They were being taken out of their cells...and were beaten...a yard or two away from where I was sleeping, where we were all sleeping, with some kind of implement. They looked quite poorly in the morning. One night, a guy was moaning for half an hour, an hour, and I think they brought a doctor at one stage for him. I have no idea who was doing it," he said, adding there were both interrogators and guards in the prison. Saman said that the beatings "seemed to be a daily ritual. A group of people come and pick on somebody for whatever reason."

In the Abu Ghraib prison, they were given pyjamas, soap, blankets and food, including eggs for breakfast, and told not to speak each other from their cells, although McAllester and Bingham managed to communicate by tapping on the adjoining walls of their cells. They were all interrogated, and led from their cells blindfolded. They were interrogated about their equipment, what they photographed and who they spoke to. Bingham said she was offered tea and cigarettes at the end of one session, but demanded to have her blindfold removed upon being asked to sign a statement. Saman qualified his treatment as "humane." Bingham agreed, saying "I would second that...I was not physically hurt in any way." "I've paid for worse hotel rooms in Africa," Bingham later said of her cell on *NBC's "Today"*

show. "It was decent, it was a clean cell. I slept on a cement floor with two wool blankets, and I was given three meals a day and had access to a bathroom." "I will say that I was treated humanely, I think we all were, we weren't physically abused in any way," she added. McAllester said his interrogator was "disconcertingly polite" at times, but he was accused once of being dishonest and told his safety depended on him telling the truth. "I sense that they knew we were scared enough and didn't need to do any more." No specific charges were levelled, although McAllester suggested that it had been implied, albeit never explicitly, that he was a spy. The four were made to sign statements and released, and were given back most of their belongings, except for some money and phones. Jim Rupert, *Newsday's* foreign editor, said that many people had mediated their release, in addition to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo. Arafat had asked his ambassador to Iraq to contact Iraqi authorities and to help free the foreign journalists. Rupert said Arafat's appeal had played "an important role" in the journalist's release. Iraq maintained strict rules for journalists, such as requiring they be accompanied by a government "minder".

A different picture emerged concerning the much disputed "embedding" procedure that cast an uncommonly positive light on the initiative. **Luke Baker** reported in a *Reuters* article that "embedding" had won a "tentative thumbs up from both soldiers and reporters." Accordingly, journalists had the unprecedented opportunity to observe and report on the military up close and personally – from the way ordinary soldiers live and work to the way generals draw up their battle plans. For the military, soldiers had been granted a chance to explain to "folks back home" what exactly it is they do. Officers and enlisted men said that the war they were fighting was more likely to be reported in a "fair and balanced" light if journalists were operating alongside them, rather than reporting events from afar. A positive aspect for journalists, it was being said, was the "relative lack of censorship." It was alleged by sympathetic voices that commanders in the field had been open in terms of letting journalists in on secret briefings and plans, trusting reporters not to release information until critical missions were complete, and that military oversight had in fact been minimal. "There's not necessarily any censorship, but we're completely dependent on the army for food, water and security without access to opposing points of view," said **Gareth Schweitzer** of Washington DC-based *Talk Radio News*.



"That makes it that much harder to report anything negative or damaging about the military." Concerns also abounded that the amount of access offered to journalists was restricted when things start to go badly for the US military. As Luke Baker put it, "news reports about edgy soldiers opening fire on civilians at checkpoints have not helped Washington's efforts to portray the invasion as an effort to liberate the Iraqi people." Journalists were also said to complain about the length of the war, initially assumed to be a short affair. "I've had enough," said Tim, a cameraman for a German satellite TV station. "The food sucks, I haven't slept in days and we can't work because we only brought enough tapes for a week."

#### **Day 14: Wednesday, 2 April 2003**

*US ground forces overcame divisions of elite Iraqi troops to bring them within 32 kilometres (20 miles) of the Iraqi capital, according to American military officials. US marines appeared to be in control of most of the southern city of Nasiriya, a key crossing point on the Euphrates river and the scene of heavy fighting in the previous week. The push by the US 3rd Infantry through the gap between the town of Karbala and a lake was said to have been part of a three-pronged attack which also saw American marines further east secure a key bridge across the River Tigris, near Kut. The Marines were said to have destroyed the Baghdad Division of the Republican Guard. A teenage US servicewoman held captive for a week in Iraq arrived in Germany for treatment at an American military hospital. Private Jessica Lynch, 19, has two broken legs, an injured arm and multiple gunshot wounds, but was said to be in stable condition.*

**Kaveh Golestan**, an Iranian free-lance cameraman on assignment for the *BBC*, was killed in northern Iraq after stepping on a land mine. Golestan accidentally detonated the mine when he stepped out of his car near the town of Kifri, **John Morrissey** of the *BBC*'s foreign desk told CPJ. Golestan was travelling as part of a four-person *BBC* crew that included Tehran bureau chief **Jim Muir**, producer **Stuart Hughes**, and a translator. Hughes' foot was injured and treated by US military medics. Muir and the translator suffered light injuries. Golestan, who was also a well-known still photographer, worked frequently with the *BBC* out of its Tehran bureau.

Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* reported that Australian journalist **Ian**

**McPhedran** was expelled from Baghdad for “breaking the rules” by leaving his hotel unescorted. McPhedran wrote from Amman that while in Baghdad, he had “decided to head to the Information Ministry, across the river from his hotel, to file an eyewitness report about a US missile attack on the area.” He said he received permission from an Iraqi official to leave the hotel.

Practically overnight, Israeli cable companies removed the English-language TV news channel, *BBC-World*, from their network. Fears abounded that the station’s seemingly critical stance towards the war in Iraq was the reason underlying this decision. The cable-network officially declared that a new agreement with the *BBC* could not be made due to disagreements over the terms of contract. Through cable, *BBC-World* was beamed into an estimated one million Israeli households. As little as a few months ago, *CNN* was threatened by the same cable-network company as its reporting was perceived, by most Israelis and especially by the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, as being one-sided and decidedly pro-Palestinian. Unofficially, the decision to axe *BBC-World* came “from above” through concerns about showing the Israeli people “programs that might cast the Israelis in a negative light.” The liberal daily Israeli newspaper, *Ha’aretz*, described the move as “proof of the lack of understanding for democracy (in Israel).”

*Al-Jazeera* said that Iraq had barred two of its correspondents from reporting and that the network was halting the work of all its journalists in Iraq in protest. **Tayseer Alouni**, the star correspondent from *Al-Jazeera*, was expelled from Iraq on 1 April by the Ministry of Information, and his Iraqi colleague **Diyar al-Omari** had his accreditation revoked. The Iraqi government gave no reason for its action against the network, which was lambasted by the United States and Britain for showing distressing pictures from a war that is domestically portrayed by the west as a “humane act of liberation.” The Iraqi Information Ministry informed *Al-Jazeera*’s office in Baghdad that its correspondent there, Diyar al-Omari, was banned from performing his journalistic work and that its correspondent Tayseer Alouni must leave Iraq as soon as possible without giving any reasons for the decision, *Al-Jazeera* said. “*Al-Jazeera* regrets this surprising and sudden stand which is not justified and has decided, until further notice, to freeze the operations of all its correspondents in Baghdad while continuing to transmit live and taped images from its offices in Baghdad, Basra and Mosul,” it

added. *Al-Jazeera's* editor-in-chief, **Ibrahim Helal**, said all the network's correspondents would remain in Baghdad and the rest of Iraq until the Iraqi authorities clarified their decision. "They cannot dictate to us who can and who cannot work," he told *Reuters* by telephone. At the time, *Al-Jazeera* had eight correspondents in Iraq – five in Baghdad, two in Basra and one in the northern city of Mosul.

*Reuters* reported that Gulf Telecoms firm Thuraya disputed the widely-held coalition contention that the signal satellite phones emit could reveal the location of American troops, and criticised the US ban on journalists using such satellite phones in Iraq. Reporters embedded with US forces in Iraq were banned from using Thuraya, and at least one journalist's handset was confiscated. Thuraya chairman **Mohammed Omran** said that Thuraya's complex encryption system would make it difficult, if not impossible, to locate journalists using the phone. "The journalists should not be prevented from using Thurayas. It is highly unlikely that our phones are endangering anyone's lives," Omran said. "Callers must specifically request to see their position and even when they do, the information beamed back to them via satellite is encrypted and the code is difficult to track," he said, adding that, however, "there is no system in the world that cannot be penetrated." US officials insist that the ban is not intended to restrict media coverage of the war, but rather to safeguard attacks by the Iraqis. Several technical experts said they were unaware of any field-level technology that could be used to find users. Thurayas use a highly-accurate Geographical Positioning System (GPS), which can identify a user to within 100 metres and which could be cause for military concern. The rival Iridium satellite phones used by the US military are said to have less accurate GPS's. (Iridium satellite phones download their user location and billing data to the United States. Thuraya location data is downloaded to Thuraya headquarters in Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates.)

The IPI issued a protest to US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, and UK Secretary of State for Defence, Geoffrey Hoon, expressing worry "that the military inquiries into the exact circumstances of the disappearance of two journalists are not being conducted in a timely or transparent manner." In the protest, IPI stated that "according to information provided to IPI, on 25 March, an Independent Television News (*ITN*) crew were travelling in two jeeps marked "TV" when they came under heavy fire at Iman Anas on the

approach to Basra. The direct hits on the jeeps killed *ITN* reporter **Terry Lloyd** and injured cameraman **Daniel Demoustier**. French cameraman **Frédéric Nerac** and Lebanese interpreter **Hussein Othman**, who were also travelling as part of the *ITN* team, have disappeared and are feared dead. In the aftermath of the tragic incident both the UK Ministry of Defence and the US Central Command in Doha, Qatar, announced an intention to carry out inquiries into the disappearances, but they have so far yielded little information. This is despite the fact that the inquiry into the death of Lloyd has already been concluded, admittedly without a final determination as to who was responsible for his death. As a result of the slow-paced inquiries, nearly eight days after their disappearance, the relatives and colleagues of Nerac and Othman have yet to be officially informed of their whereabouts or, indeed, their fate.

IPI called on the UK and US to carry out a full inquiry into the disappearances of the two journalists and, in the interests of transparency, make the results public as soon as possible. While IPI recognised there may be difficulties in conducting such an investigation at this time, it said it strongly believes that the circumstances of the journalists' disappearance are such that they demand a timely inquiry. On the subject of military inquiries into deaths or disappearances during wartime, IPI feels that there may be a need to thoroughly review the procedure once the war has ended. Because of the nature of the allegations in this incident, it might aid transparency and enhance the validity of final reports if they were conducted by an independent body or expert.

CJFE, the association of Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, stated that "the war enters its third week with an unacceptable number of attacks on journalists just doing their jobs. All sides in the conflict would do well to remember that journalists are in the service of their readers, viewers and listeners around the world; they are entitled to fair and humane treatment as they struggle to cover the war. It urged all journalists to monitor the treatment of their colleagues and to speak out when there is abuse." Among the incidents that sparked the concern of the CFJE were the following: US troops expelled four journalists from Iraq on the alleged grounds that they were spies. The journalists – Israel's **Dan Scemama** of *Channel 1 TV*, **Boaz Bismuth** of the Israeli daily *Yediot Ahronot*, and Portugal's **Luis Castro** and **Victor Silva**, both of *Radio Television Portuguesa* – said they were detained, abused and mistreated by US

soldiers. US journalist **Caroline Glick** of the *Chicago Sun Times* and the *Jerusalem Post* was, while in Kuwait earlier this month, pressured by Kuwaiti officials into signing an undertaking not to file stories to her employer in Israel while in Kuwait. *NBC* fired journalist **Peter Arnett** after he provided an interview to state-run Iraqi TV. Arnett apologised for doing the interview but was still terminated by his employer, which initially defended his action.

The Iraqi government asked citizens to hand over any portable satellite telephones, claiming that the equipment was being used by “agents” to guide US and British bombs and missiles. All satellite communications equipment is banned in Iraq. In a statement read by a government spokesman on Iraqi television, it was claimed that many Iraqis nonetheless possess such equipment. He urged Iraqis to hand over the satellite phones “before it’s too late, (as) such equipment has been used by agents involved in treacherous acts by US agents,” and added that a receipt would be issued for every surrendered phone that would be returned after the war. A military spokesperson told the Iraqi news agency that there was a five million Dinar (approx. \$1,560) reward for anyone informing on those who used those phones. In the previous week, Iraq had announced the arrest of three Iraqis allegedly involved in guiding US and British air raids. A portable satellite phone was among the “spying equipment” found with the men.

The *European Broadcasting Union* (EBU) issued a protest against the restrictions introduced by the US Central Command in Doha, Qatar, on newsgathering in Southern Iraq. “US Central Command policy is now actively restricting independent newsgathering from Southern Iraq,” EBU Secretary General **Jean Stock** said in a statement. “Reporters and camera crews who put their lives at risk have been detained by American and British troops and returned to Kuwait.” Mr. Stock said that this treatment appeared to be aimed in particular at organisations from countries who had chosen not to participate in the American-led “Coalition of the Willing.” “As a result journalists are now exposed to a much greater risk and the coalition policy targets the quality of their reporting,” he said. The EBU initially welcomed the decision by US Central Command to allow journalists to “embed” with military units, and saw that move as an important contribution to newsgathering about the conflict. On the other hand, the EBU noted that this only permitted a small number of European broadcasters to report directly on the conflict. “We have independent

information that broadcasters can work safely in many areas, so we do not understand why the military is putting so many obstacles in the path of journalists,” EBU head of news **Tony Naets** said. “They have created a caste system with embedded journalists – usually from the countries in the so-called coalition who can associate with the troops – and the truly unilateral broadcaster who is prevented from coming anywhere near the news.” The EBU is an association of state and commercial broadcasters which includes the *BBC*, *CNN*, Italian, French and German channels.

**Day 15: Thursday, 3 April 2003**

*US forces said they were taking up positions just outside Baghdad and were ready to fight in what could be a first crucial battle for control of the city. Iraq's information minister Mohammad Saeed al-Sahaf dismissed the claims as “silly,” saying US troops were “nowhere near Baghdad.” US Secretary of State Colin Powell said the UN would definitely have a role to play in post-war Iraq – but the precise nature of the role was yet to be decided. He said the US-led coalition would work in partnership with other organisations but would reserve for itself the “leading role in determining the way forward.”*

*The Australian newspaper's London-based correspondent **Peter Wilson** and Canberra-based photographer **John Feder** were arrested in Basra on Tuesday afternoon after entering the besieged city to interview civilians. The pair, along with British-Lebanese interpreter **Stuart Innes**, were detained by Iraqi authorities and were placed under house arrest in the Baghdad Meridian Palestine Hotel, while the government tried to decide whether to expel them from the country. “They have been told their situation may be clarified in the next 24 hours – whether they will be expelled or allowed to stay in the country,” said **Bruce Loudon**, managing director of group news at **Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd**, which owns *The Australian*. “They are in the Palestine Hotel where they are free to move around, but they cannot leave and they cannot work,” he told *Reuters*, adding that the three were well. Several Italian and French journalists were also being held at the hotel. Wilson and Feder had tried to remain independent from the control of US and British military since entering Iraq from Kuwait last Wednesday. Another *News Ltd.* journalist from Australia, **Ian McPhedran**, was ordered out of Iraq this week after*

leaving his hotel in Baghdad without a government-appointed minder.

**Fabienne Nerac**, the wife of the French cameraman missing in Iraq since 22 March, was promised by US Secretary of State **Colin Powell** that he would help shed light on Fred Nerac's disappearance. When questioned by Ms. Nerac after she was clandestinely admitted to a press conference in Brussels, Powell said "I give you my personal promise we will do everything we can to find out what happened". Ms. Nerac told Powell: "My husband has been reported missing since your forces fired on his jeep." She criticised the fact that she had heard no word from the US authorities despite her requests for information, supported by the French government and London's *ITN* network, her husband's employer. Earlier in the day, Ms. Nerac made public the letter she had just sent President Bush, Powell, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and General Tommy Franks. "I think you may have the answer to many of our questions but you are telling us nothing," she complained in her letter, saying that when her husband's TV crew was trapped between Iraqi and US forces near the southern town of Basra, the latter had fired on the crew's vehicle without seeing or heeding their TV and press markings. The fact that they were caught in the crossfire between Iraqi and Coalition forces was confirmed by an investigation carried out by a security company, AKE, at *ITN's* request. The enquiry established that the crew's two charred jeeps had been hit by gunfire of various calibres coming from different points. "We have heard the reports," said Central Command spokesman Brig. **General Vincent Brooks**. "But in this case what I would tell you in all seriousness is that the reports we have is that they were in an area that was involved in combat. We don't know the circumstances surrounding the lack of accountability for them at this point in time, or what the circumstances are. We take the concern seriously, and we're looking into it," he said.

US artillery struck the hotel where *Al-Jazeera's* offices were located. In a statement faxed to *Reuters*, *Al-Jazeera* stated that at least four shells struck the Sheraton hotel in Basra. "Due to this latest development, *Al-Jazeera* satellite channel said it would be sending yet another letter to the Pentagon stressing the station's concern for the safety and security of its reporters in Iraq," the statement said. "The news network has officially advised the Pentagon in Washington of all relevant details pertaining to its reporters covering

the war in Iraq,” it added. *Al-Jazeera* broadcast pictures of the bombed Sheraton, showing a building with a gaping hole in the side.

*Al-Jazeera* said it would continue to cover the war on Iraq even after the authorities banned two of the network’s correspondents from working there. The Qatar-based station had earlier said that none of its eight correspondents would report from Iraq after the ban; however, the network said in a news bulletin that it would continue to broadcast live and taped events, including news conferences by Iraqi officials and air strikes on Iraqi cities – without any commentary. “We were taken completely by surprise by this unexplained and, we believe, unjustified decision. So we will remain in Iraq, but we will not report from there. We will just show the pictures. We’re hoping things might change,” said an *Al-Jazeera* official who declined to be named.

*Al-Jazeera* also stated it was launching a new service to send its news to mobile phones. It would beam news-alerts in both Arabic and English to mobile phones around the world, after both its Arabic and English-language web sites were brought down by pro-American hackers. *Al-Jazeera* said it would launch reinforced sites later this month. *Al-Jazeera* called on the United States to come to its aid last week after the attacks on its web sites, and urged the US to ensure the safety of its correspondents in Iraq after US artillery hit a hotel where one of its offices are located. An *Al-Jazeera* spokesperson said the new mobile servicing would be launched on Wednesday and would be available in 130 countries.

The Bush administration approved a grant of 4 million dollars for a major Iraqi opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress, so that it could resume satellite broadcasting of its “Freedom Television” programme. Broadcasts were suspended in May 2002 after the US subsidy of 7 million dollars approved for 2002 was frozen before any of it was disbursed. Several US senators wrote to President Bush to ask him to unblock the funding. Since US troops were on the ground and US lives were at stake, they argued, the Iraqi opposition group should be supported under all circumstances.

The *Los Angeles Times* fired one of its photographers covering the war in Iraq because he doctored a photo. In a suspected act of patriotism, **Brian Walski** admitted to using his computer to merge elements from two separate shots in order to have a better-composed picture showing a British soldier helping Iraqi civilians find



shelter during shooting. Several civilians in the background appeared twice. The doctoring, discovered after the photograph was published, violated the newspaper's code of ethics, the *Los Angeles Times* said.

Journalist **Jason Deans** reported in the British daily, *The Guardian*, that Australian-born media tycoon **Rupert Murdoch** had shown true American patriotism by declaring that it was important that the world learned to "respect" America. Referring to the American people as "we", Murdoch allegedly said the public was far too worried about what the rest of the world thought of the US's declaration of war on Iraq. He said he believed Americans had an "inferiority complex" about world opinion and that Iraqis would eventually welcome US troops as liberators. Murdoch told a conference in California it would be "better to get (the Iraq) war done now" rather than have a longer conflict that could prove more damaging to the world economy. "We worry about what people think about us too much in this country. We have an inferiority complex, it seems," he said at the Milken Institute Global Conference. "I think what's important is that the world respects us, much more important than they love us," added Mr. Murdoch, who is Australian but took American citizenship in 1985 to get around ownership rules that barred foreigners from owning TV stations. His company *News Corporation's* media interests in the US include the *Fox broadcast network*, *Fox News Channel*, the *Fox film* and TV production studio and the *New York Post*. Murdoch also warned that the world should be prepared for more terrorist attacks. "It's very possible to see freelance suicide attempts both here and in London, and that would psychologically shake this country up," he said. All of his newspapers backed the war, which he believes is the only way to rid the Middle East of Saddam Hussein. In his *Sydney Daily Telegraph* earlier this year, he said he thought "Bush is acting very morally, very correctly, and I think he is going to go on with it".

IFJ issued an official protest over "unacceptable discrimination" and restrictions being imposed on journalists covering the war in Iraq when they are not travelling with army units of the United States or Britain. "This is unacceptable discrimination against independent journalism at a time when the pace of war is quickening and reporters are striving to bring millions of people coverage from the front lines," said IFJ. He was particularly concerned at reports that the military forces are singling out groups of journalists who are from countries that are not part of the coalition in support of the war. "We already have a number of journalists who are casualties," said White,

“and there may be more dangers ahead if journalists have to find ways of circumventing attempts to stop them from working.”

**Day 16: Friday, 4 April 2003**

*The US military said its forces had secured Baghdad's international airport, after soldiers of the 3rd Infantry Division fought their way into the site overnight. Iraq's Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf threatened a counter-attack on Friday night against coalition forces at the airport who, he said, were completely surrounded. He told a Baghdad news conference Iraq might take “non-conventional” action. A car explosion at a US military checkpoint north-west of Baghdad killed three American soldiers, as well as the driver and a pregnant female passenger. Iraq's state news agency said two Iraqi women were responsible for Friday's suicide attack. Iraqi television showed footage of President Saddam Hussein meeting cheering residents on the streets of Baghdad.*

French President **Jacques Chirac** received the wife of Fred Nerac, the French cameraman employed by the British TV organisation *ITN* who has been missing in southern Iraq since 22 March. **Fabienne Nerac** called the meeting “very constructive and positive,” and said they had discussed the “various organisations and authorities that have been contacted and the strategy to pursue,” adding that she hoped they would shortly receive information from US secretary of state Colin Powell. President Chirac called for “the maximum to be done to establish his situation and locate him.”

British government ministers and MPs again accused the British media over its film coverage of the war and its analysis, accusing it of “lacking perspective” and “playing into the hands of Saddam Hussein.” Conservative MP **Christopher Chope** demanded that the publicly-funded *BBC* pull its reporters out of Baghdad, charging that their reporting of the Iraqi government's statements and reports on war progress meant that “taxpayers were being forced to subsidise Saddam's propaganda machine.” Foreign Secretary **Jack Straw** went as far as to say, that “the kind of media pressure surrounding the Iraq war would have made World War II more difficult to win.” He told a meeting of the *Newspaper Society* “it might have been much harder to maintain the country's morale after Dunkirk if live reports had confronted the public with the brutal reality of German technical

and military superiority." Home Secretary **David Blunkett** chimed in, saying that journalists reporting behind "enemy lines" and giving "blow-by-blow" accounts of events there were treating the US-led coalition forces and the Iraqi regime as "moral equivalents." *The Daily Mail's* **Ross Benson** protested that "for Blunkett to suggest in some way that I was a stooge of Saddam Hussein is deeply offensive," and said he was in Baghdad to report "not what the Iraqis tell me but what I personally see."

American journalist **Michael Kelly** was killed when a military vehicle he was travelling in plunged into a canal while trying to dodge Iraqi shooting near Baghdad airport, US officials confirmed. Kelly was 46 and was working for the *Washington Post* while holding the editorship of *Atlantic Monthly*; he was, accordingly, the first "embedded" journalist to die in the war. He was embedded with the Third Infantry Division.

#### **Day 17: Saturday, 5 April 2003**

*US tanks and armoured vehicles launched their first raid into Baghdad city - and fought skirmishes with Iraq's elite Special Republican Guard. US rangers and special forces were reported to have taken control of the road leading to Tikrit - the birthplace of the Iraqi president - to the immediate north of Baghdad. In Basra, British forces said they were moving further into the city and destroyed a building where one of Iraq's most important military commanders, Ali Hassan al-Majid - also known as "Chemical Ali" - was thought to be staying.*

A bomb hit central Baghdad on Saturday about 100 metres from the Palestine Hotel where many journalists covering the war in Iraq were staying, and where Iraq's information ministry briefings had been held. *Reuters* correspondent **Samia Nakhoul** said the explosion was so close she that could feel the impact and see a fiery flash. She said there was one big bang, but that otherwise it had been quiet. The hotel is located in a business and residential area, near other hotels and a government communications centre. Nakhoul said it was unclear whether the bomb targeted anything in the area, or whether it was a stray. Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf was at the building earlier in the evening giving television interviews.

The Iraqi information ministry reversed its decision to ban the two *Al-Jazeera* journalists, **Diyar al-Omari** and **Taysir Alluni**, from working in the country. The Council of Europe's secretary-general, **Walter Schimmer**, recently praised the station's independence, and called for governments to respect its right to freedom of expression.

**Day 18: Sunday, 6 April 2003**

*British troops bombarded the headquarters of Iraq's Baath party as the massive coalition assault moved into the centre of Basra. A fierce battle erupted in the western outskirts of Baghdad. A BBC reporter said the Iraqis were putting up tough resistance, but he also saw more than a dozen burned out Iraqi tanks and APCs, and reports emerged that civilian vehicles also got caught in the fighting. US officials said the US would start moving its planned post-war civil administration, led by retired general Jay Garner, into Iraq within the next few days.*

**Kamran Abdurazaq Muhamed**, a translator working for the *BBC*, was killed in Northern Iraq in another "friendly fire" incident, after a US warplane dropped a bomb on a convoy of Kurdish guerrillas, allied with the US forces, who were travelling close to the city of Mosul. Veteran *BBC* correspondent **John Simpson** and producer **Tom Giles** were also injured. Simpson said he received shrapnel wounds to the ear, while Giles suffered an injury to the foot. The crew was transported to a US hospital in Arbil, northern Iraq, for treatment. According to press reports, at least 18 people were killed or wounded in the incident, including members of US Special Forces who were travelling with the convoy.

*Reuters* journalist **Sebastian Alison** described the incident: "A US warplane bombed American special forces and their Kurdish allies on Sunday, killing at least 10 people in a "friendly fire" attack in northern Iraq, witnesses and Kurdish sources said. The *BBC's* World Affairs Editor John Simpson said he was travelling in a convoy of eight or ten cars when it came under air attack as it approached an area recently captured from Iraqi forces near the town of Kalak. "I've counted 10 or 12 bodies around us, so there are Americans dead. It was an American plane, dropped the bomb right beside us, I saw it land about 10 to 12 feet (about four metres) away," Simpson told the

BBC moments after the blast. A Kurdish source told *Reuters* that the brother of **Massoud Barzani**, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), was wounded in the explosion and was in critical condition. The KDP governed two of the three provinces of northern Iraq under Kurdish control since the 1991 Gulf War. Kurdish fighters backed by US forces were slowly advancing out of their enclave towards the Iraqi-controlled cities of Mosul and Kirkuk. A highly placed Kurdish source told *Reuters* that seven Kurdish fighters, known as Peshmerga, died in the strike, while at least 10 people were wounded, including **Wajeih Barzani**. He did not know how many US special forces were killed. The wounded were reported to have been taken to Erbil, which is southeast of Kalak. *Reuters* reporters said the city's central hospital had been sealed off. The US military said in a statement it was investigating the incident, which occurred about 30 miles (48 km) southeast of the northern city of Mosul. "Coalition aircraft were conducting close air support missions at the time, and were in coordination with ground forces. The circumstances contributing to the incident are under investigation," the statement from US war headquarters said.

**David Bloom**, an American journalist working for the *NBC* network, reportedly died of natural causes. Bloom, 39, who was embedded with the US Army's Third Infantry Division, apparently suffered a pulmonary embolism 25 miles south of Baghdad. (A pulmonary embolism is an obstruction of the pulmonary artery in the lungs by a blood clot usually originating from a vein in the leg or pelvis) The most common cause is a clot formed deep in the leg when the legs are immobilised. Bloom rode with the US Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry on a high-tech transmission set-up, nicknamed the "Bloom mobile," from which he sent back graphic dispatches. Using state-of-the-art technology, including satellite imaging from the moving vehicle, an exuberant Bloom's vivid descriptions of the war's progress brought television viewers into the desert with him. He was airlifted to a nearby field medical field unit, where he was pronounced dead. Bloom was a native of Edina, Minnesota, and lived in the New York area with his family. He was also employed by *NBC's* cable affiliate *MSNBC*. "You couldn't keep him away from a story," **Tim Russert**, *NBC* Washington Bureau Chief said, "Whenever something was breaking, he wanted to be there." Bloom was the co-anchor of the weekend "Today" show since March 2000. He was described by his co-anchor **Soledad O'Brien** as being "a dedicated, tenacious and talented reporter, who died doing what he loved, and what he did

best.” Bloom was formerly a White House correspondent during the Clinton administration. Former President **Bill Clinton** said that Bloom’s “integrity and good humour will be missed. He was a smart, energetic professional whose enthusiasm for the job was evident in every question he asked and every story he covered.”

*Reuters* reported that a reporter for Russian state television *Rossiya* said on Sunday he saw US military vehicles roll past a convoy of Russian diplomats and journalists which had come under fire as it was trying to leave Iraq. It had not been established whether Iraqi or US-led forces were responsible for the attack on the convoy, which included Russian ambassador **Vladimir Titorenko**. As expected, the US Central Command in Qatar said neither US nor British forces were in the area. *Rossiya* correspondent **Alexander Minakov** said the convoy encountered “terrible, fierce shooting” outside Baghdad and was forced to stop for an hour, during which some of the four or five injured people received treatment. “It was then that a big convoy of American armoured vehicles appeared in front of us,” he told *Rossiya*. “They came within 50 to 70 metres of us...We came out of our cars and started waving white cloths to attract attention and ask for medical help. But no one stopped. The column passed by us for 40 minutes.”

#### **Day 19: Monday, 7 April 2003**

*American tanks and armoured vehicles penetrated deep into the centre of the Iraqi capital, raiding President Saddam Hussein's main palace and attacking several other sites. Sporadic fighting continued in Basra as British troops sought to bring Iraq's second city under their control. Fire fights broke out in the centre of Nasiriya - it was believed that the fighting erupted between Iraqi groups, possibly between Fedayeen members faithful to Saddam Hussein and people opposed to him.*

**Christian Liebig**, a German journalist of the weekly magazine *Focus* and Spanish reporter **Julio Anguita Parrado** of the newspaper *El Mundo*, were killed in an Iraqi missile strike south of Baghdad. Liebig and Parrado died in the attack along with two US soldiers, the two publications said in separate statements. Liebig, 35, had been one of only a few German journalists who received permission to be “embedded” with U.S. forces fighting in Iraq, due to the German

government's tough opposition to the war which had hurt US-German relations. He had been travelling with the 2nd Brigade of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division and was in a camp the brigade set up as its tactical command and control centre when the missile struck, *Focus* said. It said soldiers from the brigade had advanced into the centre of Baghdad and into one of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's palaces on Monday morning. "Liebig had stayed behind in the camp for security reasons," the magazine said. In a previous report on the dangers of his assignment, he had quoted a US major as saying: "No story is worth dying for." "Liebig was a careful reporter, not one of the daredevils of the sort who flock to all the world's war zones," *Focus* said.

Parrado, born in 1971, was normally assigned to New York for *El Mundo* and covered the 11 September, 2001 attacks. "He has just died, doing his job as a war correspondent," Parrado's father, **Julio Anguita**, told Spanish state radio. "He was with me three weeks ago and said that he wanted to be on the frontline." Parrado was also assigned with the 3rd Infantry Division as an "embedded" reporter. He had contacted his editors three times on Monday to report on US troops attacking Baghdad. His father is a former leader of the United Left party, one of the most vocal anti-war forces in Spain, where opinion polls showed strong opposition to the war. Parrado was the second *El Mundo* journalist killed covering wars in the past 17 months. *El Mundo* correspondent **Julio Fuentes** was killed on November 19, 2001, in Afghanistan along with **Harry Burton** and **Azizullah Haidari** of *Reuters* and **Maria Grazia Cutuli** of Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*. They were shot dead in an ambush as they drove from Jalalabad to the Afghan capital of Kabul.

20,000 transistor radios distributed by British soldiers in southern Iraq in the past week were set to alone receive the so-called "*Voices of the Two Rivers*" propaganda station set up by US and British forces, according to the French daily *Le Monde*. Following the dropping of so-called "black propaganda" aimed mostly at Iraqi soldiers from planes, the "psychological operations" enterprise was targeting hostile civilians with "white propaganda," *Le Monde* said. "Voices of the Two Rivers," mobile and broadcasting on five different frequencies, broadcasted music and messages devised by the aforementioned "psychological operations" experts with the help of "advertising" specialists.

It was reported by RSF that the small US radio station *KPFA*, well known in the 1960s and '70s for supporting civil rights and being anti-Vietnam, became the voice of the opponents of war and claimed tens of thousands of listeners in the San Francisco Bay Area. The station was founded more than fifty years ago in the university town of Berkeley, California, and has four associated stations, in New York, Los Angeles, Washington and Houston respectively. Another 50 less popular stations also aired its programmes.

**Day 20: Tuesday, 8 April 2003**

*US tanks and low-flying jets pounded Iraqi forces in central Baghdad in support of troops advancing across the city. However, US forces met fierce resistance in some areas, and the Pentagon said it believed the Special Republican Guard still had "great potential for some sharp fights." During the day, US marines seized the Rashid military airbase, five kilometres (three miles) south-east of the centre. Kurdish soldiers backed by US special forces gradually advanced on the Iraqi-controlled towns of Kirkuk and Mosul in the north.*

**Tarek Ayoub**, a cameraman with *Al-Jazeera*, was killed during a US air raid on Baghdad which also set the Arab network's office ablaze. The Qatar-based satellite network said Ayoub, a Palestinian with Jordanian citizenship, was confirmed dead in hospital after he was wounded in a missile strike on *Al-Jazeera's* office near the Information Ministry. Another member of *Al-Jazeera's* Baghdad crew, **Zohair al-Iraqi**, was slightly wounded. *Reuters* correspondent **Samia Nakhoul** had earlier reported that US planes were bombing targets near the ministry. "We regret to inform you that our cameraman and correspondent Tarek Ayoub was killed this morning during the US missile strike on our Baghdad office," *Al-Jazeera* said in a statement read out during its news bulletin, adding: "He is a martyr." The network regularly referred to Iraqi civilians killed in the US-led war as "martyrs". *Al-Jazeera's* Baghdad correspondent **Majed Abdel Hadi** called the US missile strike and Ayoub's death a "crime". "I will not be objective about this because we have been dragged into this conflict," he said, visibly upset. "We were targeted because the Americans don't want the world to see the crimes they are committing against the Iraqi people." No comment from the US military was immediately available. *Al-Jazeera* and fellow Arab network *Abu Dhabi TV* were the only two international channels with



their own offices in Baghdad. All other media organisations used to operate from a press centre at the Information Ministry, but they moved to the Palestine Hotel after the ministry was bombed. *Abu Dhabi TV* had earlier shown footage of a huge fire blaze from the *Al-Jazeera* offices. *Al-Jazeera* correspondent **Tayseer Alouni**, who made his name covering the US-led war on Afghanistan, was seen carrying the wounded Ayoub into a car. "One missile hit the pavement in front of us, ripping out windows and doors, and then one hit the generator," said **Maher Abdullah**, another *Al-Jazeera* correspondent. "The office is now on fire." Alouni was one of only a few international correspondents allowed to operate under the aegis of the now defunct Taliban government in Afghanistan. *Al-Jazeera's* office was similarly one of the first targets hit when the US-backed Northern Alliance fighters routed the Taliban in Kabul.

RSF issued a protest over the bombing in which Ayoub was killed. "We strongly condemn this attack on a neighbourhood known to include the offices of several TV stations," said RSF in a letter to General Tommy Franks, commander of US military operations in Iraq. "To ensure the safety of its journalists, *Al-Jazeera's* management was careful to inform the Americans of the exact location of its crews right from the start of the war. The US army cannot therefore claim it did not know where the Baghdad offices were. Did it at least warn the journalists about an imminent bombing? The outcome was predictable. Yet another journalist was killed covering this very deadly war for the media," said RSF. Which called on General Franks to undertake a serious and thorough investigation of the attack in order to establish who was responsible for it and why it was carried out.

Shortly after the blast at the *Al-Jazeera* office, *Reuters* cameraman and journalist **Taras Protsyuk**, 35, was killed after a US tank fired a shell at the 15<sup>th</sup> floor of the media hotel, the Palestine, where most of the foreign media professionals were working. The Spanish *Telecinco* cameraman, **José Cuoso**, was also killed in the attack. Protsyuk, a Ukrainian national based in Warsaw, had worked for *Reuters* since 1993 and had reported from conflicts in Bosnia, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Pakistan. Japanese journalist **Kazutaka Sato** had been next door when the shell hit, and rushed in to find Protsyuk. "I saw the cameraman lying down on the balcony with a camera standing upright," he told *Reuters* in Tokyo by telephone. "With a couple of other journalists, I

put him on a blanket and carried him down to the ground floor and put him in a car. I believe he was shooting the scene of two US tanks west of the Republican (Jumhuriya) Bridge. His belly was torn up and there was a lot of blood there,” he said. For Sean Maguire, *Reuters* editor in Eastern Europe at the time with U.S. forces near Baghdad, Taras “epitomised the best of the people in *Reuters* – cheerful, incredibly easy to deal with and extremely professional.”

Madrid television channel *Telecinco* said that its cameraman, **José Cuoso**, 37, was also killed in the attack. Cuoso was wounded in the jaw and the leg, and was taken to hospital where he underwent surgery for shrapnel wounds. He died as he was being operated upon. “It wasn’t possible to save him,” a news reporter said. Television images showed Cuoso with blood on his legs being stretched away and put into the back of a vehicle outside the Palestine Hotel.

**Samia Nakhoul**, the Lebanese-born Gulf bureau chief for *Reuters*, and Iraqi photographer **Faleh Kheiber** were both treated in hospital for facial and head wounds and concussion. Television satellite dish co-ordinator **Paul Pasquale** from Britain was taken to hospital with leg injuries. “We are devastated by the death of Taras, who had distinguished himself with his highly professional coverage in some of the most violent conflicts of the past decade,” said editor-in chief **Geert Linnebank**. “Taras was one of our most experienced television journalists. He is sorely missed by his colleagues, friends, and family.” Linnebank added: “I note that the commander of the US Third Infantry in Baghdad has now said that one of its tanks fired a round at the Palestine Hotel. The commander said the tank did this after it came under fire from the hotel. Clearly the war, and all its confusion, have come to the heart of Baghdad, but the incident nonetheless raises questions about the judgement of the advancing US troops who have known all along that this hotel is the main base for almost all foreign journalists in Baghdad. “Taras’ death, and the injuries sustained by the others, were so unnecessary,” Linnebank said.

A US general conceded that a US tank had fired “a single round” at the Palestine Hotel where the international media has been posted. A Pentagon official who refused to be named said that “we had reports of Iraqi snipers in the vicinity of the Palestine Hotel, operating from the Palestine Hotel, proving that this desperate and dying

regime will stop at nothing to cling to power,” with US military spokesman Captain Frank Thorp corroborating to *CNN* in Qatar that “the hotel wouldn’t be a target. We only target military forces and if they place themselves in civilian areas, they become a legitimate military target. We have said very clearly from the very beginning that Baghdad will be a very dangerous place to be. This is a war zone,” he said. However, British *Sky* television’s **David Chater**, who saw the tank pointing its gun muzzle directly at the 15<sup>th</sup> floor of the hotel before diving for cover, said “I never heard a single shot coming from any of the area around here, and certainly not from the hotel. They must have seen us, they have seen us, we have seen them... there was absolutely no mistake, they knew we were there. That tank shell, if indeed it was an American tank shell, was aimed directly at this hotel...this wasn’t an accident. It seems to be a very accurate shot.” “There was just a huge bang. The walls shook,” a *Reuters* correspondent telephoning from the lower floor of the hotel said. An emotional Chater described the scene after the blast as awful, with people screaming and calling for a doctor. “Standing here right now, I’m in the direct line of sight of the barrel of that tank, if it lobs another shell it could land here. It makes you realise how vulnerable you are,” he said, visibly upset. “In all the three weeks I have worked from this hotel I have not heard a single shot fired from here and I have not seen a single armed person enter the hotel,” Swiss television correspondent **Ulrich Tilgner** said in a report from the hotel. When asked why the tank hit a floor so high up, US Brigadier **Vincent Brooks**, spokesman for Central Command war headquarters in Qatar, said: “I may have misspoken on exactly where the fire came from. When we potentially take fire from those locations, decisions have to be made at a very low tactical level,” allegedly adding that Iraqi fighters were using all kinds of civilian buildings like the hotel for cover as they fought. Later, the Defence Department’s chief spokeswoman **Victoria Clarke** responded to the questioning about the incident with the following statements: “We are at war. There is fighting going on in Baghdad. Our forces came under fire. They exercised their inherent right to self-defence. We go out of our way to avoid civilians. We go out of our way to help and protect journalists. I personally have probably had 300 individual conversations with news organisations and bureau chiefs and some individual correspondents. And the essence of every one of those is: war is a dangerous, dangerous business, and you’re not safe when you’re in a war zone. The US military has repeatedly showed restraint in trying to protect innocent civilians during the conflict. We

have said for a long time, even before we knew whether or not there would be military action in Iraq, that a war zone is a dangerous place. Baghdad in particular we believed would be a dangerous place,” she said.

Amnesty International called for an independent investigation. “Unless the US can demonstrate that the Palestine Hotel has been used for military purposes, it was a civilian object protected under international humanitarian law that should not have been attacked,” Amnesty said in a statement. “If it had demonstrably been used for military purposes, it should not have been attacked by a tank shell, clearly incapable of careful targeting in this case.” RSF said: “It’s hard to believe this was just a mistake. We want proof this was not a deliberate attack of journalists.” The Arab Journalists Union (AJU), also condemned “the Anglo-American attack on journalists while in Baghdad to cover the aggression”. A number of news organisations were considering pulling their reporters out of Iraq after the latest deaths. Spain said it had asked for an explanation of the incident and had been told by US commanders that they had warned journalists 48 hours beforehand that Iraqi military commanders were using the building for meetings. Correspondents at the hotel said they were unaware of any such warning. Spanish media organisations said Spain’s Defence Ministry had recommended their correspondents leave Baghdad and broadcaster *Telecinco* said it was pulling its reporter out. Greek Foreign Minister **George Papandreou** appealed on behalf of the European Union for the US side “to safeguard the lives of all European journalists and other journalists in Baghdad”.

In a letter addressed to Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, to protest the incidents that took place at the Palestine Hotel IPI said it, “protests in the strongest possible terms the shelling by the U.S. military of the Palestine Hotel in which two journalists were killed and several more injured.” IPI went on to say that, “Based on information provided to IPI, on 8 April a U.S. tank fired upon the Palestine Hotel, which is the headquarters of many foreign journalists reporting on the conflict from Baghdad, resulting in the deaths of Reuters cameraman Taras Protsyuk and *Telecinco* cameraman José Couso. Reuters reporter Samia Nakhoul and photographer Faleh Kheiber were also injured in the attack. In response to questioning from the media, U.S. officials have claimed that the shelling of the Palestine Hotel was undertaken due to sniper fire coming from the roof of the building; however, this has been denied by eyewitnesses who allege

that no gunfire had been heard prior to the attack. Although the U.S. military have expressed regret at the loss of life and reiterated the fact that it is not their policy to target journalists, IPI has been left with the overwhelming impression that the attack was carried out recklessly and without regard to the potential for civilian casualties. Throughout the war it has been common knowledge to both sides in this conflict that international journalists were using the Palestine Hotel as their base and the failure of the U.S. military to act upon this information is inexcusable even in what has been termed the "fog of war." In reference to international law IPI had this to say, "In consequence, the United States may be in breach of international law, particularly the Geneva Conventions. Under the Geneva Conventions and the precedents of customary international law, journalists enjoy protection from the dangers arising from military operations and the U.S. military forces are bound not to conduct indiscriminate attacks. In shelling a civilian hotel, known to be occupied by international journalists, it is the strong belief of IPI that the U.S. military may have conducted just such an indiscriminate attack; a possibility supported by the use of a means of combat, namely tank shells to combat sniper fire, that cannot be solely directed at a specific military target and is of a nature to strike military objectives and civilians without distinction. Therefore, on the basis of international law, irrespective of whether there was sniper fire or not, IPI finds that the actions of the U.S. military to be indiscriminate and taken with complete disregard for the lives of the journalists living and working in the Palestine Hotel." Finally IPI called on the U.S. military to conduct a timely and transparent inquiry into the Palestine Hotel attacks

In a letter addressed to Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, to protest the incidents that took place on 8 April, CPJ said it was "gravely concerned by a series of U.S. military strikes against known media locations in Baghdad today that have left three journalists dead and several wounded." The letter went on to say that, "While we recognise that both stations, which are located near the Presidential Palace and the Information Ministry, were operating in an area where combat was occurring, the missile strike on the *Al-Jazeera* facility raises questions about whether the building was deliberately targeted. The strike against these facilities is particularly troubling because both *Al-Jazeera* and *Abu Dhabi TV* had been openly operating from these locations in Baghdad for weeks, providing images of the war to the rest of the world. In addition, prior

to the commencement of hostilities in Iraq, both stations told CPJ that they provided the specific co-ordinates of their Baghdad offices to the Pentagon. CPJ has seen a copy of *Al-Jazeera's* February letter to Pentagon spokeswoman Victoria Clarke outlining these co-ordinates." The CPJ continued to urge Rumsfeld "to take measures to ensure that similar attacks do not occur in the future and that journalists are given the protections afforded under international humanitarian law. We believe these attacks violate the Geneva Conventions. Even if US forces had been fired upon from the Palestine Hotel, the evidence suggests that the response of US forces was disproportionate and therefore violated international humanitarian law," the statement said. CPJ was concerned with the bombings of *Al-Jazeera* offices since the same thing had happened to their offices in Kabul in November 2001, in a previous US-led war. At the time the Pentagon asserted, without providing additional detail, that the office, "was a known Al-Qaeda facility," and that the US had not known that the space was being used by *Al-Jazeera*. Specifically, Article 79 of the Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions notes that "journalists engaged in dangerous professional missions in areas of armed conflict shall be considered civilians ... without prejudice to the right of war correspondents (embedded reporters) accredited to the armed forces." CPJ went on to say that if US troops were actually fired upon from the Palestine Hotel or the *Al-Jazeera* and *Abu-Dhabi* offices, "the response of US forces was disproportionate and therefore violated international humanitarian law." Finally, the letter's closing remarks called on the US government to launch an immediate and thorough investigation and to make its findings on the issue public.

In reference to these incidents, the media in Latin America said it saw sinister motives behind the killings of the three journalists in Iraq. "The US is now murdering journalists," Mexico's respected daily *El Universal* said in a front-page headline. "MASSACRE," screamed Peru's *La Republica* in a headline in giant black letters. Argentina's *Clarín* daily said US military officials did little to allay suspicions that the attacks were intentional attempts to muffle the media. "The immediate perception that this was a deliberate act was poorly countered by the coalition chiefs," *Clarín* wrote in an editorial, next to photographs of the 11 journalists thus far killed in the US-led invasion. Political commentator **Federico de Cardenas**, writing in Peru's *La Republica*, said: "It appears that there was an ill-conceived plan in the US top brass to make journalists abandon the city." O

*Estado de Sao Paulo*, one of Brazil's largest and most-respected dailies, ran a two-page spread on the journalists' deaths headlined "Victim of the Day: The Press." US Vice President **Dick Cheney**, speaking to US newspaper editors in New Orleans, dismissed the suspicions. "The suggestion that the United States would have deliberately attacked journalists is obviously totally false. You'd have to be an idiot to believe that," he said. The Latin American media has a long, distinguished history of coming under attack from authoritarian governments, guerrillas or drug traffickers, with Colombia topping the list as the world's most dangerous country for journalists.

In a Counterpunch article, **Wayne Madsen**, a columnist and investigative journalist for the California-based news organisation, referred to the incident at the Palestine Hotel where several journalists were killed, as follows: "U.S. tanks opened fire on foreign TV and wire service offices that were already identified as "no fire" zones by the US Central Command. It did not matter. Tanks belonging to the US Army's Third Infantry Division destroyed the media offices and killed and injured a number of journalists". Apparently, the person in charge of the Third Infantry Division, and for the order to open fire at the hotel, where the western news organisations' offices were located, was Major General Buford "Buff" Blount III. In a subsequent *Independent* article published on 26 April, **Robert Fisk**, echoing many other eye- and ear-witnesses, said, "At the time, General Buford Blount of the 3rd Infantry Division, told a lie: he said that sniper fire had been directed at the tank--on the Jomhouriyyah Bridge over the Tigris river -- and that the fire had ended "after the tank had fired" at the Palestine Hotel. I was between the tank and the hotel when the shell was fired. There was no sniper fire -- nor any rocket-propelled grenade fire, as the American officer claimed -- at the time. French television footage of the tank, running for minutes before the attack, shows the same thing. The soundtrack -- until the blinding, repulsive golden flash from the tank barrel -- is silent. Then, in reference to Secretary of State Colin Powell's statements, an outraged Fisk continued "and then yesterday I had to read, in the *New York Times*, that Colin Powell had justified the murder -- yes, murder -- of these two journalists by saying: "According to a US military review of the incident, our forces responded to hostile fire appearing to come from a location later identified as the Palestine Hotel... Our review of the 8 April incident indicates that the use of force was justified."

Prior to Fisk's visit to Baghdad on 8 April, he was in Beirut meeting with the managing director of *Al-jazeera*, **Mohamed Jassem al-Ali**. In that meeting al-Ali gave Fisk a letter *Al-jazeera* had written to Victoria Clarke, US Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, dated 24 February. In that letter al-Ali gave the address and exact map co-ordinates of the *Al-jazeera* office in Baghdad, with the following details: Latitude: 33.19/29.08, Longitude: 44.24/03.63, stating that journalists would be working in the building. Incidentally, on 8 April a single US missile was hit at the exact same co-ordinates given by al-Ali, killing *Al-jazeera* reporter **Tarek Ayoub**.

On 27 May, CPJ published an investigative report on the incidents that took place at the Palestine hotel on 8 April. CPJ concluded from this report that, "the attack on the journalists, while not deliberate, was avoidable." In the report CPJ said, "There is simply no evidence to support the official U.S. position that U.S. forces were returning hostile fire from the Palestine Hotel. It conflicts with the eyewitness testimony of numerous journalists in the hotel. CPJ interviewed about a dozen reporters on the scene, including two embedded with U.S. forces who heard military radio traffic before and after the shelling. "CPJ has learned that Pentagon officials, as well as commanders on the ground in Baghdad, knew that the Palestine Hotel was full of international journalists and were intent on not hitting it."

In Madrid, meanwhile, relatives of Cuoso asked the high court to have three U.S. soldiers extradited to Spain and put on trial there for "war crimes," and to be provisionally jailed. **Pilar Hermoso**, lawyer for the Couso family, said Spanish law and international treaties allowed for suspected war criminals to be tried in Spain even though the alleged crimes were committed abroad. Legal sources said whether the case was even taken up would depend on the judge assigned to it, with investigating judge **Baltasar Garzon** – known for attempting to try former Chilean dictator **Augusto Pinochet** – and high profile judge **Guillermo Ruiz Polanco** seen as most likely to take it up. If the High Court does not try the three men, named in the filing as Sergeant **Gibson**, his superior Captain **Philip Wolford** and Lieutenant Colonel **Philip de Camp**, the family would appeal to Spain's Supreme Court, Hermoso told a news conference.

The testimony from Captain Wolford appeared to contradict itself, according to the CPJ report. "He said on the one hand that the tank



that fired on the Palestine Hotel was 'returning fire' but clearly stated at other times that the tank was firing at a spotter with binoculars".

*Reuters* reported on 27 May that it was conducting an internal investigation into the attack on the Palestine Hotel and was awaiting further details from the US military. The report was due to be finished in a few weeks' time.

**Day 21: Wednesday, 9 April 2003**

*The government of Saddam Hussein lost control over Baghdad, with the advance of US forces into the centre of the capital. US tanks drove unhindered into public squares on the eastern bank of the Tigris for the first time. In a symbolic moment, an American armoured vehicle helped a crowd of a few hundred cheering Iraqis pull down a huge statue of Saddam Hussein in the al-Fardus square in front of the Palestine hotel. Looting broke out in Baghdad, with no sign of uniformed Iraqi soldiers or police on the streets of the city. BBC correspondents said cheering Iraqi civilians welcomed US marines advancing into Baghdad from the east. US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said Syria had been ignoring a warning he gave in the previous week about giving military assistance to Iraq, and accused Syria of harbouring fleeing Iraqi officials.*

Twenty-seven journalists from *Abu Dhabi TV*, based in the United Arab Emirates, were found safe after being trapped in cross-fire between coalition and Iraqi forces at their Baghdad office for more than 24 hours, *Abu Dhabi TV* officials told CPJ. The journalists, together with several employees of Qatar's *Al-Jazeera* satellite channel, had taken refuge on the previous morning during the fighting, during which US missiles damaged *Al-Jazeera's* office and killed one of its correspondents. At the time, *Abu Dhabi TV* reporters also came under fire and their nearby office was damaged. *Abu Dhabi TV* director **Muhammad Dourached** said that since then, fighting had subsided, and journalists were able to move around the area and had gone back on the air.

Two Polish journalists who disappeared in central Iraq on Monday after five armed Iraqis stopped them at a checkpoint near the town of Al-Hilla, were declared safe. **Marcin Firlej**, a reporter for the private *TVN24* news channel, and **Jacek Kaczmarek**, working with *Polish Public Radio*, were travelling with two other cars carrying Polish

journalists when they were stopped at a checkpoint about 100 kilometres south of Baghdad. Two of the cars managed to escape despite coming under fire from the armed Iraqis. No one was injured. The journalists had been detained at a school in Al-Hilla. TVN24 news producer **Aleksandra Karasimsak** told CPJ that the journalists were able to escape with the help of an Iraqi teacher who gave the two the keys to their car.

The German Association of Journalists (DJV) accused the US military of deliberately firing at the Palestine Hotel, and demanded a halt to operations that endanger reporters. "We are appalled to learn the Hotel Palestine in Baghdad, headquarters for journalists from around the world, was deliberately targeted by the US military," the DJV said in a protest letter to Daniel Coats, the US ambassador in Germany. "We demand all military operations be halted which either deliberately target journalists and their work places or condone such attacks," said the association, which represents 40,000 journalists in Germany. Asked by German radio whether the letter meant they believed the US military deliberately fired at journalists, **Gusti Glattfelder**, a board member of the DJV association, said: "Yes, that is indeed the correct conclusion." He emphasised that belligerents should respect war correspondents as non-combatants. "In a war in which a "civilised" power like the United States is involved, vehicles and buildings clearly marked as belonging to journalists should not be attacked," he said. The DJV, along with the German Foreign Ministry, called for an investigation into the attack.

As Iraqi-Americans spilled out on to the streets of Detroit, Michigan to celebrate the fall of Baghdad, they protested the presence of reporters from *Al-Jazeera*, and accused the channel of siding with Saddam Hussein's government. Celebrations in the suburbs of Detroit, which has one of the largest populations of Iraqi Shi'ite Muslims outside the Middle East, persevered throughout the day as people danced in the streets with Iraqi and American flags. The festivities turned ugly later in the evening when a crowd of about 1,500 demonstrators sighted an *Al-Jazeera* correspondent and his cameraman and began hurling insults at them. "Down, Down, Jazeera; Go home, Jazeera!," they shouted angrily at correspondent **Nezam Mahdawi**. Police advised Mahdawi and his cameraman to leave for their own security, and, after a long stand-off, they ended up leaving. "It's a great message to send for all these hypocrite Arabic networks, especially *Al-Jazeera* and *Abu Dhabi*," said **Cassy**

**Mahbouba**, head of the group affiliated with the opposition Iraq National Congress and the leader of the anti-*Al-Jazeera* protest. "These networks talk about freedom and democracy but they don't represent freedom and democracy," he said. "To the last moment they tried to support the dictatorship regime." "We get used to it," Mahdawi said, "we're just doing our job."

The constant coverage of the war against Iraq eclipsed other newsworthy events which took place around the world during the crisis, diverting media scrutiny away from military conflict, massacres and other human rights abuses. "The Iraq story is huge. We have to pay attention," said **Michael Hoyt**, the executive editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, as he told *Reuters* that it was in the nature of the media that "when something's big, it pushes other thing out of the way." While the world has been transfixed by events in Iraq, very little attention has been paid to a plethora of stories that would otherwise have been front page stories or would have received a prominent mention in news bulletins. These included a massacre in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), killings and detentions of Palestinians in the West Bank, and a crackdown on dissidents in Communist Cuba. The Deputy Executive Director of *Amnesty International USA*, **Curt Goering**, said the rights group had been concerned about the virtual exclusion of most other international news ostensibly providing an excuse for repressive authorities to "settle old scores" by cracking down on opponents. "That's been a fear that we had even before the war started. In Cuba that's certainly happening," he told *Reuters*. The government of President Fidel Castro had arrested 78 dissidents since 18 March, two days prior to the beginning of the war in Iraq, and dozens had been jailed for up to 28 years for being "mercenaries" of the United States. IPI condemned these actions as "apparently meant to silence once and for all the critical voice of the regime's opponents while world attention is focused on the war in Iraq." The United Nations said that up to 350 people were massacred by tribal militias in the DRC last week, about one third of the number of dead originally claimed by local people. Even as it was being reported that nearly 1,000 people were feared dead – a number that could be compared with the estimates of casualties in Iraq – there was hardly an iota of international interest. The US government also benefited from the attention directed at its forces in Iraq. On Tuesday, 11 Afghan civilians died when an American bomb missed its target and landed on a civilian house. This tragic incident could not compete with more

“preferable” live television coverage of US Marines placing American flags on giant statues of President Saddam Hussein in downtown Baghdad, before toppling them to the cheers of hundreds in Baghdad and millions at home in the US.

**Day 22: Thursday, 10 April 2003**

*US-backed Kurdish forces occupied the centre of the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk. There was jubilation and chaos on the streets of Kirkuk after the northern Iraqi city fell to the Kurdish militia. In scenes reminiscent of the uprising in Baghdad on Wednesday, people tore down a huge statue of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in the city's central square and burned a giant portrait of him. US President George W. Bush and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair issued a TV message to Iraqis, telling them that the rule of the Saddam Hussein regime was coming to an end. “American and coalition forces are now operating inside Baghdad - and we will not stop until Saddam's corrupt gang is gone,” said Bush in his address.*

US and British leaders launched a new TV service into Iraq with a pledge to Iraqis that they would control their own future once the “nightmare” of Saddam Hussein was over. “You deserve better than tyranny, corruption and torture chambers...your nation will soon be free. The nightmare that Saddam Hussein has brought to your nation will soon be over,” Bush said in a pre-recorded message. The messages from Bush and Blair were beamed into Iraq via a new Arabic TV network produced by UK and US governments, called *Nahwa Al-Hurrieh* - “Towards Freedom.” It was due to be broadcast one hour a day from a specially-modified EC-130 US air force plane known as “Commando Solo” flying over the country, providing news, advertisements and “coalition public service announcements,” British officials said. The enterprise was a bid to hasten the full collapse of Saddam's power structure. “Saddam Hussein's regime is collapsing and the years of brutality, oppression and fear are coming to an end,” Blair said. “We did not want this war but in refusing to give up his weapons of mass destruction Saddam gave us no choice but to act. Now that the war has begun, it will be seen through to the end.” The messages were pre-recorded at a summit in Northern Ireland on Monday. They promised troops would leave Iraq as soon as a new government was set up to replace an interim authority due to take over from the military. “Iraq will not be run by Britain or the United

States, or by the United Nations. It will be run by you. Our forces are friends and liberators, not your conquerors, and they will not stay in Iraq a day longer than is necessary," Blair said, acknowledging that many Iraqis feared a repeat performance of the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war when Washington urged them to rise up against Saddam but did not back them with troops. "You thought Saddam's rule was being ended, but he stayed, and you suffered. That will not happen this time. This regime will be gone and ended," he said. "You will be free. Free to build a better life instead of building more palaces for Saddam and his sons...the government of Iraq and the future of your country will soon belong to you. We will respect your great religious traditions, whose principles of equality and compassion are essential to Iraq's future," Bush added. Fronted by Iraqi journalists, the content for the TV service had been agreed following discussions with the Iraqi exile community in London, British officials said. The first broadcast included an interview with an opposition group, a report on humanitarian aid, and a feature on Iraqi arts. It would purportedly be available initially to people in central Iraq including Baghdad, before being extended nation-wide on frequencies previously used by Iraqi TV. Leaflets were dropped to inform Iraqis of the new station, it having also been publicised on a US-backed radio channel which had been broadcasting in Iraq since 20 March. The service would last until a "proper, free and open" media could be established, a British foreign office spokesman said.

**Day 23: Friday, 11 April 2003**

*Widespread looting broke out in the main northern Iraqi city of Mosul, after the Iraqi army abandoned the city to US-backed Kurdish fighters. Television pictures showed people picking up banknotes from the street, alongside beds, furniture, and even a roof-top air-conditioning unit which was stripped from a building and carried away. In Baghdad, serious disorder continued, with the BBC saying that the Iraqi capital was prey to gangs of armed looters who had raided government buildings, museums, shops, private homes and even hospitals. In another development, the US military issued coalition forces with "playing cards" portraying 55 key individuals from the former Iraqi leadership whom it wants to see captured or confirmed dead. Sporadic fighting continued in Baghdad, with Iraqi militia fighters still resisting US forces in the densely populated western suburbs of the city.*

An American reporter and his cameraman were threatened and held captive for four hours by militias loyal to Saddam Hussein in Tikrit. The militias forced the reporters from their vehicle onto the ground with pointed arms, beat them and threatened them with death, *CNN* reporter **Kevin Sites** recounted on US television. "This is evidence that Tikrit is still firmly under the control of the regime," he said, designating the men as Fedayeen fighters. They allegedly accused the reporters of being spies, but a translator helped free the men, although they were forced to leave their technical equipment behind.

The brothers of **José Cuoso**, the Spanish journalist who was killed by US troops on Tuesday, lodged a complaint against the Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar. **Javier** and **David Cuoso** revealed during a press conference that they wanted to place Aznar before the highest court in Spain for his personal responsibility in ensuring the involvement of Spain in what they termed an illegal war. Cuoso was killed along with Ukrainian cameraman Taras Protsyuk in a US attack on the Palestine hotel, where non-embedded reporters were known to be staying. The US Central Command said an investigation was underway.

US Brigadier-General **Vincent Brooks** revealed from the Centcom headquarters that US forces had been running the *Nahwa Al-Hurrieh* Iraqi television channel for more than a week, and that they were reaching the entire country with radio broadcasts. He recognised that much of the country would not be able to watch the messages by Bush or Blair because of the lack of electricity due to coalition bombing. "While we recognise we're not reaching all of the population yet by television, we think it's important to begin broadcasting right now for those who can receive it. We know there are some elites that had access to satellite TV, there are also some population areas that have generators. Iraqi TV channel number 3 has been run by the coalition now for over a week, perhaps two weeks. Our radio broadcasts cover all of the country and have for some time on five different frequencies, seven days a week," he stated.

However, as **Claudia Parsons** and **Merissa Marr** wrote in a *Reuters* article, "the 'Tony and George' show will not have reached many of the Iraqis it was meant for," despite what they referred to as "the celluloid nation" being determined to bring its bidding to Iraqis through the all-powerful television screen. The lack of power and

electricity in the country meant that most people could not see the messages. As few Iraqis can actually see the "Towards Freedom" broadcasts, media commentators said the messages were aimed at the west as much as they were Iraq. "For every Iraqi who watched it, many thousands in the west also saw it. The broadcasts are partly directed at western audiences at an illustration of what they are saying to Iraqi people and how they are promoting the idea of a free and democratic Iraq," said **Paul Rogers**, professor of peace studies at Bradford University. "It is not a long term alternative to Iraqi broadcasting," a British official said. Of the five hours daily on air, the American content is produced by the Pentagon. US officials said the current schedule includes constant replays of Bush's message and slides of propaganda leaflets. The British content, one hour per day in total, is the responsibility of Britain's Foreign Office, which has reportedly outsourced production to a private London-based company called *World Television*. "It's not designed for any other purpose than to reassure the Iraqi people that the coalition will contribute towards reconstruction and reconciliation. We will be producing an hour-long Arabic language programme, include reviews of London newspapers and broadcast news, Iraqi culture, interviews and commercials," said **John King**, chief operating officer of *World Television*. Washington considers television as the key medium in Iraq, especially terrestrial channels because of the ban on satellite dishes under Saddam Hussein, analysts said. "That's why we saw so much effort to destroy television networks," said **Paul Cornish**, director of the centre for defence studies at King's College, London. Thankfully, "media experts said Iraqis would see through such blatant propaganda," according to Parsons and Marr.

**Day 24: Saturday, 12 April 2003**

*A senior aide to former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, General Amir al-Saadi, surrendered to US forces in Baghdad. General al-Saadi told the German television station ZDF, which filmed his surrender, that he did not know Saddam Hussein's whereabouts. The station said General al-Saadi insisted that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction, and he denied being a member of Saddam Hussein's former ruling Baath Party. Kurdish forces said they would withdraw from the city of Kirkuk in the oil-rich north by the end of Saturday, a day after it fell to Kurdish troops backed by US special forces. US personnel began to take control of the northern*

*city of Mosul after telling Kurdish militia to stay on the outskirts of the city.*

Three Turkish journalists were hurt by gunfire near Erbil in North Iraq. It was unclear who had fired at their vehicle, Turkish Prime Minister **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** said. According to the Turkish partial state news agency *Anadolu Ajansi (AA)*, a reporter and a cameraman were from the *Sky-Turk* television channel. All three were supposed to be transported back to Turkey for treatment. The injuries were not mortal.

Three Malaysian journalists who were attacked and kidnapped in Baghdad were reported released and unharmed on 13 April, according to the Malaysian government. **Terence Fernandez**, a reporter from *The Sun*, **Anwar Hashim**, a photographer from the *New Straits Times*, and **Omar Salleh**, a cameraman from *Malaysian state television* were initially reported missing last week. An Iraqi translator was killed during the attack on the journalists on the previous day. Two doctors from Malaysia were also hurt in the attack.

#### **Day 25: Sunday, 13 April 2003**

*US marines entered Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit. Coalition commanders in Qatar said their troops met some resistance, but that it was very patchy. Tikrit was believed to be a possible remaining stronghold of Saddam Hussein's regime and there was speculation that troops loyal to the deposed leader might be planning a last stand there. Meanwhile, former Iraqi interior minister Watban Ibrahim al-Tikriti - a half-brother of Saddam Hussein - was captured and flown by US helicopter to an unknown location for interrogation. In Baghdad, hundreds of members of the Iraqi police force and public service workers responded to an American call to help restore order. About 1,000 people, including health workers, electricity and water ministry employees, attended a meeting in the centre of the capital to volunteer for work.*

RSF expressed concern that a CNN team reporting from Iraq was travelling with an armed guard, and that this guard had employed his firearm. RSF said that the action established "a dangerous precedent" with the potential to imperil other journalists. "This



behaviour creates a dangerous precedent that could imperil all other reporters covering this conflict and others in the future. There is a real risk that belligerents will believe that all press vehicles are armed", said RSF director in a statement. He added that the use of armed private security guards increased the confusion between reporters and combatants in the conflict. Journalists can and must try to protect themselves by such methods as travelling in bullet-proof vehicles and wearing bullet-proof vests, he said. The *CNN* television news network had been using a private security firm to protect its crews, including the one led by reporter Brent Sadler that came under fire as it approached a checkpoint at the entrance to Tikrit. After a security guard in one of the vehicles returned fire, the convoy turned back. A *CNN* driver who was slightly injured was taken to hospital.

The comments came after an incident in Tikrit in which a security guard hired by *CNN* fired his machinegun at a checkpoint as the *CNN* convoy came under fire. It is unprecedented for journalists to travel with armed guards in conflict zones. "To our knowledge, this is the first time press vehicles have travelled with armed security guards. It did not happen in the Balkans and it didn't occur in the first Gulf war. *CNN* appears to be going too far. This could come back to haunt them and other journalists. Journalists should not be travelling around with guards," said an RSF spokesperson.

**Matthew Firman**, a *CNN* spokesman in Atlanta, said the team of reporters had come under small arms and automatic weapons fire from "relatively close range," either on the way in or out of Tikrit. He said the security guard, an Iraqi Kurd, opened fire in response and was slightly wounded in the exchange. No one else was hurt. He pointed to an earlier *CNN* report of an alleged assassination plot by Iraqi agents against its reporters, and confirmed that locals had been hired in Kurdish-controlled Iraq to protect the station's journalists. "Presumably we hire them to protect us, so if firing their weapon is required to protect themselves and our team, then that is appropriate. We only put our teams in situations in which we can do our best to ensure their safety. If it means hiring armed guards or security consultants we will do that. The security of our team is paramount," he added.

**Day 26: Monday, 14 April 2003**

*US Central Command said the war in Iraq was "coming to a close" after US troops took control of the northern city of Tikrit. Brigadier-General Vincent Brooks told reporters in military HQ in Doha: "Clearly we are at a point when the decisive military operations that were focused on, removing the regime... that work is coming to a close." In Baghdad US marines were involved in a gun battle early in the morning. The exchange occurred outside the Palestine Hotel, and the marines later arrested and took away at least one man. After three weeks in captivity - the US POWs were freed on Sunday, when US marines stormed a house near the northern town of Samarra, where they were being held.*

Argentine reporter **Mario Podesta**, 52, and camerawoman **Veronica Cabrera**, 29, both of the Argentine TV station *America TV*, died in a car accident near Baghdad. They were travelling on the highway between Amman, Jordan and Baghdad in a convoy of around 30 vehicles. The accident occurred about 25 miles from Baghdad after a tire on their vehicle exploded, according to CPJ. Podesta was killed instantly in the crash. Cabrera died in a Ramadi hospital around 24 hours later from critical injuries sustained in the accident, the Argentine daily *La Nacion* reported. A Portuguese cameraman was also in the vehicle and sustained a dislocated shoulder. No one in the car was wearing a seatbelt. The exact cause of the crash remains uncertain. The CPJ said it was investigating reports of gunfire heard near the convoy just prior to the accident. **Monica Perez**, another journalist present in the convoy, told *La Nacion* that the Jordanian driver of the vehicle was "scared to death and was speeding along the highway." "It was so terrifying when I saw Mario thrown on the highway, dead...and, Veronica was thrown out, groaning in pain, as was the Jordanian driver," Perez said in an interview. Podesta was an independent journalist and veteran war correspondent; he covered 35 conflicts and interviewed Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Salvador Dali, and Saddam Hussein, among others. He was survived by four children. Cabrera is the first female journalist known to die while covering the war in Iraq. She was survived by her husband and two-year old daughter. "She knew that she could die, but her passion was to cover war and she was happy doing it," Cabrera's sister told the Argentine news agency *DyN*. Podesta and Cabrera previously collaborated to cover the war in Afghanistan in 2001.

## CONCLUSIONS

Eleven of the fifteen journalists who died in the Iraq conflict were killed while pursuing their professional duty of reporting on the conflict. Five media workers were killed by Iraqi forces, namely Kaveh Golestan, Michael Kelly, Christian Liebig, Julio Anguita Parrado and an Iraqi interpreter travelling with a Malaysian Radio team. Paul Moran was killed by a Kurdish suicide bomber with Islamist affiliations. Five journalists were killed by coalition forces. They were Terry Lloyd, Tarek Ayoub, Jose Couso, Taras Protsyuk and Kamran Abdurazaq Muhamed. The other four journalists died in incidents unrelated to combat.

Two *ITN* journalists, Fred Nerac and Hussein Othman, are still reported as missing. No news of their fate has been forthcoming since their disappearance, following bombardment by coalition forces on 22 March. IPI finds that not enough is being done to learn more of their fate by those responsible for their disappearance, and that efforts to inform the world about it have been obscured as the war and its consequences has disappeared from “main news item” status. IPI recommends that the US, British and French governments co-operate in an effort to obtain information about Nerac and Othman and grant the public unfettered access to any information they may have.

IPI condemns the killings of three journalists on 8 April, two of which were killed at the Palestine Hotel when a US Army tank fired, entirely unprovoked according to many eye-witnesses, at the hotel on the fifteenth floor where the journalists had been residing since before the beginning of the war. The other incident that sparked controversy happened when a US missile hit the *Al-Jazeera* offices in Baghdad, with the US armed forces aware of the exact coordinates of their offices, which *Al-Jazeera* had provided prior to the outbreak of the war. IPI recommends an investigative court case to determine the causes of these civilian deaths.

Another issue which caused great concern to IPI was the treatment of journalists by coalition forces according to their status, either as embedded or non-embedded journalists. In many cases non-embedded journalists were denied access to broadcasting

equipment that was offered to embedded journalists by coalition forces. However, due to the journalists embedded with coalition forces, the coverage of certain aspects of the war was more detailed, because of the privileged access that these journalists were granted. Nonetheless, IPI was alarmed at the vast number of press freedom violations in cases where non-embedded journalists were harassed, detained, had their equipment confiscated, were fired upon, and in many cases deported.

Furthermore IPI is deeply worried over a statement given by US Brigadier General Vincent Brooks when he said, "that while embedded journalists receive protection from the military, those who operate as non-embeds do so at their own risk." IPI would like to remind the members of the coalition forces that they have the obligation under international law not to target journalists, whether embedded or not. Journalists practising their profession are to be treated as civilians, as stipulated in the Protocols Additional to the 1949 Geneva Convention, Articles 50 and 79. They also have the right to access to information, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19.

With such a spectrum of violations, and despite the absence of an Iraqi government to hold responsible for the killings perpetrated against the journalists, it must be stressed that IPI holds the previous Iraqi regime under the leadership of Saddam Hussein responsible for several years of grave press freedom violations. IPI calls on the newly-imposed, US-led administration in Iraq to undertake thorough and transparent investigations into the harassment and killings of journalists and media workers and to respect and promote the basic human right to freedom of expression.

With the US and UK governments occupying Iraq, in an effort to rebuild the country and assist the people of Iraq on their road to democracy and eventual self-rule, IPI would like to see that the same be done to develop the media in Iraq which for decades has fed the Iraqi people a diet of a state propaganda. Being advocates of press freedom in their respective countries, the US and UK governments should not attempt in any way to hinder, censor or obstruct a new era of Iraqi press freedom for the sake of their own propaganda.

Ultimately, IPI requests a full and transparent inquiry as to all the press freedom violations perpetrated by the coalition forces during

the war and reiterates the necessity of an ameliorated effort in the event of any future wars involving or perpetrated by the aforementioned parties.

## **SOURCES**

**(in chronological order)**

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