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The Most Biased Network During the Pre-War Months Now Offers the Most Biased Iraq War Coverage

ABC's War News Touts Doubt and Dissent

Peter Jennings may have been late for the war — while Tom Brokaw and Dan Rather were reporting the first U.S. air strikes last Wednesday, ABC viewers had to wait a half-hour for Jennings' arrival — but the anchor's bias has been far more problematic than his tardiness. ABC's coverage of the first days of Operation Iraqi Freedom have revealed the network's pattern of boosting anti-war protesters while denying the benefits of U.S. action:

■ **Thursday, March 20:** During mid-afternoon coverage, Jennings conveyed how he was "very struck" by "huge" anti-war ads in newspapers, bemoaning how "history tells you that it's going to be very difficult for people who are opposed to the war to debate it now that the forces are in combat." Minutes later, Jennings pleaded with Democratic Senator Joe Biden: "A large number of people in the country are opposed to this...but look to members of the Democratic party, particularly, to be sort of their port in a storm, their place to manifest their dissatisfaction." Biden retorted that protesters should not look to him to denounce U.S. policy during wartime: "They've got the wrong port....The decision's been made."

A few hours later, rumbling through the Iraqi desert with the U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Division, ABC's Ted Koppel pontificated to Jennings: "I just think, Peter, we ought to take note of the significance of what is happening here, because this is an invasion that in this particular case, of course, was not prompted by any invasion of the United States."

■ **Friday, March 21:** Shortly after major air attacks on key buildings in Baghdad, ABC's Terry Moran asked Ari Fleischer if the President cared about the deaths of innocent Iraqi civilians: "Have you heard him talk about this responsibility, which may weigh on him heavily today, and that is for the deaths of innocents, for Iraqi moms and dads and children who may, despite our best efforts, be killed?"

During ABC's prime time coverage, Jennings decried Bush's lack of responsiveness to anti-war demonstrators. He wondered to former Ford, Reagan and Clinton aide David Gergen: "Seeing the people in the streets of Washington

today right across from Lafayette Park, people in Chicago, San Francisco, New York, demonstrating against the war, there's a tendency, I think, in the administration to — pretend is not quite the right word — pretend it isn't happening."

Jennings spent much of Friday night's coverage doing his part to make sure the anti-war side was heard, including an eight-minute interview with two far-left leaders of anti-war groups in which Jennings tossed softball questions such as, "Why do you feel so strongly about this war?"

■ **Saturday, March 22:** In the morning, ABC reporter Chris Cuomo (son of the former New York Governor Mario Cuomo) picked up where Jennings left off. Previewing new protests, he insisted that anti-war activists represented more than the tiny fraction of the country that shares their views: "In American history, protests like this have been prescient indicators of the national mood, so the government may do well to listen to what's said today."

Later, Jennings doubted whether celebrations from freed Iraqis were even genuine: "Yesterday we saw images of a jubilant reception in the southern Iraqi town of Safwan where... people tore down a picture of Saddam Hussein and jumped in the streets, at least for the cameras." ABC's John Donovan, who's not embedded with any U.S. unit, went to Safwan and found angry Iraqis. "What I saw was a lot of hostility towards the coalition forces, towards the United States, towards George Bush."

Other networks are satisfied to factually convey the war's developments. ABC has apparently chosen to continue its months-old anti-war crusade into coverage of the conflict itself.— *Brent Baker and Rich Noyes*

The Iraqi People Should Distrust America

"The truth is the United States enabled Saddam Hussein to stay in power for a very long period of time, led the campaign to keep sanctions on him for a long period of time — which hurt the Iraqi people — and when there was the uprising...in 1991, the United States, at least in their mind, encouraged them to go and then didn't support them as much as they had anticipated."

— *Jennings during ABC's live coverage Friday night.*

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; Brent Baker, Rich Noyes, Tim Graham, Editors; Geoffrey Dickens, Jessica Anderson, Brad Wilmouth, Brian Boyd, Ken Shepherd, and Patrick Gregory, Media Analysts; Kristina Sewell, Research Associate; Liz Swasey, Director of Communications. More of ABC's anti-war bias is documented at www.mrc.org.