



Media Reality ✓ Check

A Regular Report on Major News Stories Distorted or Ignored ☐ www.mediaresearch.org

NBC Fires Its Baghdad Correspondent Based on Iraqi TV Appearance, But His Work Was Also Shoddy

Arnett's Propaganda Meets an End at NBC

Peter Arnett was fired by NBC Monday morning for doing an interview with Saddam-controlled Iraqi TV. NBC News President Neal Shapiro said Arnett was wrong to grant the interview, and wrong to "discuss his personal observations and opinions in that interview."

In an apologetic interview on this morning's *Today*, Arnett regretted the appearance of the "impromptu" interview with the enemy government's propaganda outlet, but insisted his opinions about how the first U.S. war plan "failed" were in line with the media establishment.

Today co-host Matt Lauer insisted, "Peter, at the risk of getting myself in trouble, I want to say I respect the work you've done over the last several weeks and I respect the honesty with which you've handled this situation. So good luck to you."

But did Arnett's performance deserve the respect of media professionals? Recent reporting for NBC suggests a repeat of his performance in Gulf War I, with unverified repetition of incredible Iraqi propaganda claims:

■ **March 26:** Arnett asserted in the 8:00 a.m. hour on *Today*: "The Information Minister, Mr. Al-Sahaf complained that the U.S. has started using cluster bombs in the area." An hour later, he repeated "The Iraqi peoples are complaining that two cruise missiles or cluster bomb units did land in a residential area."

But Katie Couric alerted viewers "The Pentagon is refuting that cluster bombs have been used in Baghdad." Pentagon reporter Jim Miklaszewski later maintained that "as far as we know, there were no plans to use cluster bombs inside Baghdad," and that "if you look at pictures, so far, outside of Baghdad, a cluster bomb would create a Swiss-cheese effect – thousands and thousands of holes in the target – and we don't see that quite yet." Arnett's dispatch for the MSNBC Web site revised the line: "Iraqi officials later blamed the attack on two cruise missiles."

■ **March 25:** Arnett relayed the tender mercies of Saddam toward U.S. prisoners of war on *Today*: "Now last night we

saw on television pictures of the two more American POWs, the pilots of those Apaches, making seven prisoners. And this morning the trade minister, Mohammed Salih, told us in a press conference that President Saddam Hussein had personally ordered that these prisoners be treated well. The Iraqis are aware that there is increasing American concern about the treatment of their people that are being held, a total of I believe seven now. The trade minister said Saddam wants them given the best medicine and the best food."

■ **March 19:** Arnett told *Today* co-host Matt Lauer from Baghdad: "The government here maintaining a very strong pugilistic position, you might say. In fact, the National Assembly met this morning in special session and [was] criticizing the U.S. One other aspect, Matt, the Foreign Minister Naji Sabri has called the UN's act of completely leaving Iraq, all its aid workers,

he called that 'shameful' and he suggested it would leave 10 million Iraqis possibly starving in a few weeks if the war does continue."

■ **February 28:** "Peter Arnett's Baghdad Diary" for *National Geographic Explorer* aired as part of MSNBC's *Countdown: Iraq*. Arnett showcased an Al-Jazeera broadcast of U.S. and Iraqi students denouncing U.S. treatment of Iraq. One Iraqi student charged that "my mother, sister and brother were burned to death in the Ameriyah shelter. I want to ask the American people is this the human touch and love letter your government has sent to other people?!" After an American student worried about the "pain" the U.S. caused Iraq, Arnett lamented that "it's a pain some Iraqi students might have to suffer again." At least Americans won't have to suffer through Arnett's sloppy and slanted reporting for the war's duration. — *Tim Graham*

How Arnett Helped the Iraqi Cause

"Our reports about civilian casualties here, about the resistance of the Iraqi forces, are going back to the United States. It helps those who oppose the war when you challenge the policy to develop their arguments."

— Peter Arnett in his interview with Iraqi television.

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