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Criticism for Bush Administration and Israeli Anti-Terror Effort, Sympathy for Palestinians & Arafat

Deploring Terror-Fighters, Not Terrorists

Bryant Gumbel announced Thursday that he will quit as co-host of CBS's ratings-challenged *Early Show*, but even as he began packing up his stuff, Gumbel displayed, yet again, the agenda-driven questioning style that's made him a poster boy for bias. This morning, he seemed to push for a wider Middle East war to punish Israel for fighting terrorism. "Why have Arab states done so little in response to Israeli military operations in Palestinian territories," Gumbel asked the Secretary General of the Arab League, Amr Moussa. "You talk of unified action and you talk of all the rage and yet we see no action from the Arab states. Why not?"

"What we need is not to go back to war-footing, what we need is to go forward on peace-footing," Moussa replied, looking more moderate than Gumbel, who did not ask whether the Arab League would ask terrorists like Arafat's Al Aqsa brigades to stop sending suicide bombers into Israeli civilian areas. And, the departing CBS host is hardly unique. Since the Israeli military campaign began, the broadcast networks, especially ABC, have shown increasing sympathy for the Palestinians and Yasser Arafat, while castigating both Israel and an allegedly neglectful Bush administration.

On Thursday, for example, *Good Morning America's* Charles Gibson explained the procedures followed at border crossings through the eyes of hassled Palestinians, not insecure Israelis: "Only foot traffic can pass, Palestinians who work in Jerusalem, opening their coats, raising their shirts, showing no explosives are strapped to their bodies. They're made to wait in pens before being checked one at a time. It takes at least an hour, they say, to pass through.... Even at the checkpoints where Palestinian residents of Jerusalem can pass back and forth from their homes to their jobs, the waits are a humiliation, they say." The pictures showed that the "pens," as Gibson called them, weren't little cages, but rather muddy waiting areas surrounded by low barricades. And he neglected to report that a terrorist bomb killed an Israeli police officer at one of these "humiliating" checkpoints on Tuesday.

Friday, the day Israeli tanks seized Arafat's compound after a Hamas terrorist attacked a Passover dinner, killing

more than two dozen civilians, ABC *World News Tonight* anchor Peter Jennings zeroed in on the U.S. government: "Almost everywhere you turn this weekend, inside the Middle East and out, you hear people criticizing the Bush administration for not doing more to end the violence."

Two days later, ABC reporter Terry Moran editorialized on *This Week*: "His administration's response to this latest upsurge in violence has been hesitant, confused and contradictory. Mr. Bush himself has remained mostly aloof from day-to-day management of the crisis, unwilling to risk his personal political capital in such an uncertain endeavor."

The next morning, April 1, Gibson relayed how one Palestinian "felt it was criminal — criminal was the word used — that the White House and President Bush have not involved themselves more to try to defuse what is such a high-tension situation here."

A bad day for balance: ABC's Gibson portrayed Israeli security checkpoints as "humiliations," while CBS's Gumbel demanded Arab League intervention.

But that hasn't been the worst spin job. On March 27, ABC's Jennings visited Beirut, and offered a positive portrait of an anti-American terrorist group: "It is Hezbollah, which means the party of God, that gets credit for liberating Lebanon from the long Israeli occupation.... Its 38-year-old leader, Hassan Nasrallah, [is] a popular member of the political establishment. The Bush administration says Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. 'Hezbollah was proud to resist the Israeli occupation,' [Nasrallah] says. 'We gave our lives. We are not terrorists,'" Jennings translated.

Later, at the site of America's former embassy, the ABC anchor recounted its destruction: "In 1983 a man simply drove his truck to the front door and blew himself up. Sixty-three people died. Later that year, the Marine barracks here were destroyed in much the same way, 241 Marines died." Actually, Hezbollah terrorists committed those murderous acts, not a random "man" with a truck, and Jennings knows it. Who does he think he's helping when he spins the truth to make the terrorists look like the good guys? — *Rich Noyes*

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; **Brent Baker, Rich Noyes**, Editors; **Jessica Anderson, Brian Boyd, Geoffrey Dickens, Patrick Gregory, Ken Shepherd**, and **Brad Wilmouth**, Media Analysts; **Kristina Sewell**, Research Associate; **Liz Swasey**, Director of Communications. For the latest liberal bias, subscribe to MRC's *CyberAlert* at www.mrc.org.