



Media Reality ✓ Check **QUICK TAKE**

Friday, April 11, 2003 ✪ www.mrc.org ✪ Contact: Katie Wright (703) 683-5004

WILL OTHER NETWORKS NOW REVEAL THE SADDAM SECRETS THEY KEPT?

CNN ADMITS HONEST REPORTING WAS IMPOSSIBLE, SO WHY GO TO BAGHDAD?

Americans debated President Bush's Iraq policies for months, and one of the key questions was the nature of Saddam's regime — was the dictator pragmatic enough to genuinely cooperate with U.N. inspectors, or was his regime so thoroughly evil that it could not be reformed, disarmed or contained? It turns out news organizations reporting from Baghdad had lots of information about the true nature of Saddam's regime, but concealed it from viewers.

Thursday night on CNN's *NewsNight*, and in an op-ed, "The News We Kept to Ourselves," in Friday's *New York Times*, the executive in charge of CNN's worldwide news-gathering operations, Eason Jordan, revealed Saddam's thugs harassed his staff, imprisoned Iraqi citizens who worked for CNN, and hatched a plot to murder his reporters working in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq.

"The secret police terrorized Iraqis working for international press services," he disclosed. "Some vanished, never to be heard from again. Others disappeared and then surfaced later with whispered tales of being hauled off and tortured in unimaginable ways."

"I came to know several Iraqi officials well enough that they confided in me that Saddam Hussein was a maniac who had to be removed," Jordan wrote. He felt CNN could not reveal any of their information without putting lives at risk: "An aide to Uday [Hussein, Saddam's son] once told me why he had no front teeth: henchmen had ripped them out with pliers and told him never to wear dentures, so he would always remember the price to be paid for upsetting the boss. Again, we could not broadcast anything these men said to us."

"I felt awful having these stories bottled up inside me. Now that Saddam Hussein's regime is gone, I suspect we will hear many, many more gut-wrenching tales from Iraqis about the decades of torment," Jordan concluded. "At last, these stories can be told freely."

In the October 28, 2002 *New Republic*, Franklin Foer documented how foreign journalists in Baghdad were afraid of reporting anything that would upset Saddam and get them kicked out of Iraq. Jordan now admits that CNN kept many of Saddam's secrets; have other networks also censored their own tales of Saddam's evil? If accurate reporting from Iraq was impossible, why was access to this dictatorship so important in the first place? And what truths about the thugs who run other totalitarian states — like North Korea, Cuba and Syria — are fearful and/or access-hungry reporters hiding from the American public?