



Campaign 2004

# Media Reality ✓ Check

Expert Documentation of the Latest Liberal Media Bias ✪ Friday, June 4, 2004

Press Contact:  
Katie Wright  
(703) 683-5004  
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Networks Highlight Soldiers Smiling in Prison Abuse Photos, Ignore Those Showing Bravery in Combat

## All Abu Ghraib Zeroes, Not Decorated Heroes

As the networks prepare to cover the 60th anniversary of the heroic American D-Day landing, they ought to reconsider American heroism in this century. In the latest *National Review*, Kate O’Beirne found a sad measure of anti-war bias: While the networks have relished making the names of the smiling Abu Ghraib prison abusers famous — their defense lawyers have been all over the tube and Lynndie England even gained an exclusive CBS interview — those fighting men who’ve won the highest military honors are unknown.

With two notable exceptions — former NFL player Pat Tillman, who earned a posthumous Silver Star for his service in Afghanistan, and P.F.C. Patrick Miller, who earned the Silver Star for saving Jessica Lynch’s unit — the TV elite have made few mentions of the Distinguished Service Cross, the Navy Cross, the Silver Star, and other high honors for 130 serving soldiers. Almost all medal mentions touted the decorated bravery of John Kerry. In contrast to hundreds of prison-abuse stories, here’s the Iraq rare medal mentions:

■ **ABC.** On May 4, *Good Morning America* aired a segment of tribute to Tillman. Miller’s award was mentioned on the July 15, 2003 *Nightline*. Marine Sgt. Jeffrey Bohr earned a Silver Star, posthumously given to his wife on May 3. She appeared briefly on the June 26, 2003 *Nightline*. Bohr was also included in *Nightline*’s April 30 summation of “The Fallen.” But his medal has yet to be mentioned.

■ **CBS.** On April 18, 2003, *Early Show* co-host Harry Smith mentioned Sgt. Bohr in a story on fallen soldiers. Miller’s actions were profiled on the November 9, 2003 *60 Minutes*. On April 30 of this year, Dan Rather briefly noted Tillman’s Silver Star. On May 11, Rather’s new “Fallen Heroes” feature noted the posthumous Silver Star of Michael Stack, for “actions that helped save the rest of his team.”

■ **NBC.** In 2003, NBC had four mentions of Silver Stars: an April 18 *Today* anchor brief on Lt. Col. Jeff Ingram, a May 26 *Nightly News* mention of a Silver Star application for Capt. Phil Wolford, and two stories on P.F.C. Miller, an August 1 *Dateline* profile and a November 11 *Nightly News* story. This year, news anchor Carl Quintanilla briefly noted Tillman’s medal on the May 1 *Today*.

**ABC, CBS, and NBC noted the Silver Star given posthumously to Pat Tillman, the former NFL star killed in Afghanistan. But telling the stories of medal winners in Iraq has not been a network news priority. American heroism just isn’t as newsworthy as American depravity.**

On April 28, *NBC Nightly News* took a different approach to medals: instead of noticing the actual medal winners, reporter Chip Reid did a story on people who have conjured up false histories of medal-winning military heroism in previous wars.

CNN’s Lou Dobbs has a regular “Heroes” segment which has shown stories of valor that Dan, Tom, and Peter have completely ignored while they’ve overdosed on prison

abuse. On the November 14, 2003 *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, he recognized Major Mark Mitchell, who won the first Distinguished Service Cross since the Vietnam War for his valor in the battle of Mazar-e-Sharif.

On the May 14 *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, CNN reporter Casey Wian told the story of Marine Lt. Brian Chontosh, whose “Marine platoon was ambushed by Iraqis firing mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and machine guns. Trapped, Chontosh ordered his driver, Lance Cpl. Armand McCormick, to turn directly into a heavily armed enemy trench.” When ammunition ran out, Lt. Chontosh twice picked up discarded enemy rifles until he had cleared over 200 meters of trench and killed 20 enemy soldiers.

Unfortunately, to most network reporters today, American bravery and heroism on the battlefield isn’t a fraction as newsworthy as American depravity in a prison.

— Tim Graham

To schedule an interview with an MRC spokesman, please contact Katie Wright at (703) 683-5004