



Media Reality ✓ Check

# QUICK TAKE

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**TODAY SHOW SEEKS OUT SADDAM DEFENSE LAWYER TO EXPRESS HIS OUTRAGE OVER BRUTAL IRAQI DICTATOR'S UNFAIR TREATMENT**

## **IGNORING SADDAM'S MASS GRAVES, COVERING UNDIES PHOTO "OUTRAGE"**

All three network morning shows highlighted newly published tabloid photos of Saddam Hussein in his underwear, but only NBC's *Today* treated it like a human rights scandal, inviting on Saddam defense lawyer Giovanni DiStefano to voice his outrage. ABC and CBS didn't give a dictator's lawyer time today to complain about due process the dictator never granted. Compare that to April 15, when the *New York Times* reported the discovery of new Saddam-era mass graves in southern Iraq, including one believed to be holding as many as 5,000 corpses. NBC didn't air that story. **How do undies pictures of Saddam compare to Saddam's mass murder on the human rights meter?** NBC's record of coverage suggests America should find the undies pictures more outrageous.

*Today* began this morning: "Breaking news, embarrassing new pictures of Saddam Hussein in captivity. Now his lawyers are outraged. We'll have an exclusive interview with one of them." After a news report from reporter Jim Miklaszewski, who underlined that the pictures "don't appear to rise to the level of the photos that we saw at the Abu Ghraib prison," Lauer asked if the Pentagon felt this was a violation of the Geneva Convention.

Asked for his reaction, Saddam's lawyer DiStefano changed the subject: "Well, of course, all of us are outraged and what is more regrettable that here we have a man that is 19 months in custody and still does not have an indictment or a charge. That gives me and my colleagues far greater concern than a photograph of Saddam Hussein in his underwear." (In an interview with MSNBC last year, DiStefano argued it was plausible that his client could run in the Iraqi elections, because "at the moment, Saddam Hussein is an innocent man.")

Lauer, predictably, changed the subject back to the likelihood of U.S. military wrongdoing: "Let me go back to the photos for a second. Would you allege they were deliberately leaked by U.S. military officials to perhaps weaken the resistance, to show Saddam as an aging, very human ex-leader?" Strangely, DiStefano was less suspicious than Lauer: "Well, you could, cynics, of course would put that interpretation." Who looks more cynical today than NBC?