



Media Reality ✓ Check **QUICK TAKE**

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NBC'S MATT LAUER: "YOU CAN'T DENY THAT WHEN YOU DROP THESE [MEALS], YOU'RE SENDING U.S. PROPAGANDA" ***THANKS, BUT NO THANKS: REPORTERS DENIGRATE U.S. FOOD AS PROPAGANDA***

On Sunday, shortly after the United States and Great Britain began dropping bombs on Taliban and al-Qaeda military targets, American planes began air-dropping meal packages to the people of Afghanistan. But a few journalists undercut the aid effort as somehow propagandistic.

"One other item about these food and medicine drops," ABC's Peter Jennings stated on Monday's *World News Tonight*. "They're not popular with everyone. The international relief group, Doctors Without Borders, which won the Nobel Peace Prize for relief work, described it today as military propaganda to justify the bombing." Nice of Jennings to bolster the group's credentials by mentioning their Nobel Prize.

By Tuesday, ABC had sent reporter Dan Harris to follow up on the charge. "Some humanitarian aid workers were saying this effort is little more than propaganda," Harris relayed on *World News Tonight* before showing a sound bite from a Doctors Without Borders spokesman, Nicolas Detorrente: "The main concern that we would have with air drops is that the amounts of food delivered so far are insufficient compared to the needs." Added Harris: "Some say the U.S. is actually doing more harm than good. The bombing raids have some truck drivers too scared to carry food into the country. Many of the humanitarian workers who stayed behind in Afghanistan are now fleeing for the same reason. The attacks have significantly hampered a large humanitarian effort, and the U.S. food drops simply can't compensate for that."

This morning on *Today*, NBC's Matt Lauer questioned the Air Force general in charge of the air drops, D. L. Johnson: "But you can't deny the fact that when you drop these into impoverished areas you're, in effect, sending U.S. propaganda into those areas, you're saying, 'Taliban bad. Here's a gift from the U.S.'" Johnson replied that "We're saying this is a gift of food and nourishment to people who are starving."

Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis was underway long before the U.S. military got there, and many would find it noble that a nation, attacked as savagely as we were on September 11, would make it a priority to help others in need. Would skeptical reporters — and complaining relief workers, for that matter — prefer no U.S. food assistance at all?