

False Man-in-the-Street Interview

Journalists or visitors to Iraq are often witnesses to “spontaneous” outpourings of grief or anger by what appear to be common people, or hear stories about hardships supposedly caused by the United Nations economic sanctions. In one international news broadcast during Operation Desert Storm focusing on a missile that had struck near a civilian area, a woman posing as a casual passer-by spoke to the camera in fluent English about the “criminal bombing of Iraq.” But American diplomats who had served in Iraq recognized her as Suha Turayhi, a career minister in the Iraqi foreign ministry.²⁷

Censorship

The easiest way to manipulate images is to control and censor outgoing broadcasts. During the Gulf War, the Iraqis would not allow CNN and other media to broadcast scenes of damage to Iraqi military installations—only footage of civilian casualties. According to the February 9, 1991, *Washington Post*: “[BBC cameraman Peter Jovenal] said censors had excised footage showing damage to military targets at a bridge destroyed by allied bombers at Nassariyah, south of Baghdad, to make it appear that the only victims of the raid were civilians. At a nearby hospital, he told the BBC he was prevented from filming soldiers wounded in the raid. At one point, he said, an official escort covered with a blanket the uniform of one victim to make him appear to be a civilian.”

Covert Placement

The following scenario reflects another, especially egregious corruption of the public record: An Iraqi government intelligence officer, diplomat, or operative provides a journalist or publication in another country with a false story. The story contains specific details that appear to bolster the story’s main theme but cannot be verified. Sources or protagonists in the article are described in convincing detail but without actually being named. Dates or places of supposed events are provided in order to give the article texture and credibility.

The Iraqis have also built false stories around real events or meetings, so that falsehoods can be built around a skeleton of truth. The journalist may or may not know the original source of the material, and because these placements are made covertly, they cannot always be attributed with certainty to Iraq. But knowledge of Iraqi covert activities, clear evidence of Iraqi involvement in some covert placements, and strong circumstantial evidence combine to support attribution of the following items to Iraq. **None of the reports cited below is true.**

- [A]t least 10 Saudi citizens were martyred and others wounded when U.S. soldiers fired at them after hundreds of Saudi citizens demonstrated in front of a U.S. military base.
– Sawt Al-Sha’b (*Jordan*), August 13, 1990
- Over 100 Christian churches were built in Saudi Arabia. Americans had imported over \$5 million worth of liquor to Saudi Arabia. American soldiers were in all parts of Saudi Arabia disguised as Saudis.
– *Counterfeit letter from Nigerians living in Saudi Arabia to the Nigerian daily Republic*, October 28, 1990