

# MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION

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## *Militainment, Inc.* *Militarism & Pop Culture*

Transcript

### CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In 2003 a new word was introduced into the English language: Militainment. We now consume war in much the same way we consume any other mode of entertainment. This has become a prominent feature of American life in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The blending of war an entertainment is not necessarily a new phenomenon. What is new is the massive collaboration between the Pentagon and the entertainment industries. In addition, the scope of militainment has grown rapidly. The television war has now invaded popular culture on multiple fronts including sports, toys, video games, film, reality TV and more. How has war taken its place as a form of entertainment? The answer to this question has powerful implications for who we are and the world we inhabit. Join me as we map the terrain of this new entertaining war. This is Militainment, Inc.

**TV REPORTER, [FOX News Clip]:** If TV ran the free world... TV doesn't run the world? (laughter)

**PETER JENNINGS [ABC News Clip]:** The country's most popular basketball tournament is scheduled to begin and the Academy Awards are scheduled for Sunday, so what will the organizers and the networks do? Here's ABC's Dean Reynolds...

### CHAPTER 2: SPECTACLE

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Culturally, we've reached a point where war blends seamlessly into the entertainment landscape. So we gather to watch the war in the same way as we gather to watch the Oscars or a large sporting event. In other words, we take it for granted that war is staged for our consumption. ABC said if there are world events that warrant coverage on the night of the Academy

Awards, ABC News will bring them to the American audience with the full support of the Academy.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** Producers made that announcement today but said developments in the war could still force a postponement.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Since war has become such a spectacular event, it is fitting that the 2003 invasion of Iraq began with a movie trailer, produced by the Pentagon.

**Enduring Freedom Clip:** I do solemnly swear to support and defend...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The four-minute film, *Enduring Freedom: The Opening Chapter*, showed in theaters across the country in January of 2003. The executive would launch the invasion of Iraq just two months later.

**Enduring Freedom Clip:** I was once told by a commanding officer, "It's not a question of if we go to combat, it's a question of when."

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The trailer was an outgrowth of Hollywood's relationship with the Pentagon, which has been longstanding but was also becoming more overt at this time. The 2001 film, *Behind Enemy Lines*, for example, served as an explicit recruiting advertisement.

**MILITARY AD:** When was the last time someone made a movie about what you do? Navy, accelerate your life. Log onto the life accelerator at navy.com. *Behind Enemy Lines*... available on video and DVD.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The real action was not in the movie theater but rather in the living room. TV news unleashed what amounted to be an unstoppable blitzkrieg of coming attractions.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** It's time to roll tonight's "Showdown Lowdown."

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** Here's your "Countdown Rundown" for tonight.

**PRESIDENT BUSH [CNN News Clip]:** At this hour American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** News anchors juiced up their coverage with the kind of poetic language we might expect to hear in a movie trailer.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** This is a live shot of Baghdad as the dawn's early light begins to increase.

**REPORTER [ABC News Clip]:** Air raid sirens, tracers, and anti-aircraft fire in the misty morning light signal a surprise air attack.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** The calm, in a figurative sense only, before the storm.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** The night sky in Baghdad...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** As for those of us watching at home, we were addressed not as citizens but as audience members at the big show.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** Baghdad live, we will keep a camera trained at all times on the night sky there. If that image changes we will bring it to you immediately as you see in night vision. The simple green and seemingly calm image for now.

**PETER JENNINGS [ABC News Clip]:** Just taking again another look... you could sit and look at it by the hour obviously waiting for something to happen at Baghdad...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Or perhaps we're watching a fireworks show at a picnic.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** Well, Wolf, I'm watching a, they look like a Roman Candles going up into the night sky that stand on the desert sand...

**KERRY SANDERS [MSNBC News Clip]:** Last night, a tremendous light show here, just a tremendous light show...

**DAN RATHER [CBS News Clip]:** When Baghdad was lit up, big time...

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** Baghdad, where another strike lit up the night, just a short time...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** This, of course, contained very little information value. The purpose is not to inform but to keep us entertained, spellbound, and generally on the edge of our seats.

**DAN RATHER [CBS News Clip]:** This was not the start of what some in the military would call, "the big show" which is used to say an overwhelming... awesome aerial campaign...

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** This was not the opening act of this war that any of us had been prepared for that you had been listening to and about for many, many weeks...

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** That perhaps this is the quote, unquote shock and awe phase, the beginning of it in any event that we had all been waiting for...

**REPORTER [ABC News Clip]:** I still very much believe from people I've talked to that we will all be shocked and awed at some point. People I talked to today said, look, what you are seeing now is just setting things up. When the massive assault starts you will know it, there will be no doubt.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Shock and Awe – the initial blitz of Baghdad – was only the first in a series of massive spectacles. The Shock and Awe strategy was invented by a man named Harlan Ullman for the national defense university in 1996. Much like 9/11, Shock and Awe was a media event at its core – hence the protected camera emplacements all over the city. Shock and Awe functioned to do a number of things. It psychologically overwhelmed the Iraqi military. It sent a message to the world about the superiority of US military power. And it served as a weapons advertisement for the global arms trade. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Shock and Awe put on a mesmerizing, pyrotechnic show for those watching at home. It was a must-see television event.

**TOM BROKOW [News Clip]:** (Explosion) Finally, shock and awe...

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** First, though, some sights and sounds from the past week of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

[Clip of Shock and Awe]

**JON STEWERT [Comedy Central News Clip]:** That was real...(laughter)... Sounded like our troops have liberated a Yanni concert...(laughter).

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The Iraq war movie also came with a soundtrack. In some places it was New Age music. There were marching bands.

**SONG:** ...that the yanks are coming, the yanks are coming, the drums drum drumming everywhere... so prepare...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Mostly the soundtrack came in the form of the New Country. With music videos like this one from Lee Greenwood, aired on the news.

**SONG:** You should be hearing daily, thank you...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** So we got live performances on the news, music videos on the news. Music video channels like CMT hosted war-themed videos alongside pro-war messages.

**SONG:** *It was a young man named private...*

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Some radio stations literally positioned themselves as soundtracks to the news.

**DJ, 96.5 AD:** When you need us...

**CALLER Radio Station 96.5:** I make sure I watch the news every night and I'm in tuned to you guys everyday makin' sure I listen to everything...

**DJ 96.5 AD:** The information you need... the music that inspires...

**CALLER Radio Station 96.5:** Just please remind everybody to fly the flags proudly...

**DJ, 96.5 AD:** Ninety six point five... The Mountain

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The Pentagon assisted in the production of a number of jingoistic videos. These included Toby Keith's American Soldier, shot on California's Edwards Air Force Base.

**TOBY KEITH [Singing]:** *American Soldier...*

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** John Michael Montgomery's "Letters From Home" was shot on a National Guard base near Nashville Tennessee.

**JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY [Singing]:** *... pick up my gun and get back to work...*

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Gary Allen's "Tough Little Boys" video was shot at an Army and Air National Guard base in the same area.

**GARY ALLEN [Singing]:** *... and I'm, gonna stand there and smile...*

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The Pentagon generously supplied expensive military props for each video.

**DARRYL WORLEY [Singing]:** *Have you forgotten, how it felt...*

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Singer Darryl Worley achieved widespread fame for his song "Have You Forgotten" which the Department of Defense all but took as its theme. The Pentagon often invited Worley to perform for soldiers and other flag waving events. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld hosted a special guest at the Pentagon on Wednesday, country music star Darryl Worley.

**DONALD RUMSFELD:** It is a great pleasure for me to introduce and welcome to the Department of Defense, a great supporter...

**DARRYL WORLEY:** It's been called a pro-war song, and if that means I support my president and the conflict that we just took care of over there, then I guess that's what it is if that's what it has to be.

**DARRYL WORLEY [Singing]:** *Have you forgotten...*

**REPORTER [Fox News Clip]:** Now before the US went to war in Iraq, country music star Darryl Worley, he came by the studio to remind us what we're fighting for in a tribute to those who died on September 11th. He performed his hit song, "Have You Forgotten."

**DARRYL WORLEY [Singing]:** *I hear people saying, we don't need this war. I say there's something worth fighting for. What about our freedom?*

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Toby Keith's hit song, "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue," also had heavy involvement from the Pentagon.

**TOBY KEITH [Singing]:** *You'll be sorry that you messed with the U. S. of A. 'Cause we'll put a boot in your ass; it's the American way. And Uncle Sam, put your name at the top of his list...*

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Like Worley's "Have You Forgotten," the song was originally written to boost soldier morale on Keith's tour with the USO. A marine general eventually convinced him to publicly release the song. Later, Keith made sure to thank the directors of the movie in which his song is played.

**TOBY KEITH [at concert]:** I want to dedicate this great award to Mr. Rumsfeld and Tommy Franks.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Beyond Shock & Awe and Toby Keith's Shockin' Y'all tour, the war featured a continual line-up of planned made-for-TV spectacles. The first of these was the rescue of Private Jessica Lynch.

**REPORTER [Fox News Clip]:** Mike, today we heard more, really heart-rending details of the rescue of Private Jessica Lynch. We heard them from Centcom, and I'm wondering...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The Pentagon released its own night vision footage of the dramatic raid of Lynch's hospital room complete with gunfire and soldiers kicking down doors. Later it became clear that Lynch was in friendly hands and being

well cared for at the hospital. Lynch herself told Diane Sawyer in an interview that she didn't know why the event was filmed and that it hurt her to know that the story had been largely fabricated. Regardless, five months later Tom Brokaw opted to go with the Pentagon's story rather than Lynch's story for a Discovery Channel Special.

**TOM BROWKAW [News Clip]:** The mission is a success. The 19-year old supply clerk is the first American POW rescued from behind enemy lines since World War II.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The Lynch story is a good example of what media scholar George Gerbner has called "instant history." Gerbner wrote after the first Gulf War that a "a boiling point is reached when the ability to wage war coincides with the ability to direct a movie about it." And indeed we got the made-for-TV movie *Saving Jessica Lynch* a few months after the event. But this was a natural decision for NBC given that the script had already been penned by the Pentagon. This kind of moviemaking was not entirely new. If we look back to the first Gulf War, we find a made for TV film called *The Heroes of Desert Storm*, which was a joint production between ABC and the Pentagon.

**TV AD [clip]:** Tonight's film is based on true stories and interweaves news footage and dramatizations with actors and actual participants. To achieve realism no distinction is made among these elements.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Alongside scripted material and news footage, the film included a welcome message from President Bush.

**PRESIDENT BUSH:** But the heroes of war are not just great leaders recorded by historians. The film was the first of its kind, but it paved the way for future projects that mixed public relations with dramatic filmmaking.

*[Clips of TV Movies]*

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** With the help of Billy Baldwin, the dramatic motif of the film was *Top Gun*.

**BILLY BALDWIN:** There will be thousands of (indistinct) flown here. When they get through, Saddam's military will be in the gravel business, because that's all they'll be left of them, baby.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In 2003, the story borrowed from another film, Stephen Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*.

**CLIP OF SAVING JESSICA LYNCH:**

That's her.

Okay.

Jessica. Jessica Lynch. We're United States soldiers and we're here to take you home.

**JESSICA LYNCH [CNN News Conference]:** However, I'm still confused as to why they chose to lie, and try to make me a legend, when the real heroes were my fellow soldiers that day...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Another fine example of the manufacture of instant history is the celebrated fall of the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad's main square.

**TV REPORTER, MSNBC:** Back at the statue they found a ladder and a rope. The people were determined to topple Saddam.

**JOURNALIST [News Clip]:** Tell me, will you bring this statue down? (Chanting)

**REPORTER [News Clip]:** A few hours later they'd found a crane to do the job. Here we had the appearance of a spontaneous act by throngs of liberated ordinary Iraqis.

**REPORTER [Fox News Clip]:** If this had been planned in some way, which manifestly it was not, that we can tell, it could hardly have been more effective or more powerful a message.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** We have seen a reluctance on the part of U.S. troops to help out these particular scenes, not giving the impression... But we find out later in an Army report that the event had been staged by Army Psychological Operations. The report states, "A marine corps colonel in the area saw the Saddam statue as a target of opportunity and decided that the statue must come down. The statue was later pulled down by a U.S. tank recovery vehicle." This was in every way a public relations event designed to be broadcast as part of the Iraq War movie. And though virtually all networks went wall-to-wall with the toppling of the Saddam statue, they did little in the way of questioning the authenticity of the event.

**REPORTER [Fox News Clip]:** Truth, with a capital "t," is put in fine focus here like nowhere else.

**TOM BROWKAW [Discovery Channel (Interview)]:** It was a memorable day.

**PRESIDENT BUSH [Discovery Channel (Interview)]:** It was. (laughing) It was.

**TOM BROWKAW [Discovery Channel (Interview)]:** Did you watch all that?

**PRESIDENT BUSH [Discovery Channel (Interview)]:** I watched some of it. They had a guy hammering on it for a while. It took a while to pull it down. And I watched him hammer. And then they said they were hooking it up and they've got the crane out there...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Indeed, this was a masterful highlight of the war movie.

**REPORTER [Fox News Clip]:** Well if you don't have goose bumps now you'll never get them in your life. Brit, please stand by...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The idea of war as spectacle has become so naturalized that Mad Magazine put out a spoof movie poster, which played on the *Star Wars* movie franchise. The tabloid show "Inside Edition" even did a review of the Iraq war movie. The war practically had its own award show.

**PAULA ZANN [CNN News Clip]:** Thanks so much for joining us tonight, I'm Paula Zahn.

**INTERVIEWEE [CNN News Clip]:** The war was a win for Paula Zahn.

**TV REPORTER [Fox]:** CNN's anchor Paula Zahn won the prize of anchoring prime time.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** But we need to ask ourselves who the war movie benefited? What does it mean for how we regard the most destructive human endeavor? And is our democracy better or worse because of it?

### **CHAPTER 3: CLEAN WAR**

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** It has been a horrendous day of terror with two huge and deadly attacks -suicide bombings in Iraq and Israel. And we caution you...some of the pictures in our coverage tonight that you are about to see are extremely graphic. (noise, explosion, yelling)

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The new television war is occasionally punctuated by scenes of intense violence. When an insurgent bomb targets Westerners, for example.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** There was chaos and unimaginable horror. Everywhere, torn bodies, blood-soaked survivors.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** We have not quite yet become used to these sudden floods of violent imagery. But the images afford a unique glimpse into the face of suffering and we identify with that face. This is only one side of the TV war we have come to know, however. The other side of the war, the receiving end of Western bombs, has no face at all. This war without victims, without bodies, and without suffering is the war we *have* become used to. This war is easy to watch on the couch with a bag of chips. This war is, above all, *clean*. The clean war has been a long time in the making, extending back to Vietnam, the first “television war.” Late in the war when domestic dissent became widespread, policy makers blamed a free press, calling the phenomenon the “Vietnam Syndrome.” Thus began the search for sophisticated methods to control wartime imagery in order to placate the home front. After experimenting with various media restrictions in the 1980s, the Pentagon arrived at the perfect formula for the 1991 Gulf War. Create conditions by which war appears short, abstract, sanitized and even aesthetically beautiful. Minimize any sense of death: of soldiers or civilians. When these factors converged, President George H.W. Bush proclaimed, “By God, we’ve kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all.” The first step in constructing the clean war is to “dehumanize destruction” by extracting all human imagery from target areas. The clean war prefers the view from above.

**U.S. AIRFORCE SOLDIER [Discovery Channel News Clip]:** Well from a distance, probably about 100 miles away, you can see just glowing clouds from the clouds over above of Baghdad.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** The airfield is simply a fuzzy image on his radar. From his virtually windowless workstation, he’ll program precise global positioning coordinates into each of the 2,000 pound JM bombs.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The cameras on the ground in this clean war tend to tilt to the sky rather than to the street. Weapons are endlessly touted for their precision, their seeming inability to hurt civilians.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** Pound them with 2,000 pound bombs and then go in

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** 2,000 pound bombs in urban areas?

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** Oh, sure. Absolutely.

**LT. GEN TOM MCINERNEY [FOX News Clip]:** Mankind has never seen anything like this. And the important thing is its precision, Brit. And that precision is designed to minimize the collateral damage.

**DONALD RUMSFELD [CNN News Clip]:** And it was as precise as ever before in the history of warfare.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In the off chance a civilian or two is killed, the clean war makes sure we know up front that it will be the fault of the enemy.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** The Marines say, the Iraqi government has been collecting and hiding leaflets dropped by the U.S. telling civilians how to stay safe.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** The U.S. central command says Iraq plans on having its paramilitary forces attack Iraqi citizens while wearing military uniforms identical to those worn by U.S. and British troops. Iraq will then blame coalition forces for the atrocities.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** Iraqi forces in Basra open fire on their own people as they run for freedom.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** No one is sure if it was U.S. guns or the Iraqi military shooting its own citizens.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** And if innocents are killed, the survivors will understand.

**REPORTER [CBS]:** U.S. Marines mistakenly kill a family of farmers, then lend a hand to bury them and wind up with thanks from the survivors.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The language used to describe the clean war is as antiseptic as the pictures. Bombings are “air strikes.” A future bombsite is a “target of opportunity.” Unarmed areas are “soft targets.” Civilians are “collateral damage.” Destruction is always “surgical.”

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** So you’re going to have to go back and make another pass with some other asset to determine whether you’ve actually hit the target and what the impact is.

**INTERVIEWEE [CNN News Clip]:** Boy, you’re throwing a lot of jargon at me tonight. A lot of jargon. We’ve got assets and DDAs going.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** But of course, the clean war cannot escape certain contradictions, such as the fact that there is no such thing as a clean war.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** On the second day, the plan calls for launching another 300 to 400 cruise missiles. There will not be a safe place in Baghdad, said one Pentagon official who has been briefed on the plan.

**DAN RATHER [CBS News Clip]:** David, who is left in the capital of Iraq now?

**CORRESPONDENT [CBS News Clip]:** Very few people have been able to get out. There've been very long queues at petrol stations...

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** It's almost a contradiction in terms, in terms of what we're being briefed, that it is going to be, we've been told for so many weeks and months, this massive aerial bombardment, but on the other hand they also want to go soft for fear of doing too much damage to civilians and other kinds of infrastructure.

**REPORTER [Fox News Clip]:** At this moment the people there, well the people there are never under attack, but the military forces there are not under attack either...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In the rare instance when civilians are acknowledged, the falling bombs are described as a minor annoyance.

**DAN RATHER [CBS News Clip]:** The people of Baghdad are spending what must be a difficult and unsettling night, perhaps their last night before war begins.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** One colonel with the 3rd infantry sending a message to the Iraqi civilians. The message is this: Stay home. (Explosion)

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Well it started out as a relatively quiet night last night in Baghdad, but this morning, Sunday morning, Iraqis are awakening to thunderous explosions.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Most rare is the humanizing of those on the ground. The image of civilians with families and fears is so out of place in the clean war as to seem surreal.

**DAVID CHATER [CBS News Clip]:** Dan, I've never known this city so quiet. It's like everybody here is holding their breath, looking upward expecting the attack to come any minute now. There are many civilians, large civilian bomb shelters, but many people don't want to go in those. They all remember the casualties from the last Gulf War. They'd rather make it on their own, go in their own backyard with their own children and fend for themselves.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** But by and large, the clean war wiped the humanity of civilians from the screen.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** Baghdad is once again rocking under an aerial bombardment which the Pentagon calls “shock and awe.” More explosions on what appear to be...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The Pentagon publicly stated in 2003 that it “does not do body counts.” This leaves the task of counting to others. In November of 2004, the high profile British medical journal *The Lancet* published a study conducted out of Johns Hopkins University. A group of epidemiologists used conventional sampling methods to estimate the civilian death toll. “Making conservative assumptions,” they wrote, “we think that about 100,000 excess deaths or more have happened since the 2003 invasion of Iraq.”

**TOM BROKAW [Discovery Channel News Clip]:** The U.S. loses more than 140 soldiers. At least 13 journalists die, including NBC’s David Bloom. On the Iraqi side the toll is in the thousands, but the exact number may never be known. (chanting).

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In 2006 the same researchers found this number to have risen to 680,000. Though slightly more visible, images of U.S. dead are also scrubbed by the clean war. In 1991 President George H.W. Bush ordered a ban on press access to returning U.S. caskets. A decade later, President George W. Bush strictly enforced the ban. Some of the few glimpses of the cost of war to U.S. families are seen in photos leaked to the *Seattle Times*. The U.S. military budget in 2005 approached the budgets of all other countries on earth combined. By comparison the Iraqi army in the 2003 invasion was only 1/400<sup>th</sup> of this size. What we call war has thus changed dramatically from the war of our grandparents, and it comes with a new language. The guiding metaphor by which we talk about this new clean looking war is, not surprisingly, a clean-up job.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** Would you characterize this as mop-up operations?

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** And the military says it’s still mopping up small pockets of resistance in the town.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** It’s only a matter of time before the U.S. and coalition forces get the job done in Iraq.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** The pilot who goes by the call sign Mr. Clean simply flies the B-1 to an optimum release point for the j-dems to begin their lethal glide.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** And the clean war must contend with plenty of dirt.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** Planning to detonate a dirty bomb in the U.S.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** The big fear, they might fight dirty.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** But they're raiding the home of a notorious woman known as "Dr. Germ."

**DAN RATHER [CBS News Clip]:** Secretary of State Colin Powell called the fugitive dictator, and I quote, "a piece of trash waiting to be collected by U.S. forces hunting him."

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Another powerful metaphor that accompanies the clean war is that of the hunt.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Even to the degree of chasing one ghostly figure running down the road.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** He went down to the ground. Yeah, he just dove on the ground, he's moving again.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** One Taliban escaped by heading to a mosque.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** We get a good sense of the hunting metaphor at work by looking at the way Fox News treated some footage released by the Pentagon during the 2001 Afghan invasion. The footage came from an AC-130 gunship, nicknamed "Azrael" for the angel of death in the Quran. Even though the glowing figures on the ground were human beings, the effect was the same as someone, say, zapping insects.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** The gunship finishes off the job.

**SOLDIER ON RADIO:** Get ready!

**SOLDIER ON RADIO:** Take on the other guys.

**SOLDIER ON RADIO:** Alright, he got the other guy.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** One last look, and back to base.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Like the clean-up job, the hunting metaphor casts the business of killing humans into something more palatable. Abstracting the war into a hunt for a few game animals gives us a very selective view of what is at stake, but it does make war TV friendly.

**REPORTER:** On "American Morning", stepping up the hunt for Saddam Hussein.

**PRESIDENT BUSH [MSNBC News Clip]:** I don't know how close we are to getting Saddam Hussein. You know, it's closer than we were yesterday, I guess. All I know is we're on the hunt.

**DAN RATHER [CBS News Clip]:** U.S. forces hunting for Saddam Hussein have new leads.

**DONALD RUMSFELD [CNN News Clip]:** Will be hunted down and treated with accordingly.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** We're still hoping to hunt them down as you are looking at tanks rolling their way through Baghdad.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The clean war so dominates the screen that we actually need to be reminded that when bombs fall, people die. After all, there is a small chance that we may be exposed to images of human suffering that slip through the cracks. If this were to happen and we didn't have warnings like this one from Dan Rather, we might not know what to think.

**DAN RATHER [CBS News Clip]:** That the leadership of the United States feels it's very important for people to understand and that is, quote, "Americans ought to be prepared for loss of life", which is to say, must be prepared for loss of life; loss of the lives of our own fighting men and women, as well as those of the British and Australians who are (inaudible), and the loss of life inside Iraq. Does it need to be said?

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Strangely, it does.

## CHAPTER 4: TECHNO-FETISHISM

**JOHN ELLIOT [MSNBC News Clip]:** You're looking at some of the B-1 Bombers that haven't been deployed from Ellsworth Air Force base yet but this morning, around 4am local time, the first three took off. And when you're three hundred feet away from them when they do it, you hear it in your shoes and feel it in your gut.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In the time leading up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, MSNBC's John Elliot had a job to do. His task was to lead us around a virtual showroom of military hardware. Mr. Elliot's enthusiasm for his job was unmistakable. He was a kid in a candy store.

**JOHN ELLIOT [MSNBC News Clip]:** Just imagine, seven of these U's just for the cause. I want to walk you here from the ground first. This is the boxer. This

an amphibious assault ship. You see the crewmembers lining up there. These are the sea knights here, these are the transport helicopters...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The message was clear enough: the proper attitude to take toward these machines of destruction is not somberness but delight.

**JOHN ELLIOT [MSNBC News Clip]:** And then another base here in San Diego, Miramar. You hear those things buzzing overhead quite a bit. Big monsters here! Also have some aerial views...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Elliot wasn't the only one. Together the major networks dispatched a choir of reporters to sing the praises of the high tech war machine.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** The U.S. appears to have assembled now, an awesome display of missiles within striking range.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** The fourth infantry today is the world's deadliest, most technologically advanced, armored division. A mighty second wave of American power, about to break on Iraq.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** These twenty-seven ton machines, that's roughly the weight of four elephants, that pound over flat terrain at nearly fifty miles an hour. Delivering infantry close to their objectives, while shielding them from hostile fire. Plus, they can swim!

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** I've got to tell you, my favorite aircraft, the A-10 Wart Hog, I love the Wart Hogs.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Behind me, there are M-109 Paladins. Gonna step out of the way. You can see about a battery of these...

**REPORTER [ABC News Clip]:** Of course they have others at their disposal, including the fifty-caliber machine gun, which can fire 800 rounds a minute.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** A very interesting thing I might want to point here out on the F-18. You might be able to pick it out and that is the bunker busters. A lot of talk about the weaponry used in this conflict with Iraq...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The networks also deployed an endless caravan of animated stat sheets for various weapons systems. Weapons became central characters in the drama, and the war movie featured a cast of dozens. In the near total absence of meaningful public debates about the wisdom of invading Iraq, we were inundated with meaningless trivia regarding the weapons of the invasion.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** Which U.S. battle group, on patrol in the Persian Gulf, is now stationed closest to Iraq? Is it A, the USS Abraham Lincoln; B the USS Constellation; or C, the USS Harry Truman? The answer coming up on the “Showdown Lowdown”.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** This obsession with weapons of war has a name: techno-fetishism. Weapons appear to take on a magical aura. They become centerpieces in a cult of worship.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** The test is of the newest, biggest baddest U.S bomb...

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Now this is the first live test of a MOAB and we expect to get video of this test up here at the Pentagon sometime today....

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** When the Pentagon showcased the largest conventional bomb in its arsenal, the MOAB, the networks went wall to wall with rituals of devotion.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** And we have been told they will try and release some pictures to us...

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** The MOAB carries 18,000 pounds of high explosives and on impact, creates a 10,000-foot high mushroom like cloud, that looks and feels like a nuclear weapon.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Apart from gazing at the majesty of these bombs, we were also invited to step inside these high-tech machines and take them for a spin. Thanks to anchors like Lester Holt, for example, we can ride in a B-1 bomber.

**LESTER HOLT [MSNBC News Clip]:** I was on a simulated bombing mission, in a B-1 several months ago...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** And we even found ourselves in the cockpit.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** But over Iraq, the B-1’s will likely be operating much higher, as they were during this simulated bombing mission MSNBC flew on last fall over Texas.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** And also aboard the B2 Bomber, perhaps we were as giddy as anchor Greta Van Susteren to try our hand at the controls.

**GRETA VAN SUSTERN:** How do you steer this thing, I mean there is no; you have a stick, is that right?

**U.S. PILOT:** Sure, we have ... both of us have matching center stick, with left throttles. You can do everything from that side of the cockpit that I can do from this side of the cockpit...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** President Bush acted out this wish in 2003 as part of a photo opportunity. Daydreaming about riding in a fighter plane thus became an official national pastime.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** The President chose to fly in on a NAVY jet because he wanted to experience landing on a carrier short deck and the adrenaline rush that comes with it.

**PO3 WINSTON CANTON U.S. NAVY [CBS News Clip]:** He was like catching his breath. He was just like, "uuhhh why." You know he had to take a little time to pause for a second.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** He had hoped to be in one of the sexier Fighter Jets but that idea was grounded by the secret service. That wasn't the end of the President's experience on the flight deck. He was also treated to the teeth rattling power of the F-18 as they rocketed off the Lincoln in their final mission.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** If we don't have a president or a news anchor handy, sometimes we just hitch a ride. Or if we have the means, we can purchase one of the military vehicles on the consumer market. Not only are we invited to fantasize about being in the driver's seat, we are routinely invited to peer through the crosshairs too. These repeated modes of imaging war cultivate new modes of perception, new relationships to the tools of state violence. In other words, we become accustomed to "seeing" through the machines of war.

**DAN RATHER [CBS News Clip]:** Byron's report was taped using a special "night scope" lens.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** These modes of seeing position us not as third party observers, as citizens, but rather as woven into the apparatus of battle.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** The fully digitized M-1A2 tank. If the enemy stays together...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Apart from ritualistic worship, the fetishizing of weapons also demands that they be depicted as objects of beauty. The romance of the still photograph will do the trick. Weapons sometimes take on sexual symbolism.

Weapons are often shot in silhouette against a sunset. These techniques can be found in a number of places such as in military recruiting ads, in music videos on the war movie soundtrack. Movies like *Saving Jessica Lynch* or *The Heroes of Desert Storm* are chocked full of weapons against sunsets. We don't have to look far for a caption to these images.

**GERALDO RIVERA [FOX News Clip]:** The forces on the front facing what's left of Iraq armed service may soon see those Buffalo Soldiers and the rest of "Task Force Iron-horse" galloping over the horizon riding 500 heavy tanks and other armored equipment. That's it for Kuwait City, back to you.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Our going to be a sight for sore eyes; Geraldo Rivera from Kuwait, thank you.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The final aspect of weapons fetishism ascribes an inherent moral goodness to technology. An act of destruction is regarded as more righteous if caused by high tech weapons as opposed to low tech.

**WEAPON PROMO AD:** Swift, surgical, powerful; more accurate weapons, more advanced technology...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The story of the inherent virtue of high tech weaponry is often told through the language of "civilization" versus "barbarism." High tech weapons are used as evidence of the moral superiority of the countries that wield them.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** They better not mess with the United States of America and they better not mess with civilized countries, because we are going to defend ourselves and we are going to stand up for civilization against these barbarians.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** If this aspect of technofetishism is to make sense, it must be accompanied by a constant reminder of the disparity between high tech and low tech.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** A combination of skills, ranging from diplomacy to high-tech combat. Enable them to operate amidst an ancient culture.

**REPORTER:** And through its narrow valleys, you can fly over places that look like the Stone Age.

**REPORTER:** With a faithful weapon, the Cobra helicopter.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** One can only see through a night-vision lens. Technology believed to be in short supply in the Iraqi Army.

**TOM BROKAW [Discovery Channel News Clip]:** More evidence of the huge technological gap that has developed between the U.S. and Iraq since operation Desert Storm.

**INTERVIEWEE [Discovery Channel News Clip]:** So this time around, it was literally almost a no contest.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** Iraqis are taking on American troops, sometimes armed with nothing more than a flintlock rifle. They take on tanks with their sedans.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** This disparity is even represented graphically. The low-tech side of the war equation is often rendered in a jagged typewriter font. High tech weapons also blend with national symbols.

**NAVY [RECRUITMENT AD]:** And to think, somewhere some poor guy is buying a minivan. Navy. Accelerate your life.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In 2001, military recruiters began to make the appeal to technofetishism a major part of their advertising campaigns.

**NAVY [RECRUITMENT AD]:** Why should you consider getting an education in the Navy? This is one of your classrooms! Because rocket science is more fun when you actually have rockets. Navy. Accelerate your life!

**ARMY [RECRUITMENT AD]:** You ever been around anything this fast before? Yeah, in my last job.

**NAVY [RECRUITMENT AD]:** It's the most powerful weapon system ever invented. Its called AGES, and it's one of the amazing technologies that you'll find only in the United States Navy. Navy. Accelerate your life.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** TV news and recruitment ads seem to be borrowing from the same set of images. This is significant. It signals that the two are telling essentially the same story.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** There's a saying in the military, "train like you fight, fight like you train." A mantra, American air crews have faith will keep them alive and help them get the job done as America once again goes to war.

## CHAPTER 5: DEMONIZATION

**TOM BROKAW [Discovery Channel News Clip]:** He is the Ace of Spades in the playing cards of the regime's most wanted members. His whereabouts are the subject of speculation and wild rumor.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In order for the Iraq war movie to be properly dramatic, it needed to construct a proper villain. Saddam Hussein, with his well known record of dictatorial rule and mass murder, made this an easy task. But the picture of Hussein drawn by the dominant news media was highly selective. One crucial fact remained invisible. During the 1980's, the period of his worst human rights violations, Hussein was a close U.S. ally. Billions of dollars of U.S. military aid – including chemical and biological weapons - helped keep Hussein's minority Baathist party in power. This fact was obvious to many Iraqi immigrants living in the U.S., but it was a part of the story left out for American audiences.

**IRAQI CIVILIAN [CNN]:** Saddam is not our president. Saddam is an agent of the West. So the people who brought him into power, it's about time to clean up their mess and get him out.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In 1990, Hussein disobeyed his American benefactors and invaded Kuwait. Thus began the long term effort to replace him, perhaps with someone as politically useful as the old Hussein. In a rare instance of historical reflection, Peter Jennings reminisced about this radical shift.

**PETER JENNINGS [ABC News Clip]:** From ally to enemy; the astonishing American relationship with Saddam Hussein over the last twenty years it astonishes people who've followed the region all these years of how the United States' relationship with him has changed in so many ways and it will be...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** But this important fact was notably absent in the lead up to the 2003 U.S. overthrow of the Iraqi government. This allowed the symbolic process known as "demonization" to begin in full. This process transformed Saddam Hussein from a local thug to public enemy number one in order to mobilize support for the impending invasion. The first step in this process was the reduction of the war to a conflict between one good guy and one bad guy. This was often accomplished graphically by facing off photos of Presidents Bush and Hussein.

**REPORTER [NBC News Clip]:** Mr. Bush set a one-day deadline...

**PRESIDENT BUSH [CNN News Clip]:** He can either get rid of his weapons, or the United States will disarm this man.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** Showdown: Iraq

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The contest had all the intrigue and trash talk of a grade school playground.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** This is not new rhetoric for him. I remember it vividly from 1991. He couldn't do it then; can he do it now?

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** What do you think of Saddam's statements? We won the war, that's a lot of chutzpah, isn't it?

**INTERVIEWEE [FOX News Clip]:** It sure is.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Also a string of insults from Iraq's foreign minister Naji Sabri directed at President Bush and Prime Minister Blair. He called them warmongers, war criminals, cowboys, idiots...

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Are you surprised that he's still here, still giving us a hard time, in 2003?

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** As the invasion approached, the sense of a duel between one black hat and one white hat intensified.

**WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY [CBS]:** Tonight the American people will know that Saddam Hussein has committed his final act of defiance.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** Countdown to war. Right now, Saddam Hussein running out of time to meet President Bush's deadline to step down...

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** We are now 24 to 48 hours away from the start of the final battle with Saddam Hussein.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** and begin the showdown with Saddam.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** The President of the United States did indeed speak last night, he said Saddam Hussein and his sons have 48 hours to get out of town, and if they don't we're gonna take 'em down.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** With the President essentially giving Saddam 48 hours to get out of Dodge, war now seems all but inevitable.

**PAT BUCHANAN [MSNBC News Clip]:** Well, the deadline for Mr. Saddam Hussein to get out of Dodge...

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** A convoy of unidentified diplomats, apparently getting out of Dodge. From Studio B, let's go to...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** One editorial cartoon captured the dominant framing of the war as an OK Corral shootout. The metaphor of the duel has a cost, however. This repeated framing directs our attention away from those who will be caught in the crossfire - the lives of soldiers, civilians, and future generations. Reducing the conflict to two characters limits our ability to imagine the consequences of war. The process of demonization went far beyond distinguishing good characters from bad. Anchors consistently compared Hussein to Hitler, an indisputable evil figure.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** That the two countries who stood shoulder to shoulder against Hitler fifty years ago are united today in their fight to disarm Saddam Hussein.

**WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT [ABC News Clip]:** Absolutely, there's a lot of talk that it should be a "de-Baathified," as Germany was de-Nazified after World War Two, country...

**REPORTER [NBC News Clip]:** Now, one State Department official told me that what is most concerning to the Bush administration is that they do not want Syria to become the way Algeria was sort of a safe haven for Nazi war criminals after World War Two.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** What I'm thinking about here is in 1944, a group of brave soldiers, German soldiers, took out, tried to take out Hitler. He was severely damaged. Prussian ethic kept their top generals, managing generals, from rebelling when we all thought they would have. What is the ethic that keeps the Republican Guard staying with this guy if he's injured? There is no Iraqi war ethic.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** Instant history now for April 10th, and if you want a hopeful context for our countdown flashback, it was 42 years ago today that the war crimes trials started for the Nazi Adolf Eichmann and 57 years ago today that the first election was conducted for the new Japanese Parliament.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Though the U.S. military dwarfed the Iraqi military by a factor of 400, World War Two somehow became the dominant analogy with its language of allied and axis powers.

**REPORTER [WB News Clip]:** Say allied forces will achieve victory over Saddam Hussein in what the President calls a noble purpose.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** There are reports at least that the allied forces have taken some degree of control.

**REPORTER:** That we shall pay any price, bear any burden.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The Cold War analogy came in at a close second, as in this jingoistic bumper featuring President Kennedy aired by MSNBC.

**JOHN F. KENNEDY [MSNBC News Clip]:** To ensure the survival and the success of liberty.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Anchors routinely compared Iraq to the massive Soviet empire.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** This is the place where you've seen those pictures of Saddam Hussein constantly firing off pistols, that is, every time you see that, that is shot right here. That's kind of the Lenin Square or the top of Lenin's tomb, I should say, the Kremlin if you will, for Saddam Hussein, and that's where those parades occur. Anyway...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The analogy was most fully realized by the spectacular felling of the Saddam statue.

**REPORTER:** A couple of observations though, this does really remind you, when you saw the guy with the sledgehammer pounding at the base of that statue, of the day the Berlin Wall came down.

**REPORTER:** A moment not unlike that of the fall of the Soviet Union, when we saw statues coming down in Eastern Europe and indeed in the heart of the Soviet Union.

**REPORTER:** Chris, I'm guessing that once this statue goes down, a lot of those Iraqi people are going to be trying to get a piece of that statue just as so many people tried to get a piece of history in getting a piece of the Berlin Wall back in 1989.

**PRESIDENT BUSH [Presidential Address, CBS]:** The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on September the 11th, 2001. The liberation of Iraq is a crucial advance in the campaign against terror. We've removed an ally of Al Qaeda.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The networks also took a cue from the Bush administration and wove Iraq into the narrative of terrorism.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** Suspects, according to the U.S. military, with ties to Saddam's old regime and Al Qaeda.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The War on Terror and Operation Iraqi Freedom occupied the same screen.

**OLIVER NORTH [FOX News Clip]:** By the way, one of the things that the Marines have done so remarkably well is target these locations that were key installations for terrorists. This is the headquarters of one of Saddam's Fedayeen units; it's a training center for terrorists.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** They found a terrorist bomb-making facility in Southern Baghdad.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Fedayeen, there's a Fedayeen. Saddam, are the terrorists, as Secretary Donald Rumsfeld called them, who work loosely with, as the Secretary puts it, Saddam Hussein...

-- These terrorists, these Saddam, these Hussains...

-- Fedayeen?

-- Yes, thank you. Fedayeen Saddams.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Thus, Hussein and Al Qaeda merged into one. This presented a problem for embedded reporter Jim Axelrod as he stood befuddled by a painting of the New York City skyline in a bombed out Iraqi barber shop.

**JIM AXELROD [CBS News Clip]:** But it's not a trophy painting of the destroyed towers, it's more like a glorification of them.

**US SOLDIER [CBS News Clip]:** It's certainly bizarre. That's the only word that can come up.

**JIM AXELROD [CBS News Clip]:** That's not the only challenge to logic...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** There was one challenge to logic back in the U.S., however. In August of 2004, a full 70% of the U.S. population believed that Iraq had a part in carrying out the 9/11 attacks. This in spite of the famous 9/11 Commission Report, which announced just a month earlier with much publicity that there was no connection between the Iraq and Al Qaeda. Still in 2006, a Zogby poll found that 85% of troops serving in Iraq believed the US mission was in retaliation for Saddam's role in 9/11. It remains a mystery as to where the troops and the majority of the U.S. population received this erroneous information.

**PRESIDENT BUSH [News Conference July 17, 2004]:** Well, the reason I keep insisting that there was a relationship between Iraq and Saddam and Al Qaeda was because there was a relationship between Iraq and Al Qaeda.

**PRESIDENT BUSH [News Conference August 21, 2006]:** The terrorists attacked us and killed 3,000 of our citizens before we started the freedom agenda in the Middle East. They were... What did Iraq have to do with what?

**JOURNALIST:** The attack on the World Trade Center.

**PRESIDENT BUSH [News Conference August 21, 2006]:** Nothing! Nobody's ever suggested that the attack of September the 11th were ordered by Iraq.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** When the familiar stories of political evil had been activated, the Iraq war movie went to work on a more personal level. Particularly, Saddam Hussein's sexual deviance became an object of obsessive focus. He was depicted as a cross dresser, a sado-masochist, and generally a man who derived sexual pleasure from violence. Among Human Rights organizations back into the 1980s, Hussein and his sons did have a reputation for excess and brutality. But the process of demonization demanded that these attributes become a sudden object of intense interest.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** A brutal playboy, Uday Hussein. Now, we got in yesterday; let me show you this place. Unbelievable. Something out of Beverly Hills or Block Island. The taste equally as bad as the mansion is large, including a large warehouse, a gym, a home for prostitutes, and a zoo. Dozens of bedrooms, closets bigger than most homes, and elaborate furnishings, beveled mirrors, the finest bone china, a racquetball court...

--Imperial megalomania; God knows how much money this place cost

-- In his leisure times, Saddam Hussein and his cronies would retreat to a floating palace on the Tigris. This is how his personal yacht used to look, a sumptuous vessel fitted in exotic wood, marble, silver, and gold. And this is how the fifty million dollar vessel looks today. Saddam's son Uday would fly his helicopter to the teak landing pad and hold wild orgies on board.

-- Most Iraqis suffered in poverty; the 39-year-old Uday lived a life of fast cars, expensive liquor, and easy women. His bedroom looked like part of the Playboy mansion.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** As apparent justification for the invasion, we were treated to a veritable laundry list of questionable personal items in the Hussein palaces.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Along with hundreds of videos, we found bottles of Cuervo 1800 tequila, vodka, cognac, Corona and Miller beers, Dom Perignon, 40-year-old French wines, expensive brandy, plenty of whiskey, boxes and boxes

of Cuban cigars with his own name on them. Now we also were told that they found six bags of heroin, boxes of pills, medicines everywhere, including some labeled ginseng sexual fortifiers, heartburn medication, Prozac, and an AIDS screening kit Uday's. Obsession with sex was evident everywhere: painting of naked women, bundles of Internet printouts of what appeared to be prostitutes, complete with handwritten ratings on each, a black book listing hundreds of women's names and phone numbers, plenty of photos of Uday's upscale lifestyle, mixed in with boxes of UNICEF meant for schoolchildren.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Wow. I mean, not to say that they were using it, but drunk on all of that, smoking the cigars, shooting up heroin, popping pills. I mean, how did they have time to be such brutal dictators?

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Because the war was reduced to a feud between the Houses of Bush and Hussein, we were led to believe that Uday's obsession with drugs, violence, and sex might have even threatened the first family.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** One strange find: pictures of President Bush's twin daughters discovered in a gymnasium.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The endless talk of sexual deviance, hedonism, and Babylon also seemed to take on Biblical proportions. In resonance with the famously wicked city destroyed by God in the Hebrew Bible, Saddam became Sodom.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** And Saddam Hussein, giving his Generals their marching orders. He bluntly rejected President Bush's ultimatum that Sodom leave Iraq with his two sons.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** The death of Saddam Hussein... The deadline for Saddam less than three hours away...

**REPORTER [CNBC News Clip]:** Do you think there's a possibility that we did wound Saddam?

-- That whole Saddam thing was very odd

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** The leadership, specifically Saddam... Complete end to what someone today described as "Saddamism," I like that.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** One of the pleasures of the Iraq war movie, then, was to witness a decadent Hussein family go from riches to rags, their precious yacht and palace in ruins.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Uday's whereabouts, like his father's, are unknown, but somewhere he may be being tortured himself by these images. Troops toasting victory at the wet bar where he once entertained beautiful women, and a U.S. infantry woman, Felicia Harris, resting on Uday's bed.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** When U.S. troops finally captured Hussein, animal metaphors dominated the Iraq war movie. Hussein was pulled from a "spider hole." Cartoonists portrayed him as a rat, as vermin flushed out of hiding. The narrative was clear. The clean war was getting the job done. But in the history of depicting the enemy, this was nothing new. Racial stereotypes are common. The enemy is often portrayed as a sex fiend, perhaps the type to make off with the president's daughters. The enemy is also depicted through metaphors of the lowliest animals. A more recent continuation of these patterns of demonization occurred in 1989, when George Bush Sr. made the decision to sponsor Operation Just Cause, a U.S. overthrow of the government of Panama. This time the villain was Manuel Noriega. In an episode strikingly similar to Hussein's, Noriega had been an ally right up to the overthrow. He was even on the CIA payroll, and was perhaps the most famous of the U.S. sponsored dictators trained at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, GA. But like Hussein, when he defied the wishes of his benefactors, these powers moved to replace him, killing thousands of civilians in the process. When Noriega was finally captured, the Pentagon released this video of his office. Among other items, they purportedly found a voodoo altar with buckets of blood, pornography, kilos of cocaine, and a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** There is, we understand, a certain Groundhog Day quality about all this.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Rather than asking whether these objects are authentic, we should ask why they suddenly take center stage. Why the singular fascination with the personal lives of these leaders – even to the exclusion of more relevant debates about the wisdom of military action? The answer to this question may lie in patterns of demonization – patterns that make the Iraq war movie look like one scene in a much longer epic.

## CHAPTER 6: REALITY TV

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** Now some five hundred reporters have been embedded, as the Pentagon says, with U.S. and allied forces. They will be able to broadcast live from the battlefield.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The embedded press system engineered for the 2003 invasion of Iraq dramatically changed the relationship between the home front and the battlefield.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** Vietnam was the first war American's watched from their living rooms, but this time they'll be watching war live. What will they make of it?

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** This was a big shift from 1991's Gulf War. Instead of corralling reporters into press pools and tent cities, the executive sent individual reporters through a kind of boot camp and assigned them units.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** You know, I was a little skeptical at first about the whole embedding concept; it really has worked out just as advertised. We're getting to see a lot of stuff...

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** It's truly history in the making, with the military and media cooperation unprecedented in the history of war on this planet...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Of course the embedding scheme prompted new questions.

**INTERVIEWEE [CNN News Clip]:** None of us wants to turn war into entertainment. But, in an instantaneous, 24-hour, media-saturated world, I'm not sure that this is worse than being shut out of the battlefield.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** These concerns were not unfounded. As the war progressed, it seemed to adopt the look and feel of reality TV. In fact, the embedding idea sprang directly from a 2002 experiment in reality TV called "Profiles from the Front Line". Working with the Defense Department and the Pentagon, ABC enlisted the creative talent of two men: the king of action movies, Jerry Bruckheimer, and the father of reality TV himself, Bertram Van Munster. Together they produced "Profiles". The show, like a cross between "COPS" and *Black Hawk Down*, featured cameras that followed soldiers in Afghanistan.

**RICHARD MACKENZIE ["Profiles from the Front Line"]:** Alpha one, alpha one, this is base, over... An average day in Afghanistan, somebody will know where some Al Qaeda are or a helicopter'll crash into your compound.  
-- He's gonna end up being flown out of here to another location in country. At that location they have professional interrogation teams.  
-- I'm bringing the dogs on you right now.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld was so enthusiastic about the success of the show that he and Vice President Cheney made it the model by which the embedded reporting system was later designed. Profiles aired from February to April of 2003 as the build up to the invasion of Iraq reached a fever pitch. But by the time Profiles aired, the American public was already well used to the militarization of reality TV. Even before September 11, 2001 – in March – the Navy was making deals with MTV for its “Real World / Road Rules Extreme Challenge” where teams suited up in Navy garb to compete in emergency submarine drills. Later that year the regular “Road Rules” show struck a similar deal with the Air Force.

**REPORTER [MTV News Clip]:** It’s a B-2 Stealth Bomber. No civilians ever see this, only Air Force personnel. And nobody gets that close to it.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** MTV got a cheap exciting show and the Air Force got access to its most valuable demographic.

**AIR FORCE PILOT [MTV News Clip]:** ...Air Force base here in Missouri, we have a message that just came in for the crew of Road Rules.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Also in March 2001, TBS Superstation piloted a competition between teams of real soldiers called “War Games”. Football star Howie Long did the play by play announcing. Anne Powell, daughter of then Secretary of State Colin Powell, provided commentary. On the very same day, Fox kicked off its reality show, “Boot Camp”.

**BOOT CAMP PROMO [FOX News Clip]:** The premise is simple. For the first seven weeks, eight men and eight women, all called recruits, go through rigorous U.S. Marine boot camp training.

**MARC BERMAN [Senior TV Writer, Media Week]:** There were sixteen contestants that are in boot camp for two months. They are put to the test, grueling challenges, getting up early, being basically in the military, and each episode, one person is voted off. After the person is voted off...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** You might notice that “Boot Camp” resembles the hit show “Survivor”. CBS thought so too and sued Fox. Apart from “Survivor”, though, “Boot Camp” seemingly took its cues from the newly launched Army of One recruitment campaign, which also featured a reality TV style series of webisodes about recruits in basic training. Both had essentially the same plot. Both employed a similar aesthetic, even some of the same graphics such as the framing of the screen. It was difficult to tell the two apart, but perhaps this was the point. In fact, “Boot Camp” was a cooperative venture between Fox and the Marine Corps. Captain Shawn Haney, director of the Marine Corps Entertainment

liaison office in Los Angeles stated, “Right now, reality TV is the big thing. We are the first service to step into the survival reality shows. We looked at it as an opportunity to give the public a glimpse into the Marine Corps.” Not to be outdone, the creator of “Survivor”, Mark Burnett, produced a show for the USA network called “Combat Missions”.

**MARK BURNETT [Promo, USA]:** I brought in some of the best feature film people to help me make it look great. I brought in my pyrotechnics people, who just came off *Pearl Harbor* and *Windtalkers* with John Woo. I brought in my military advisors, who were also on *Pearl Harbor*, the guys from *Traffic* did all my helicopter stunts and aerals. The results are pretty spectacular.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** But “Combat Missions” also hid a grim lesson. Burnett’s first pick for a contestant was a former Navy Seal named Scott Helvenston, and he soon became a favorite on the show. Only a year after “Combat Missions” aired, Helvenston again appeared on television, this time in Iraq. Iraqi resistance ambushed an SUV in Fallujah, killing all four people inside, including Helvenston. The insurgents videotaped the event and distributed the footage. Virtually without exception, the news referred to the dead as “civilian contractors.” In fact, they were mercenary soldiers working for a private company called Blackwater U.S.A., one of many such contractors that the Pentagon now uses in place of government soldiers. Pictures of the crowd dragging the charred bodies through the streets of Fallujah became some of the defining images of the war. Helvenston’s story, while tragic, draws into sharp focus the line between reality and reality TV. The Air Force decided that it wanted a piece of the reality TV pie, too. Its entertainment liaison office commandeered the help of an old friend, Tony Scott, who directed *Top Gun*, a movie that turned out to be one of the biggest recruiting successes in the history of military-Hollywood collaboration. Along with director Ridley Scott, they produced “American Fighter Pilot” for CBS.

“American Fighter Pilot” [CBS]: Three men. 110 days. One will be top gun.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The show began airing in March 2002. The producers decided that the powerful imagery of 9/11 and the rhetoric of the War on Terror should be woven into the show’s teaser.

**PRESIDENT BUSH, [“American Fighter”, Promo]:** We’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world and no one, no one, will keep that light from shining. Our country is strong. A great people has been moved to defend a great nation.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Other military reality shows aired during the summer of 2002, including VH1’s “Military Diaries,” where armed service personnel kept video journals of their days. Perhaps one of these shows inspired the idea for

ABC's "Profiles from the Front Line", which started shooting around this time. Recall that "Profiles" was the prototype for the embedded reporting system. The show began its run in early 2003. As the invasion of Iraq got underway, however, ABC cancelled "Profiles", presumably to make way for the big reality TV war.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** We are seeing this battle unlike any war we've ever been able to witness. Almost instantaneous, some is very dramatic. We've got some footage from the department of defense of the U.S. Army rangers in a battle that raged last night. Let's look and listen.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** What characterized embedded reporting first and foremost was its privileging of experience over understanding.

**GREG KELLY [FOX News Clip]:** You had very little perspective on what was happening at home and then the other pieces of the puzzle. We could follow our unit closely, but we didn't have much connectivity with the outside world.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Just experiencing the sights, sounds, and smells of the scene became the objective.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Give us a feel for the latest, Greg. And also, can you give us a feel for uh, is there a smell in the air, is there a pace that's quickening, give us a feel for what it's like to be in the middle of all that.

**DAN RATHER [CBS News Clip]:** It's on a personal level of what that was like. What did you see, what did you hear, what did you feel?

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** We had one incoming, a short time ago and then another one just, just moments ago that I could feel. You know, earlier we watched bombs fall on southern Iraq and felt the concussion. They were two thousand pound bombs, J-dams, and they lit up the sky.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Only the most superficial information seemed to survive in this new environment.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** The F-14 that you just saw take off -- I'm not going to give you full names at this point, I'm going to stick with call signs -- that was Crunchy and Richo taking off in that jet. Prior to that it was Poncho and Sully.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** They are obviously firing at Iraq into the border region. They're firing ninety-six pound high explosive artillery shells.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** If Vietnam was the first living room war, Iraq in 2003 was the final collapse of the distinction between home front and battlefield.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** They are out of the third infantry division...Woah! I gotta tell you, it's real, it's a rather surreal experience watching these things go off as close as we are.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The embedding system also featured a compulsion to equate reporters with soldiers. This was done in a number of ways. Many news organizations simply opted to use the word "we" in place of "the military."

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** How would a war with Iraq actually unfold? What targets might we attack first, which divisions would be the first to fire?

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** So if we decide to attack Iraq again, what will be different this time around?

-- Well that brings up, that raises a good question. Now that we are trumpeting our location... And we're announcing where we are, what does that mean, have we opened ourselves up to any possible attack?

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Instead of a check on power – a fourth estate – the media took their role to be what General Tommy Franks called the Fourth Front: an extension of military power. Domestic public opinion thus entered the sphere of battle. If the press was now a useful weapon, objective journalism was the first casualty.

**RICK LEVENTHAL [FOX News Clip]:** Brian, we're on a security mission of sorts, once again. This time on the look out for Iraqi tanks and armored vehicles that are still lurking east of Baghdad. We killed three tanks yesterday...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Back in the studio even anchors adopted military language.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Brit Hume we'll have with us in Washington. Brit's gonna stand down for a little while, do some reporting of his own...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** By its very structure the embedded system seemed to prompt a new way of talking about journalism.

**PETER JENNINGS [ABC News Clip]:** Mike Cerre reporting with the First Marines in Iraq. He's been with them from California, traveled over seas with them, and very deeply embedded in a personal way with the Marines that he's traveling with.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** But Shepard Smith of Fox News probably put it most succinctly.

**SHEPARD SMITH [FOX News Clip]:** We have a number of correspondents in bed with our troops across the region. Some in Kuwait, some in...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** So long as reporters were in bed with the military instead of just covering it, they might as well be fitted not only with microphones but with tanks, too.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Why don't you take a walk over and talk to Baghdad Bob and see if he wants to admit that, or bring a tank with you and introduce Baghdad Bob to the great tank guys.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** There were a few rare moments of self-reflection on this new relationship with the military.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** CNN's Jason Belini is embedded with the Marine unit and he was also involved in the effort, or he was involved in covering the effort, let's not mistake anybody's roles here...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** But it was the embedded reporter from CBN and Pat Robertson's 700 Club who made no bones about his abandonment of journalistic ethics. Of course, he was in the service of a higher power.

**EMBEDDED REPORTER [CBN News Clip]:** And I got out of the Hum-Vee and I looked up at the night sky over Baghdad. There was tracer fire everywhere, bombs going off like crazy and the Lord said, "Celebrate the victory in the midst of the battle right now." So I began to praise the Lord. I began to shout out "Jesus is Lord of Iraq!" And it's like the Lord just gave me this tremendous peace and joyfulness, and he said, "You have done it, the mission is done. Jesus is Lord of Iraq!"

**PAT ROBERTSON [CBN News Clip]:** Jesus is lord of Iraq?

**EMBEDDED REPORTER [CBN News Clip]:** Yes.

**PAT ROBERTSON [CBN News Clip]:** Well now, then what are the long-range spiritual influences...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** It's hard to know whether Jesus would have been as excited as Paul Strand about the falling bombs. What we do know is that had Jesus been embedded in this war, he would have been punished for expressing anything but unquestioning loyalty to the powers that be.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** NBC News fired journalist Peter Arnett this morning for participating in an interview on Iraqi state controlled television.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The embedding system had sold itself on unprecedented access to the battlefield. As it turns out, this was another way of saying that the leash had been shortened.

**JAMES WARREN [CNN News Clip]:** It's really sort of night and day if you compare even what we know now and think about what we still don't know about the military actions in Afghanistan with, for instance, what happened in Vietnam. And I'm sure there are lots of folks at CNN who were there, friends of yours, Aaron, who will tell you instantly that the degree of access they had, the degree of freedom they had to go where they want to go, was infinitely greater than what's playing out here.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The rules had been set. Journalists who refused to play soldier were voted off the island. For the rest of them, the central plot of this reality show was clear: They were in the army now. Would they cut it?

**EMBEDDED REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** If it does come down to military action then this is the one that we've been assigned to ride in. It is number B-204. Good news is, I'm right up against the engine, a little more protection that way. The bad news...this stuff. This is all the ammunition.

**STEVE HARRIGON [FOX News Clip]:** You can see the bullet hole right here where a nine-millimeter slug hit. And here's the bullet itself, something Joel's going to hold onto. The problem with these checkpoints is, they disappear. They set up a couple of rocks, they have guns, and they will shoot at you. We got through one, I don't know how many more are going to be ahead, there might be a dozen, and is the story worth it? That's my question.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** And of course, afterward there were many stories to tell.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** I remember watching on a number of nights when you were experiencing fire; you guys were under fire.

**RICK LEVENATHAL [FOX News Clip]:** Yeah, and that is, that is frightening. That's chilling.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** I remember watching some of the video of you, standing with fire going around you, and unlike the troop you're not armed!

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Fox says correspondents Rick Leventhal and Greg Kelly were also in the thick of dangerous fighting. And Kelly, the son of New York Police Chief Ray Kelly, despite being wounded in the face by flying shrapnel, kept on reporting.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Here, the show “Inside Edition”, which would normally be covering the drama of other reality shows, describes reporters using language normally reserved for soldiers.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Among the standouts embedded with the troops was NBC’s David Bloom. The thirty-nine year old anchor of “Weekend Today” who had rolled through the desert in his vehicles cramped quarters and paid the ultimate price for his hard work. On April sixth, he suddenly collapsed and died of a blood clot.

**INTERVIEWEE [FOX News Clip]:** Who could forget those lively reports, they were just classic and beautiful. He’s gonna be missed.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Reporters paying “the ultimate price?” And with a blood clot? It’s true that Iraq proved to be particularly dangerous for reporters, especially those unembedded. But what is especially noteworthy is the focus on the drama of embedding civilians in the military, to see what happens to our favorite characters, to wonder what it must be like to be in such stressful circumstances, to ride along and fantasize about how we might react in their shoes. This is, after all, what good reality TV does. To meet the newfound public demand for the reality TV war, the military went on air with its Pentagon Channel in May 2004.

**REPORTER [Pentagon Channel News Clip]:** We’re going to be covering a lot of different stories today. From the special relationship between NASCAR and the military...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In December, “Nightline” would do a special called “On the Hunt”, where reporters tagged along with Task Force Red Dog in Afghanistan.

**REPORTER [Nightline News Clip]:** This is a war story, and a love story, and a recruiting poster all wrapped into one. This film is a co-production between “Nightline” and the Discovery network. On January tenth, Discovery will be launching its new military channel. The Discovery film, *Task Force Red Dog* will launch that channel.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** As advertised, the Military Channel launched in January of 2005 streaming the reality TV war 24 hours a day.

PROMO for Military Channel: Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, no matter what type of weather...we'll be there. Starting Sunday, we're showcasing our finest shows. Engaging you every night,  
 -- *That's one of the coolest things I've ever seen.*

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** A concern that came up today, which I thought was an interesting one; one of the problems with this is that it, it becomes almost the ultimate reality TV, and you can forget. I mean, you take the scenes of these vehicles racing across the desert and you add in the fancy graphics and maps, and this, and that, and if you're not careful – it's true at this end, and I worry it's also true at the other end – you can lose sight of the fact that this is no game and this is no TV show, this is war.

## CHAPTER 7: SPORTS

**REPORTER [10 News News Clip]:** Chuck, that's right. I'm here at kind of a local gathering place for folks in Blair County. On a normal night most of these television sets at this local establishment would be tuned to those sporting events, the basketball games and the hockey games that are underway right now. But, a little after 9 o'clock, most, if not all of the sets, including the surround sound, had turned to the war in Iraq.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** When the Iraq war took to the television, it substituted itself for the normal sporting events. This required only a click of the remote control and the smallest of mental adjustments. Audiences naturally shifted from one event to the other.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** And now, time for a quick update of the NCAA tournament.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** And Larry Smith joins us with more.

**LARRY SMITH [CNN News Clip]:** Certainly the war affecting viewing habits this time of year. NCAA tournament TV ratings down because of the war with Iraq.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The basketball tournament and the war merged so completely in 2003 that the NCAA president issued his own fighting words for Saddam Hussein.

**NCAA PRESIDENT [ABC News Clip]:** We were not going to let a tyrant determine how we will lead our lives.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** But basketball wasn't the only sport to realize there was another game in town.

**SUPERBOWL AD [ABC]:** Coverage of Super Bowl 37 brought to you by...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Football naturally militarized itself as well. Two months before the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the Navy supplied a destroyer, the USS Preble, to ABC. The ship became the stage for the announcers of Super Bowl 37.

**SUPERBOWL ANNOUNCER [ABC]:** Thank you, and apologies to the true commander of the USS Preble, Timothy Batzler, who will join us maybe a little bit later on. You know fans around the country, and we have a lot of fans here of teams that aren't in the Super Bowl...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The signs of an approaching military venture wove themselves into the opening ceremonies of the game.

**SUPERBOWL ANNOUNCER [ABC]:** The anthem will be followed by a Super Hornets flyover by the BFA-122 Flying Eagles from Naval Air Station Lemoore. Ladies and gentlemen, Grammy award winners, The Dixie Chicks.

**DIXIE CHICKS [Singing, ABC]:** *Oh say can you see, by the dawn's early light. What so proudly we hailed...*

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The programming surrounding the Super Bowl also took on military themes, further tying the symbols of sports with the symbols of war.

**UNKNOWN:** Pro football and the National Football League and the military have always been tied together. More than 1,200 pro football players either interrupted their careers or postponed them to fulfill their military obligations first.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** If we wonder who is promoting such connections, we don't have to look any further than the Pentagon, which sponsored a pregame show called Howie Long's "Tough Guys". Hosted by the former linebacker, the show was a combined effort between the Pentagon, the Ford Motor Company, and the NFL – a synergistic infomercial for them all.

**HOWIE LONG [*Howie Long's Tough Guys*]:** Pretty impressive, huh? Welcome to Howie Long's "Tough Guys". No, I'm not the captain. That would be Captain Erdesee. I'm, well, you know who I am.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Armed with his Ford truck and store of one-liners, Long cruised America in search of tough guys.

**HOWIE LONG:** Time out. You wanna talk air attack? The United States Air Force.

**AIR FORCE SOLDIERS:** Air Power!

**HOWIE LONG:** You don't really think you're gonna play man-to-man coverage...do ya? I didn't think so. This guy flat out gets it done. A big reason why the Jets went as far as they did.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Long profiled players between visits to each branch of the military and rides in their machines. In the end, Ford gave the truck away to the winning tough guy.

**HOWIE LONG:** I'd like to thank the Department of Defense and everyone who made "Tough Guys" possible. I'm Howie Long, stay tough.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Since the timing of the 2003 invasion of Iraq could be controlled, it had its own pregame show. Just two weeks before Shock and Awe, MSNBC aired a Gulf War I retrospective called "Waging War: General Schwarzkopf's Diary." James Baker who was Secretary of State under George Bush Sr. at the time, describes exactly how we have come to regard the television war.

**JAMES BAKER ["Waging War", MSNBC]:** And I remember going back to my office at the State Department and ordering up a drink, sitting there at 7 or 8 or 9 o'clock at night, I can't remember what time it was, with the television on, to watch the war start. And I thought to myself, this is incredible. And I was gonna watch it unfold on television. And I turned on the TV and the war was late starting.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** This pregame show had no shortage of sports metaphors.

**INTERVIEWEE ["Waging War"]:** When I looked at the disposition of the Iraqi forces prior to the kickoff of the campaign, I...

**MAJOR EVAN THOMAS ["Waging War"]:** I was eager to get out and do it, so it was really almost like before a big game, you know.

**REPORTER ["Waging War"]:** When "Waging War" returns, a violent surprise from Saddam.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The new war was shaping up to be a replaying of an old rivalry.

**INTERVIEWEE [“Waging War”]:** We think their generals were just scared to death.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Like the Super Bowl pregame shows, the war had its own set of countdown clocks. This let us know if we had enough time to order up a drink and relax before the kickoff.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** Troops on the move right now, just 28 hours from the deadline, taking up their perhaps pre-attack positions. Here the latest now, in the showdown with Saddam Hussein.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** As the 2003 invasion approached, the language of sports took a naturally prominent place in the coverage.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** Just a spectacular day here in San Diego, and as the world waits for the Super Bowl here, the world’s changing here.

**RICK LEVANTHAL [FOX News Clip]:** Certainly, you know, there is a sense that the game is on.

**GENERAL BUCK KERNAN [CBS News Clip]:** This is not, by any means, the start of a campaign. It’s sort of like the coin toss of a football game.

**TOM FENTON [CBS News Clip]:** Clearly, I don’t think the kickoff was intended to be this target of opportunity.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** One of the missiles landed within one football field of Camp Commando.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** If they move in a direction, it would be right out there in front. It would sort of be the blockers on a football team, as it were.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In the studio, the term “chalk talk” applied just as easily to the general as the coach.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Chuck, give us the chalk talk:

**TV REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Absolutely, Brian. Let’s jump right to the screenwriter because there’s been...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Banter about favorite teams also fit right into the war coverage.

**EMBEDDED REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** How ‘bout them ‘Dogs?

**SOLDIER [FOX News Clip]:** How 'bout them 'Dogs. Whoa.

**SHEPARD SMITH [FOX News Clip]:** The Knicks lost again, season over, just so you know. I didn't use most of the tickets because of the war, Rick. And then tonight, the Yankees lose 7-6 to Toronto up at the stadium, which was only their second loss of the year. It was a great game, outstanding game, it seemed like every batter went to a full count.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Apart from the spectator sport quality of war coverage, the U.S. military radically shifted recruiting strategies in 2001. For example, the Army and Navy both began sponsoring NASCAR teams. The new campaigns took advantage of the language and imagery of sports. Other ad campaigns seemed to equate war with a leisure time activity. The Army of One campaign in particular appealed to the new culture of extreme sports.

**ARMY [Recruitment Ad 1]:** Even though I'm a part of the strongest Army in the world, I am my own force.

**ARMY [Recruitment Ad 2]:** At basic training I'm looking forward to the obstacle course. I think that's going to be really fun. Your duty today is personal courage. My biggest fear is, climbing down. Like, the scary thing for me.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The ad makers for the Marines got onboard with extreme sports as well.

**VIN DIESEL [XXX]:** This is gonna be one hell of a trick.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Indeed, the U.S. military appeared to be taking a page out of the 2002 Vin Diesel spy movie, XXX. The metaphor of war as a spectator sport has powerful implications. The metaphor naturalizes violent conflict, framing it as another channel of entertainment. This quip from "The Daily Show" captures the prevalence and power of the spectator sport metaphor.

**JON STEWERT [The Daily Show]:** Americans, are, we are a passionate people, we are a nationalistic people, we can get into those kinds of rivalries as well.

**Interviewee [The Daily Show]:** Yeah, yeah, but Americans don't need a metaphor for war. We have war. If anything, we use war as a metaphor for sports.

**SHEPARD SMITH [FOX News Clip]:** Would have been their third – that was their third loss

**REPORTER [Fox News Clip]:** Correct.

**SHEPARD SMITH [FOX News Clip]:** Still, yeah the BoSox fan in the ceiling needs to just get over himself. Anyway, that's about all the sports I have for you. I guess you saw the final round of the Masters, right?

## CHAPTER 8: TOYS

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** A presidential address to the nation. From CBS news headquarters in New York, here is Dan Rather.

**DAN RATHER [CBS News Clip]:** Good evening. President Bush is about to address the nation from the flight deck of the Navy aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln.

**CYNTHIA BOWERS [CBS]:** Dan, this flight deck will be the backdrop for the president's speech tonight in which he will announce an end to major combat operations in Iraq.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** After President Bush made instant history aboard this aircraft carrier, Blue Box toys began producing a presidential action figure as part of their Elite Force collection. KB toy stores found it to be a best seller. After all, like any big budget Hollywood production, the Iraq war movie demanded merchandise. By all accounts, this was the first time a sitting president had been marketed as an action figure without a trace of irony. The TV war generated an onslaught of other war-themed merchandise, too, like Military Monopoly, a series of Topps trading cards, playing cards based on those issued to troops, and other collectables. For unknown reasons, military bears became a favorite, resulting in some strange combinations. The Hamilton Collection released this figurine in its line of "Faithful Fuzzies." With an M16, this bear struck a pose somewhere between unconditional love and unstoppable killing machine. Another toymaker hit upon the idea for the popular Shock & Awe twin bears. Notice their lovingly embroidered names. Recognizing the new absurd levels of war bear mania in 2003, one manufacturer released a satirical bear with a T-shirt reading "Give Us Your Oil or We Will Kill You." But war bears didn't hold a candle to the skyrocketing sales of action figures – especially during the Christmas and Easter seasons leading up to the Iraq invasion.

**FELICIA TAYLOR [NBC News Clip]:** Overall, the toy industry is a \$20 billion dollar business and sales of action figures have gone up about five times, just as preparations for the war began. But children only form part of the market. 40-60%

of sales of action figures come from teenagers and the older adult male consumer.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** This time, these were not your average toy soldiers. This new breed of action figures took its cues directly from the television war.

**MANUFACTURER REP. [NBC News Clip]:** This is currently a figure we've worked on that'll be available toward the fall of the year all around our troops that are currently fighting in the Middle East.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** One toy producer summarized this new trend: "We started working when the 'Showdown' buzzword hit the airwaves." There's fierce competition between manufacturers to get the new things out first. Beyond startup toymakers capitalizing on the new TV war, old standards like GI Joe began producing realistic desert-themed sets of U.S. and Israeli soldiers.

**INTERVIEWEE [NBC News Clip]:** GI Joe's having a very good year, but GI Joe is doing very well primarily because it's been remarketed...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The Army eventually caught wind of the success of action figures and released its own in 2006. The Real Heroes series took the war toy to another level. Not only were the toys based on the occupation of Iraq, they depicted actual individual soldiers who had served there. The association between toys and the TV war was perhaps most vividly captured in an Easter 2003 best seller – Ever Sparkle's Military Forward Command Post – what amounted to a bombed out dollhouse. The play set seemed to capture the essence of the "war on terror" described by president Bush, that war had in a sense "come home." The absurdity of this play set could not escape comment on "The Daily Show".

**THE DAILY SHOW [News Clip]:** And it's a good thing. I gotta tell you, I love – this is – I mean, come on! This is like the Malibu Dream House re-imagined after a carpet bombing somewhere in, like, Afghanistan or something. We happen to have the War Widow Barbie. Now this is great, because your daughter will experience a secret garden of grief. This beauty comes with, she comes with little handkerchiefs, and...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** This new breed of TV war toys not only showed up in the consumer market, it showed up on TV. While anchors and guests played their own game of military monopoly on the floor, model planes ringed the set. Lester Holt stopped just short of flying this model plane around the studio. The feedback loop between the TV war and war toys closed completely in a bizarre 2005 incident. An Iraqi insurgent website posted a picture of an apparent captured U.S. soldier. The website identified the captive as John Adam. After

some time, officials discovered it was instead a close-up of an action figure named “Cody,” complete with toy M-16 held to his head.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** But no American soldiers had been reported missing, and an American toy maker noticed that the soldier was a ringer for its Special Ops action figure, “Cody”.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** When news coverage began to affect the action on the ground in the first Gulf War, the phenomenon was dubbed the “CNN effect.” Perhaps this was the beginning of the “GI Joe effect”.

## CHAPTER 9: VIDEO GAMES

**TOM BROKAW [Discovery Channel News Clip]:** Communications, satellite systems, and unmanned drones backing up the ground troops, as never before. Allowing commanders to watch a battlefield hundreds of miles away, in real time.

**WILLIAM ARKIN [Discovery Channel]:** It’s like we fought the war in 1991 in the DOS era, in the paper era, and now we’re fighting wars in the Windows era.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The new virtual war has engendered not only new methods of state violence, but also new relationships between civil and military spheres. In 1997, for example, the Marines began using modifications of commercial games to train foot soldiers. The first of these was Marine Doom, a modification of the popular first-person shooter. The Army made use of Tom Clancy’s Rogue Spear. The Navy commissioned Fleet Command, and the British military began using Half Life. But games crossed the boundary in the other direction too – from military to commercial markets. In 1994 Sega game systems coaxed military contractor Martin Marietta to commercially release a simulator used to train tank operators. The result was the game Desert Tank. The next year, the game company Digital Integration sought to release another training simulator, this one developed by military contractor McDonnell Douglas for flying Apache helicopters. The game hit the market in 1995 as Apache Longbow. The first Gulf War had made a television star out of the Apache, and naturally the public was eager to test drive it. What better way to do this than with a real training simulator? But this was not the end of what some were beginning to call the “military-Nintendo complex.” In 1997, defense contractor OC, Inc. developed a simulator to train military leadership. Civilian game makers Rival Interactive saw commercial potential in the simulator, and sponsored its release under the name Real War. In a bizarre coincidence, Real War was set to be released on September 11, 2001 but was pushed back to the 27<sup>th</sup> due to the attacks. In 2003, commercial game makers THQ released a foot soldier trainer used by the army

called Full Spectrum Warrior. Like Real War, the fact that the game had been an actual military simulator was an obvious selling point.

**COMMERCIAL:** Top Ten Games of 2004, states PC Gamer. The most authentic military gaming experience. A quantum leap forward in battlefield simulation, states Game Informer.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The game company Destineer followed suit in 2005 by releasing a Marine combat simulator called Close Combat: First to Fight.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Folks in Iraq are seeing the symbols of Saddam Hussein come tumbling down. Now Americans are finding their own ways to vent against the Iraqi dictator. Folks right here in the U.S. shooting paintballs at pictures of the Iraqi dictator. In Indiana, people are playing war games pretending to be searching for him.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The main feature of the new video game war is an interactive urge.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** Kelly Arena has her finger on the button. She'll literally blow up a truck, to show us the explosive situations U.S. troops often face in Iraq and Afghanistan.  
-- Push it. (Explosion)

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Recognizing these trends, the Pentagon naturally sought to capitalize on the public appetite for interactive war play. This Air Force ad's main enticement is the promise that someday we might be handed the controller. The image of crossing over is a useful way to understand the new culture of war games. These games routinely invite us to cross over and play virtual soldier in an increasingly militarized civil culture.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** 45-year old lieutenant colonel Casey Wardynski is in charge of Army manpower. He's also the economist who came up with the idea of using a video game as a recruiting tool, while brainstorming with entertainment executives in Los Angeles.

**CASEY WARDYNSKI:** I was trying to work through the economics of all this, and I was chatting with a friend at a cocktail party. He was in direct marketing, and he pointed out how cheap it is to put, like, a videotape or a DVD in a house, and that really struck me as amazingly cost effective, and then the next thing was well why can't we put something more immersive in a house beyond a DVD or a tape, like a game. And then, voila. It looked like it was doable.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Nowhere is the militarization of culture more pronounced than with the Army's newest weapon in its recruiting arsenal: a video game called America's Army. The Army released the free game in 2001. Since then it has been a runaway success with 6 million registered users in 2005. America's Army introduced an entirely new relationship between the military and popular culture. This is not just any old war game. America's Army comes with a stamp of authenticity. The game's very existence advances the notion that war can be a form of entertainment, a leisure time activity. This sense was enhanced when the Army released a version of the game called Real Heroes. This game featured playable characters based on actual soldiers who had served in Iraq and elsewhere. The Real Heroes endeavor dovetailed with the release of plastic action figures of these same soldiers. With America's Army, the military had indeed conquered a new frontier.

**TOY COMMERCIAL:** You're in, darling! You're in her mind!

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** These kinds of expressions date back to the first Gulf War. In 1991 commanding general Norman Schwarzkopf told the press that the war was "not an Nintendo game." The need to say this of course signals that war has come to look very much like a video game. As viewers of the TV war, we are treated to endless flyovers. We are immersed in a general spirit of play. We are shown countless computer animations that contribute a sense of virtuality. We play alongside news anchors who watch on their monitors. We sit in front of the crosshairs directing missiles with a sense of interactivity. The destruction, if shown at all, seems unreal, distant. These repeated images foster habitual fantasies of crossing over.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** Mike Herbert remembers watching missiles like this one crash into targets on TV during Desert Storm. He was only a teenager.

**MIKE HERBERT:** And to actually do that myself, for the first time, when I remember in high school seeing it on TV. Being able to see that, now to actually do it, it's a whole different world.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** So it is no surprise when the metaphor of the video game makes its inevitable appearance in debates about journalism and war.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** If there's a war that's a Nintendo war, it was this one. We were basically playing some sort of, almost a real virtual reality. That is it. That is it for the panel today, Douglas Rushkoff thanks, Eduardo Branoff, and Elizabeth...

**[Fox News Clip]:** On this video game point, because Sony has already copyrighted the words “Shock and Awe,” they’ve got a video game coming out called exactly this.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Indeed, thirty odd companies eventually trademarked the phrase “Shock & Awe.” PlayStation manufacturer Sony was the largest of these, applying for its license only one day after the spectacular bombing of Baghdad. Sony dropped the trademark a month later under threat of public controversy. But this did not stop other game companies from capitalizing on the war. Gotham Games aggressively advertised its Gulf War I-based game Conflict: Desert Storm during the lead up to the invasion.

The company then went into full scale production of the sequel, Conflict Desert Storm II: Back to Baghdad. The game arrived in stores just six months after the 2003 invasion and still during a violent occupation. This time around, it appeared as though war games might catch up with the war itself. In 2004, a group of military retirees formed a video game company to do just that. The result was the online subscription game Kuma War. The game at first appears to be an average first-person shooter. But the minds behind Kuma War had bigger plans. CEO Keith Halper made these intentions clear: “What we are trying to do is be a news organization.”

**KUMA WAR COMMERCIAL:** From the headlines. To the frontlines. We put you there.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The game reconstructs television war events so that they can be played in 3D just days after they air. These missions have included the killing of the Saddam Hussein’s sons, Uday and Qusay, and a raid on Fallujah, an insurgent stronghold.

**KUMA WAR COMMERCIAL:** Real world games. Subscribe to Kuma War, and each month you’ll get playable missions delivered to your computer. Intense episodic play based on the very same stories rocking the world today.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Players are briefed before the mission with actual news clippings, words of advice from real military officers, and encouragement from game programmers.

**KUMA WAR COMMERCIAL:** After we report it, you play it. In single player, and multiplayer, you devise the tactics. You make the hard choices.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Kuma War illustrates the logical direction of embedded war coverage. In a sense, the game offers an embeddedness even the reporter cannot provide.

**KUMA WAR COMMERCIAL:** You are the 4th infantry division, capturing Saddam. You are the 10th mountain division, hunting Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Wherever the war takes our forces, we'll put you there. Hello, and welcome. I'm Jacki Schechner, and this is Kuma War. When four U.S. civilian contractors were murdered and their bodies publicly mutilated in Fallujah last March...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Kuma War goes out of its way to take on the visual cues of television news. This game demo purportedly features real marines playing Kuma War characters. Notice the 24-hour news channel-type crawl at the bottom of the screen. The camera following these troops is of course the Kuma embedded reporter. War games have always been with us in some form. But what's new is that games are merging with news and world events in unprecedented ways. If it is true that games have caught up with the wars themselves, what does it mean that Kuma War has designed a game involving the US invasion of Iran even before the event?

## CHAPTER 10: DISSENT

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** This right here, our first picture is of Stephanie Aunchapinche, she is with – whoa, the heavy picture – she is with the 173rd airborne in northern Iraq and her father says that he is very proud of his daughter and the troops, and he wants Stephanie to know that even though he is not in Iraq to comfort her, that God will protect her and keep her safe.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Perhaps the biggest roadblock to an otherwise smooth running TV war is the visibility of domestic dissent. Initial dissent often comes from those making the biggest sacrifices – the families of military men and women. In fact, it was this sort of dissent that accounted for the so-called Vietnam Syndrome. Because dissent was largely seen by policy makers as a kind of national disease, a massive dose of therapy was in order. Beginning in the first Gulf War, a dominant news story has been one that features exemplary families who have learned to channel their anxiety toward coping.

**REPORTER [NBC News Clip]:** And we'll take you live to Fort Stewart, Georgia to meet a sergeant with the 3rd infantry division. How are families coping as that unit gets ready to deploy?

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** In this new year, there's now a new reality. Duty calls – again.

**SGT. JOHN TOBERT:** This is different than all the other times.

**REPORTER:** Because?

**SGT. JOHN TOBERT:** You don't know when you're coming home.

**REPORTER:** What many of these families say they do know is this: that this mission and their sacrifice is worth it.

**FAMILY MEMBER OF SOLDIER:** If they don't solve it now it's just gonna get worse, and I'd rather 'em make it safe for kids to grow up now than, you know, not knowin'.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Apart from the example of coping families, this therapeutic message can be heard in a variety of contexts –

**[FOX News Clip]:** Just be a proud mom and not a nervous mom. I love you all very much. Please be safe and don't worry about me, I'm happy to be where I am. This is my contribution.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Hidden from view amidst these therapeutic images are not only the dead and wounded but also military families who find the war to be unjustified. The organization, Military Families Speak Out, for example, represents over 3,000 such families. But these stories of dissent are deemed not fit for a screen filled with coping families and happy homecomings. Not only are we given ways to cope, but also a few stern warnings. We are told that families who desire their sons and daughters to be brought home could, in reality, be the ones putting them in danger.

**FATHER OF SOLDIER [FOX News Clip]:** My son's letters is one example of many of how opposition at this point hurts their morale.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** The Cranes believe anti-war sentiment at home is a constitutional right. But...

**FATHER OF SOLDIER [FOX News Clip]:** We'd ask first of all that they be mindful of the consequence, because it may be my son's, or any of the other soldier's, death.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In this way, supporting the troops is made synonymous with supporting the war. Those who disagree with the decision to send soldiers to war are thus identified with the enemy. This is done through a variety of associations.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** The pictures tell a disturbing story.  
(Chanting)

**REPORTER:** On the eve of possible war with Iraq, it appears that anti-American sentiment is growing.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Worldwide, protesters are characterized as anti-U.S. or pro-Saddam.

**DAN RATHER [CBS News Clip]:** Many with anti-U.S. posters in English. In Jordan, police clashed with pro-Saddam demonstrators in Amman, the capital. And in Gaza, a large anti-U.S. protest today, despite President Bush's new calls for a Palestinian state.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** On February 15, 2003, 14 million people in 600 cities took to the street in the largest day of protest in world history. The event was largely invisible on the news in the U.S. When it did appear, CNN associated the event with a march organized by Saddam Hussein.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** A million people took to the streets of Rome, as hundreds of thousands turned out in other capitals across Europe. Meanwhile, in Baghdad, Iraqi officials presided over a demonstration in support of Saddam Hussein.

**REPORTER [MSNBC News Clip]:** Is this demonstration – let's talk about the ones here in the United States. Are they going to encourage Saddam Hussein to fight harder? Are they going to encourage his people to fight harder? Joe, what are the exact consequences? Go through them.

**REPORTER:** Let me tell you something. Saddam Hussein is being helped by the protestors on the streets here, and in Europe. At the same time though...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Instead of an entity advocating peaceful alternatives, demonstrators are woven into the dominant story of conflict. The war abroad is thus extended to a war on protesters at home. This framing of dissent makes the most sense in combination with images of protester violence, the preferred television image of dissent. Any peaceful message appears secondary to the story of conflict if it appears at all.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** San Francisco's protest turned violent last night as marchers hurled rocks and bottles at police.

**OFFICER:** Everybody clear to the sidewalk, now.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** And as the day's largest anti-war protest in the United States continued in New York, multiple arrests were made as protestors refused to go home.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** In this framing, police are to protestors as soldiers are to the enemy. Dissent becomes synonymous with criminal activity. Images of long-haired shrieking protestors fit the narrative of criminality best. And the implication is that this anger, this deviant rage, is directed at the troops fighting abroad.

**PROTESTER:** Our boys are over in Iraq, and they see this and it brings the morale down. I think the morale has to be up.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** This framing divides the world in two: the president, troops, and supporters of the war on one side, and on the other side Saddam Hussein, protestors, and other criminals.

**REPORTER [WB News Clip]:** Thanks Grant. Her son is fighting in the war overseas, and tonight, a mother in Brooklyn is fighting her own war – in her neighborhood! Against vandals! Marvin Scott is live tonight in Park Slope with more on this. Marvin.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** This repeated framing of dissent sometimes provokes strange responses.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** One guy in Portland, Oregon burning a peace flag. He said he supports the U.S. war with Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein. This is his answer to war protestors in Portland.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Beyond criminalization, images of dissent, if aired, are diffused in other ways. Here, CNN's Aaron Brown feels the need to apologize for showing pictures of demonstrators. Dissent is a by-product of democracy, we're told, and something we must suffer through on the way to war.

**AARON BROWN [CNN News Clip]:** This is the American democracy. You are allowed to take to the streets to show your displeasure, even in times like this. This is part of what we go through, and as long as it stays peaceful...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** But even if dissent is to be tolerated, it is portrayed as an empty exercise. If therapeutic messages can't keep protestors off the streets, perhaps protesting itself might be a way to blow off steam.

**REPORTER [NBC News Clip]:** Now psychologists are discovering that protesting can have a surprising effect on a child's health. Lisa Stofko has more. It's in tonight's Connect! With Kids.

**LISA STOFKO:** A new study out of Britain shows protesting in general can improve a person’s mental and physical well-being. It doesn’t seem to matter what your child is protesting for or against— just being involved can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression.

**INTERVIEWEE:** It makes you feel you’re making a difference. I feel that I’m empowered, because...

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** If dissent is nothing more than an extracurricular activity or a vain ploy for attention, it makes sense that it is also often described through the metaphor of the fashion statement.

**REPORTER [WB News Clip]:** Today’s fashion statement on 5th? Plastic handcuffs. More than 150 arrests.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Having framed dissent as a form of adolescent vanity, the next logical question is whether dissent matters at all. Television news spent a good deal of time posing this question.

**REPORTER [CNN News Clip]:** Anti-war protests are the e-mail topic of the day. We want to know your thoughts on this – are they effective in changing public policy, or do you think they send the wrong signal to U.S. troops overseas?

**(Chanting):** *The people, united, will never be divided.*

**DAN RATHER [CBS News Clip]:** But is America really listening?

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** After the March, 2003 invasion of Iraq, television news apparently decided that the answer to this question was “no.” Saddam had lost the war, and so had the protesters along with him.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Despite ongoing rhetoric, anti-war protesters are decreasing in numbers and increasingly frustrated. The war they call “unjust” is just about done and has gone much more smoothly than they predicted.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** If protesters had been irrelevant before the invasion, they were deemed absurd after it – even as early as April 2003 during the beginnings of the long occupation of Iraq.

**SHEPARD SMITH [FOX News Clip]:** What’s an anti-war demonstrator to do? Well, for some peace activists, the answer seems to be find a new target. But are they hurting their own cause? Trace Gallagher reports, you decide.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Having failed at stopping the liberation of Iraq, anti-war groups are now trying to get people to oppose the President, oppose funding for the recovery of Iraq, and oppose the cultural impact of American fast food.

**PETER JENNINGS [ABC News Clip]:** Well, it's been twenty-five days since the war in Iraq began and four days only that we all watched that statue of Saddam Hussein coming down in Baghdad. The Iraqi regime has collapsed. Those people who said it would be short and successful, at least in the military phase, have proven to be right. And yet this weekend, in more than fifty countries overseas and here, there were people still demonstrating against the war. So we asked ABC's Judy Muller to take a close look at why...

**INTERVIEWEE [FOX News Clip]:** Actors and actresses have to watch out now because there's a war on, and if you say the wrong thing, it could be held against you.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Nobody knows that better than the Dixie Chicks, who continue to suffer the backlash from lead singer Natalie Maines' anti-Bush comments.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** If the voice of the masses was irrelevant, especially so were the voices of those who had an audience – singers, celebrities, and other high-profile figures.

**DENNIS PRAGER:** Put on your seatbelts, were in for a ride! It's the Dennis Prager Show...

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** Radio talk show host, Dennis Prager says, "stars are under the misguided impression they speak for everyday Americans."

**DENNIS PRAGER:** The idea that someone who has acted now has a claim on my respect for his or her opinions on the great moral issues of the day is absurd.

**REPORTER [CBS News Clip]:** Still, the barrage of ads goes on.

**MARTIN SHEEN AD:** Don't invade Iraq. Inspections work, war won't.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** The new rule: celebrities with their own talk shows like Dennis Prager or Michael Savage could have legitimate views; celebrities who dissented could not.

**RADIO TALK-SHOW HOST [NBC]:** And Martin Sheen says it's not for his humanity to free these people. Remember all the Hollywood idiots who said we

shouldn't liberate the people? Why not? This was OK to them? This was good, this is what was going on.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** Dissent on any visible level was associated with Hollywood phoniness.

**CORRESPONDENT [CNN News Clip]:** In fact, you should be an actor because you sound just like one. To call the President stupid, he doesn't know much about anything. That's just great! Go with Danny Glover and Susan Sarandon; you fit in perfectly, my friend.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** If a dissenting voice did happen to have press credentials – such as Helen Thomas, the oldest member of the White House press corps – she would have to be elevated to the status of celebrity first before her views were trivialized.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** That may have cost her the kind of first row seniority she's enjoyed in Washington for decades.

**INTERVIEWEE [FOX News Clip]:** Not calling on Helen Thomas at a Press Conference is like a field trip to Washington when you don't go to the Washington Monument.

**REPORTER [FOX News Clip]:** Thomas called last night's news conference "scripted". She said, "the President had a list of names to call on," and she charges, "the President was afraid to call on her." If that's true, we can say goodbye to classic scenes like this:

Helen Thomas: And I have a follow up.

President: Thank you for warning me.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** As with street protest, if high profile dissent could not be contained, perhaps it could be neutralized with a now familiar question.

**SANDRA HUGHES [CBS]:** Celebrity opinion in the debate over a possible war has spawned a second debate on the streets – whether star power has any real power to shape public opinion. A recent poll says no. More than 90% of those surveyed say celebrity activism does not affect their political opinions. This website created by a North Carolina mom is called "Citizens Against Celebrity Pundits." It's received more than 60,000 cyber signatures from people who want celebrities to shut up.

**DR. ROGER STAHL:** If taken seriously, the dominant framing of dissent spans the field, rendering practically all critical voices illegitimate. When an entire range

of voices is silenced – either criminalized or trivialized – then real democracy has given way to a version of authoritarianism.

**ART HARRIS [CNN]:** This war is obviously underway, Erin. It's going to get a lot more intense.

**TOBY KEITH [Singing]:** *And it feels like the whole wide world is raining down on you. Brought to your courtesy of the red white and blue.*

[End]