

**LAMAR SMITH**

21ST DISTRICT, TEXAS

<http://lamarsmith.house.gov>

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY



2409 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-4236  
FAX: (202) 225-8628

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

November 7, 2007

Dear Republican Colleague,

I hope you will enjoy reading the attached column by Clifford May from *National Review*. It provides an intelligent critique of the mainstream media's unfair coverage of Iraq.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lamar".

Lamar Smith  
Member of Congress

PLEASE REPLY TO:

AUSTIN DISTRICT OFFICE  
3536 BEE CAVE ROAD, #212  
AUSTIN, TX 78746  
(512) 306-0439  
FAX: (512) 306-0427

KERRVILLE DISTRICT OFFICE  
301 JUNCTION HIGHWAY, #346C  
KERRVILLE, TX 78028  
(830) 896-0154  
FAX: (830) 896-0168

SAN ANTONIO DISTRICT OFFICE  
1100 N.E. LOOP 410, #640  
SAN ANTONIO, TX 78209  
(210) 821-5024  
FAX: (210) 821-5947

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

## Clifford D. May

NRO Contributor

November 01, 2007, 0:00 a.m.



### Not the News

The elite media's coverage of Iraq is a fiasco.

By Clifford D. May

**M**ark Twain famously said “if you don't read the newspapers you are uninformed — if you do read the newspapers you are misinformed.” Today, those who rely on the elite media for news of Iraq suffer from both disabilities.

Start with lack of information: The average news consumer probably has no clue that Gen. David Petraeus' new strategy has crippled al Qaeda in Iraq, that Americans and Iraqis are now fighting side-by-side against both Sunni and Shia extremists, and that the elimination of terrorist safe havens and weapons caches has improved security for average Iraqis in parts of the country that a few months ago were snake pits.

As for misinformation, how many people still believe that guards in Guantanamo flushed Korans down the toilet, that U.S. Marines committed a massacre at Haditha, and that American soldiers ridicule women disfigured by bombs, run over puppies for sport and desecrate graves for a laugh? All of this was reported in such mainstream publications as *Newsweek* and *The New Republic*. None of it is true.

Meanwhile, the barbarous violence committed by al Qaeda and the Iranian-backed militias in Iraq is scarcely noted. For example, here's a story you probably have neither read nor heard: On Oct. 28 in a village ten miles southwest of Baqubah, U.S. infantrymen came upon a prison run by al Qaeda. In it, according to military spokesmen, they found a hostage, bruised, battered, dehydrated, and tied to the ceiling, his arms injured because of the way they were twisted behind his back.

He had been kidnapped three days earlier, he said, because “of my brother who is in the Iraqi Army. They wanted information and for my brother and me to work for al-Qaeda. ...They beat me with cables while holding a gun to my head, but I would not work for them because I would not betray my brother.”

Had he not been rescued, he would have been executed for the “crime” of refusing al Qaeda. Even so, he said, “I would never support them.”

Where can one go to learn what is really happening in Iraq? Michael Yon is a former Green Beret. He has been reporting from Iraq's battlefields, mostly for his own blog ([www.michaelyon-online.com](http://www.michaelyon-online.com)). No journalist has revealed more about al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), including its “reputation for hiding bombs intended to kill parents in the corpses of dead children they'd gutted.”

He has photographed Iraqi and American soldiers as they “disinterred the remains of adults and

children” from killing fields. “In one grave,” he noted, “soldiers recovered the heads of decapitated children, some with still partially recognizable remnants of flesh and hair.”

His readers have learned what most Americans would not know from NBC, ABC, CBS, PBS and NPR: why AQI has failed to win Iraqi hearts and minds: “Between shooting people for using the Internet, watching television or other ‘moral transgressions’ such as smoking in public, AQI’s claim of fundamentalist piety proved to be a thin veneer, quickly eroded by blatant drug, alcohol and prostitute use.”

In perhaps his most haunting dispatch, Yon reports on meeting an Iraqi official who told him that it was al-Qaeda’s practice to invite “to lunch families they wanted to convert to their way of thinking. In each instance, the family had a boy” and at some point during the meal “their boy was brought in with his mouth stuffed. The boy had been baked. Al Qaeda served the boy to his family.”

Why have the elite media not covered such atrocities — while spilling barrels of ink over the abuses at Abu Ghraib? In part, perhaps, because the conventional storyline is that Iraq is Vietnam redux: Americans are the “occupiers” and anyone who fights them must be “the Resistance.” Reporters who dispute that narrative are apt to dine alone.

As to why lower military casualty rates and fewer insurgent attacks are not seen as newsworthy, CNN’s Barbara Starr told media critic Howard Kurtz that it was not yet clear that such developments represent “a trend.” But the lines on the graph have been heading south since at least June. Is there any doubt that if U.S. forces had been losing ground for five months it would be a huge story?

The Battle of Iraq is not yet over. It is possible that al Qaeda and the Iranian-backed death squads could regain the initiative. Iraqi’s fledgling politicians may fail to utilize the opportunity they are being given to resurrect their shattered country. But journalists should not assume such outcomes; much less should they wish for them.

— Clifford D. May, a former New York Times foreign correspondent, is president of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a policy institute focusing on terrorism.

— Clifford D. May, a former New York Times foreign correspondent, is the president of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a policy institute focusing on terrorism.

---

National Review Online - <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=YjlkMzA1YWY0ZGUxMmVmNmZiNGU4ZWRjOWI3NTU5MjM=>