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MCA 311

ISSUE REACTION PAPER ASSIGNMENT #9

Issue: Painful Images of War

Case: CBS showed an Al Jazeera clip

Five U.S. captives appeared terrified as they were thrust in front of an Iraqi TV microphone. Scenes of interrogators questioning four men and a woman were broadcast by the Arab satellite station Al-Jazeera with footage from state-controlled Iraqi television. Each was interviewed individually. The U.S soldiers were asked where they were from and why they came to Iraq. The footage could not be seen in the U.S because none of the cable or satellite carriers provided the channel for its viewers.

Once American networks got a hold of the footage through satellite connections “all of the networks said they would not show video of what was said to be an Iraqi morgue containing American bodies” (Reid, March 2003). The Iraqi’s can argue that the United States has shown their prisoners of war on TV, which make it fair to show the American soldiers they are holding. Lt. Gen. John Abizaid said “many photographs of Iraqi prisoners have been shown, but the Iraqi footage was different because it was humiliating the U.S. soldiers” (Murphy Feb, 2009).

“Under the Article 13 of the Geneva Conventions, showing of prisoners on TV is a violation and states that prisoners should be protected from public curiosity” (Holguin, Feb 2009). CBS was the first network in the sates to air the footage. After the footage was aired the Pentagon asked American’s to keep their perspective. “CBS held off from showing it again after the Pentagon asked for time to contact the families of the soldiers involved” (Reid, March 2003).

The Iraqi TV station should not have showed these clips because it is a violation of the Geneva Conventions. Once the footage has been aired I believe CBS had the right to show the footage of the soldiers. The Pentagon did the right thing by asking CBS to wait until they contacted the families of the prisoners and inform them of the video. The Pentagon should not dictate what media airs; instead they should advise media of what would be appropriate when it comes to dealing with prisoners of war. The footage shown in the U.S. was different than the footage shown in Iraq so yes CBS exercised censorship.

References

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