Televise the funerals and flag-draped coffins

By Vincent L Guarisco

So, another traumatic year has come to pass. Since 2004 was a Leap Year, we were hit with 366 nauseating days of unnecessary suffering, death, and destruction ceaselessly searing the hearts and minds of millions with the war in Iraq. Like many others, I am too listless and "war-weary" to even attempt to imagine what new destruction this administration is cooking up for this new calendar year.

Who could ever forget Christmas 2004! Earthquakes and Tsunamis aside, last year for many, Uncle Sammy morphed into a military uniformed "Chris Kringle." He became a new kind of special delivery, a "War Santa" of cheap tin thrills; one who gave folded flags to replace lost loved ones. Can you imagine? Hearing a rap on the door, answering it, and after doing so -- being handed a colorful piece of cloth to replace a vibrant, treasured life. Nothing like having your heart ripped out for eternity over an oil well and out-of-control greed!

Disaster comes in many forms, be it natural or unnatural. And media sensationalism (in the battle for market shares) can sure keep you reeling. It's amazing how the media outlets decided to show the graphic loss of life from the killer tsunami waves -- the bodies washed ashore, many bloated as they piled up in numbers that far outdistanced the ability of loved ones to identify and bury them. I'm truly amazed the media deemed it proper and appropriate, since televising dead service-members arriving home at Dover Air Force Base in the dead of night, in neat flag-draped coffins is still not allowed. Obviously, the same standards do not apply.

Who in Sam-Hell makes these decisions? Certainly not anyone with any shred of honor! But there it was in all it's undaunted glory, in big screen, plasma screen and wide screen - - media executives giving the thumbs-up to show bloated bodies decomposing bodies, floating bodies and even bodies hanging in trees, on television -- dumped them all squarely in my living room. Strange, isn't it, that they still refuse to televise one single American funeral at home honoring our heros who have died in the line of duty, while bravely serving their country in a time of war. What the hell is wrong with this picture! Can you believe this crap? Wow. We really have some screwed-up priorities!

I suspect there is an underlying explanation for this. Is it bad for the selling points of war to show such images? Is our society purposely being shielded from such upsetting details of homebound fatalities because the Makers of War want us to have a more pleasant, picturesque impression of war without the imagery of loss and death? Is it a full-blown media blackout, acting as a nerve block for the masses? Is that why they say, "out of sight, out of mind?" If so, we better consider the price -- because our loss is very real. Otherwise, becoming a casualty of war is not the final sacrifice; it is merely an insult before closing the last cryptic page -- a dead handshake, a zipper bag and a silent homecoming so as not to scare away future recruiting efforts and replacements. Yeah, sign me up! Not.
Suffering is widespread

American soldiers are not the only ones suffering and dying out there without getting public attention. The New Year began just like the Old Year ended -- with Iraq's landscape continuing to be smeared with glossy red puddles of spilled blood oozing from the many scattered dead. An Iraqi civilian population worn thin, battle fatigued, being relentlessly extinguished while reeling in agony with the putrid scent of death floating all around them, fouling the very air they breathe. And don't forget about that U-235 depleted uranium (DU) dust they are forced to inhale and ingest in their lungs along with that foul stench. Can you imagine it? Try it sometime -- it's a poisonous sobering experience of life in a hellhole.

However, through it all, the Iraqi people unceasingly continue to pray for God's help. Yep, enemy and civilians alike, regardless of who is fighting or not fighting, they are all God's people too. They pray to their prophet daily for spiritual salvation, for redemption in the wake of wanton destruction. They pray to God to save them from the so-called "liberators" who have invaded their sovereign holy land.

Some may call it religious sectarianism, but don't be fooled by the terminology. If there is an Allah, he must be listening, because he seems to have given the insurgents (acronym for freedom fighters), a Mount-Zion sized amount of tenacity to resist. They certainly are in a motivated Jihad mode for who and what they hate -- American occupation, American style democracy, American run elections and any form of American puppet government we may feebly attempt to instill. To them, we are godless infidels who have come thousands of miles to steal their natural resources and to destroy their sacred way of life. Still think we can win? In Las Vegas we call that long-shot a "sucker bet."

Does God answer some prayers and not others? Bush has publicly stated that God whispers in his ear (his approval) on whom Bush decides to attack in war. However, if you remember, that pithy wisdom didn't jive very well with the Pope in Rome. In fact, just before we invaded, the Pope warned the United States -- "If you go to war in Iraq, you go without God."

Okay, I'm a little confused on this. Who are we supposed to believe? Who is God's agent -- Bush or the Pope? Hummm, let me see. It's either the guy who resides in Washington D.C. on 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue -- the same guy who blundered into a war-profiteering crusade, and likes to brag he's a "war president," -- or it's the guy from the Vatican in Rome who unwaveringly promotes world peace. Gee, I'm so undecided.

The questions keep coming

Here at home, with a much more peaceful landscape at our disposal, many of us continue to worry about how long our soldiers will remain in foreign battlefields fighting this unsanctioned, illegal and quite possibly, "Godless" war. In fact, just the other day surprisingly, a Bush-supporting coworker sarcastically asked me how much longer I thought we would be in Iraq.
I paused for a brief moment (knowing he wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer after confessing that he had voted for the village idiot), before responding, "Hey ace, that's simple! Your man GW has an exit plan! You betcha -- we're gonna stop pillaging and dying over there and will bring the troops home just as soon as each and every one of those oil wells starts pumping seawater! I knew it would only confuse him to mention the real reasons -- profiteering spoils of war, no bid open-ended contracts for nation building, the construction of military bases, privatized troop support, the arms race, just to name a few.

Perhaps I shouldn't have said it, but the look on his face was truly a Kodak moment. Pro-war supporters love to boast that the colors of true patriotism -- red white and blue -- are the colors that never run. On the contrary, watch what happens to a mother's make-up after being told that her son or daughter has died in war. Or perhaps a wife receiving the same news about a husband, or a child about a parent. Yeah, watch the colors "run" then; they literally bleed with sorrow and, sometimes, with rage so strong that it creates a river of mournful tears.

Am I being cynical? Perhaps. But that's what happens when one gets continually fogged with media-induced bullshit and bombarded with official lies without end. After getting traumatized and betrayed so often, you become a little more "cynical" with each dying day. Five killed here, 12 lost there...every day more body bags pile up; more innocents lie unattended in the streets, mutilated by foraging packs of dogs... After a while it chips away at your very soul. I call cynicism my own personal safety feature. It's better that I am cynically safe than stark raving mad.

It's time for the killing to stop

Bottom line -- I refuse to be hypnotized -- desensitized by the state to prevent me from putting a human face on what is happening all around me. It's the media's duty to report it. I demand to know everything. It's within my right to harness that energy, to use that same energy to prevent any further bloodshed.

In September of 2003, I wrote an article published on Veterans for Peace website (http://www.veteransforpeace.org/Body_bags_filled_092903.htm) titled: "Body bags filled with GI Joe and Jane." This essay was written in the early stages of the Iraq war. At the time it was published, approximately 300 soldiers had been slaughtered. Currently, a thousand more (and counting) have died since then. I said it then and I'll say it again:

On the surface, it may seem cruel to advocate this, but for the love of life, we must immediately start televising dead and mutilated sons, daughters, uncles, aunts, husbands, wives and friends arriving home in gift-wrapped body bags. Only then will the appeal of the selling points of war and hostile occupation diminish. The injured and dead must appear on television. The media must televise the reality of what this war is about: the flag draped caskets, the funerals, the grieving, the pain, the crying, and the destruction. It must be shown immediately. It must.
As long as Bush's mandated media blackout is allowed to remain in place, his self-serving wars will continue non-stop. A quick philosophical question -- if a crime has been committed, and no one hears about it, has a crime been committed? Without media attention, there will be no cause and effect, no sense of loss, and therefore no public backlash for accountability.

Remember this: During the Vietnam War, when the Mothers of America marched in the streets in Washington D.C., the media coverage afforded that event was crucial, even instrumental, in ending that war. Bush lied and our soldiers have died and continue to die, every hour, every day. I do not believe for one minute that they will mind being exploited in the name of peace. After all, it was a falsely propagated war that killed them in the first place. Other lives are depending on us -- not the media, not the administration -- so, for the love of God, please demand that the funerals and flag-draped coffins be put before the American public. Let us demand an end to the killing.

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