

Pentagon Threatens to Kill Independent Reporters in Iraq

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The Pentagon has threatened to fire on the satellite uplink positions of independent journalists in Iraq, according to veteran *BBC* war correspondent, Kate Adie . In an interview with Irish radio, Ms. Adie said that questioned about the consequences of such potentially fatal actions, a senior Pentagon officer had said: "Who cares . . . They've been warned."

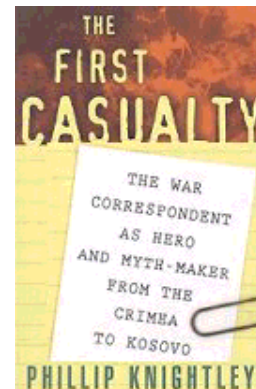


According to Ms. Adie, who twelve years ago covered the last Gulf War, the Pentagon attitude is: "entirely hostile to the free spread of information."

"I am enormously pessimistic of the chance of decent on-the-spot reporting, as the war occurs," she told Irish national broadcaster, Tom McGurk on the RTE1 Radio "Sunday Show."

Ms. Adie made the startling revelations during a discussion of media freedom issues in the likely upcoming war in Iraq. She also warned that the Pentagon is vetting journalists according to their stance on the war, and intends to take control of US journalists' satellite equipment --in order to control access to the airwaves.

Another guest on the show, war author Phillip Knightley, reported that the Pentagon has also threatened they "may find it necessary to bomb areas in which war correspondents are attempting to report from the Iraqi side."



Transcript excerpt follows below

Guests: Kate Adie, *BBC*; Phillip Knightley, author of *The First Casualty*, a history of war correspondents and propaganda; Chris Hedges, award winning human rights journalist, and former Irish Times Editor Connor Brady on the Sunday Show, RTE Radio1 9th March, 2003.

Tom McGurk:



Now, Kate Adie, you join us from the *BBC* in London. Thank you very much for going to all this trouble on a Sunday morning to come and join us. I suppose you are watching with a mixture of emotions this war beginning to happen, because you are not going to be covering it.

Kate Adie:



Oh I will be. And what actually appalls me is the difference between twelve years ago and now. I've seen a complete erosion of any kind of acknowledgment that reporters should be able to report as they witness.

The Americans (and I've been talking to the Pentagon) take the attitude which is entirely hostile to the free spread of information. I was told by a senior officer in the Pentagon, that if uplinks -- that is the television signals out of Bhagdad, for example -- were detected by any planes, electronic media, mediums of the military above Bhagdad, they'd be fired down on. Even if they were journalists, 'Who cares!' said [inaudible]

Tom McGurk:

. . . Kate, sorry Kate, just to underline that. Sorry to interrupt you. Just to explain for our listeners. Uplinks is where you have your own satellite telephone method of distributing information.

Kate Adie:

The telephones and the television signals.

Tom McGurk:

And they would be fired on?

Kate Adie:

Yes. They would be 'targeted down,' said the officer.

Tom McGurk:

Extraordinary!

Kate Adie:

Shameless. He said, 'Well, they know this, they've been warned.' This is threatening freedom of information, before you even get to a war.

The second thing is that there was a massive news blackout imposed in the last Gulf war, where I was one of the pool correspondents with the British Army, we effectively had very, very light touch when it came to any kind of censorship. We were told that anything which was going to endanger troops lives we understood we shouldn't broadcast. Other than that, we were relatively free. Unlike our American colleagues, who immediately left their pool, after about 48 hours, having just had enough of it.

And this time the Americans are asking journalists who go with them, whether they have feelings against the war. And therefore if your views are that you are skeptical, then you are not completely acceptable.

Secondly, they are intending to take control of the American's technical equipment, those uplinks and satellite phones I was talking about, and control access to the airwaves.

And then on top of everything else, there is now a blackout -- which was imposed, during the last war, at the beginning of the war -- ordered by one Mr. Dick Cheney who is in charge of this.

I am enormously pessimistic of the chance of decent, on-the-spot reporting, as the war occurs. "You will get it later."

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