

Shelley Lee
Project report
STS390, “Media, war and peace”
Spring session, 2004
Science, Technology & Society
University of Wollongong

Torture at Abu Ghraib backlash

Abstract

Following the United States beginning their war in Iraq with the publicized intention of locating weapons of mass destruction and ousting Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein US forces have taken over operations in numerous prison facilities in the area. The US, referring to themselves as ‘humanitarian forces’, were promoting the introduction of democracy and justice into the region. Abu Ghraib, one of the most feared prison facilities under Hussein’s rule, was one of these facilities. In March 2004 the US Army announced that seventeen soldiers had been removed from duty in Iraq following the mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners. In late April of that same year the public was made aware of the photographs documenting this mistreatment, sparking a massive outcry, and triggering the exposure elements of backfire theories.

This report shall interpret the events surrounding the media release of these photographs in relation to backfire theory, and seek to find where the backlash is most potentially targeted, both by the public and by the US government. It shall also include an examination of how backfire, once in effect, can trigger numerous other incidents, and attempts to deflect backfire can themselves cause a backlash.



History of Abu Ghraib

Under the reign of Saddam Hussein Abu Ghraib was a place so feared that relatives would not even go to the gates to enquire about the prisoners inside. Internationally notorious, torture, weekly executions, 400, 000 prisoners were allegedly buried in mass graves, whilst many others were apparently run through wood shredders feet first whilst still alive (Crespo, 2004 p.4). Those who entered the prison rarely left alive, those who did “told nightmarish stories of torture beyond imagining” (Rather, 2004, p.2) or were missing body parts such as ears, hands and tongues.

In April 2003, the huge prison complex was deserted and stripped by looters following the collapse of Saddam's regime. This same complex was later given a makeover by the coalition authorities who cleaned and repaired cells, toilets and



showers, retiled the floors and added a new medical centre (Hersh, 2004, p1.); it became a US military prison. By the autumn of that year Abu Ghraib again held thousands (4,400) of prisoners, falling into three categories "common criminals; security detainees suspected of "crimes against the coalition"; and a

small number of suspected "high-value" leaders of the insurgency against the coalition forces."(Hersh, 2004. p1).

In June 2003 Army reserve brigadier general Janis Karpinski was put in charge of the US's Iraqi military prisons. This included three large jails and three thousand four hundred US reservists across eight battalions. Neither Karpinski, nor most of those beneath her, had training in handling prisoners.

The US military was informed of numerous instances of severe, excessively cruel abuse occurring between October and December of that year.

In mid-January of 2004 seventeen soldiers were removed from their duties. They included Brigadier General Karpinski, Reserve Staff Sergeant Ivan ‘Chip’ Frederick, Specialist Charles Graner; Sergeant Javal Davis; Specialist Megan Ambuhl; Specialist Sabrina Harman; Private Jeremy Sivits; and the pregnant and reassigned Lynndie England. They are facing charges of conspiracy, cruelty towards prisoners, dereliction of duty, assault, maltreatment, and indecent acts.



In March the military announced these investigations were occurring and in mid-April the Department of Defence appealed to *60 Minutes II* in the US to delay their broadcast of the story. April 28 2004 *60 Minutes II* broadcast their report as photographs detailing the abuse of prisoners began to circulate in other media. The next day, April 30 2004 Seymour Hersh released his comprehensive article *Torture at Abu Ghraib* which was published in *The New Yorker* on May 10.

Backfire, backlash, and countershock the media and Abu Ghraib

Following the release of the photos, many of which can be found in the appendix of this report, there was an international outcry. The forces which had been preaching democracy and humane treatment of individuals had broken this rule and this resulted in a massive backfire against the US military. Backfire theory, as described by Brian Martin in *Iraq attack backfire*, covers not only the outcome of an attack, but also the process involved (Martin, 2004, p.1). According to Martin two factors which are

central to the backfire effect are that the attack is perceived to be unjust, or against a widely held norm, and secondly the availability of information to relevant audiences.

Firstly, the Abu Ghraib abuses were certainly seen as out of the norm and unjust by those audiences viewing the pictures in Western countries. On an online discussion



page one individual went so far as to say “...torturing prisoners for the amusement of guards? Ugh! ...Such people are not people but are monsters who should be ground up and turned into fertilizer...”(bwteim in IRAQPOW thread, Memory Hole, 7/05/2004) in reference to the attackers. In a

series of three different focus groups it was revealed that University of Wollongong students also found the actions of the prison guards to be largely for self amusement and perverse. Whether the media is reflecting, or generating these opinions is questionable, but the consistency between what is being publicized and what has been expressed in independent studies for this report have been consistent “photographs have been met with shock and outrage.”(The Mirror, 1/05/2004).

Secondly, the delay between the photographs being taken and the military investigation of them, then the second delay between this and the photographs being released to the public meant that the relevant audiences had the information concealed from them for a long time. It was interesting to note that in the focus groups the majority of participants were unaware of the age of the photographs, most assuming that the discovery and release of photos all occurred within the last two to three

months; many were shocked to realize that the events had in fact occurred up to eight months ago. “I just assumed they were recent” said one respondent.

As the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib can be directly interpreted as torture, when analysing the backfire of the photographs’ release, the five point structure of inhibiting backfire from Martin’s *Iraq attack backfire* has been merged into a hybrid of this and Martin and Wright’s six step process for inhibiting countershock as described in *Countershock: Mobilising Resistance to Electroshock Weapons*

The structure of the hybrid is as follows:

Inhibiting backfire

- *Cover up the attack
- *devalue the target
- *reinterpret the events
- *use official channels
- *use intimidation and bribery

(Martin, 2004, pp2-3)

Hybrid for inhibiting Backlash

1. conceal the abuse
2. devalue the target
3. reinterpret the abuse
4. deny actions caused harm
5. launch official procedures
6. intimidate those who expose torture

Inhibiting Countershock

- *hide torture
- *devalue the opponent
- *deny technologies are being used to repress
- *Deny technologies can/do cause harm
- *claim to follow proper procedures
- *intimidate those who expose who expose torture

(Martin & Wright, 2003, pp5)

Using the hybrid formula, this report intends to examine how the US military attempted to inhibit backlash occurring.

Backlash at Abu Ghraib

The attempt to inhibit backlash as occurred at numerous different levels throughout the US military, leading all the way up the chain of command to the President of the United States of America George W. Bush.



Conceal the abuse:

Between the months of October 2003 and late April 2004, the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib was completely unknown to the international public. This concealment began at a base level within the prison itself. Initially, in the case of Abu Ghraib the concealment was denying there was anything morally wrong with the abusive behaviour. It is recorded in a letter from Fredrick (one of those facing court marshal) to his parents that when he queried his superior officer, Lieutenant Colonel Jerry Phillabaum, about the brutality towards prisoners “his reply was ‘Don’t worry about it’” (Hersh, 2004, p.6). The military police (MPs) within the prison were allegedly told to cooperate with Military intelligence (MI), the CIA, OGA (Other Government Organisations) and civilian contracted interrogators working within the jail.

Terminology used in the jail, which has since been released, includes having to “set favourable conditions for subsequent interviews –a euphemism for breaking the will of prisoners” (Hersh, 2004). Fredrick is recorded as saying “We’ve had a very high rate with our style of getting them [the Iraqis] to break. They usually end up breaking within hours”. The Army’s own investigation of the events found that interrogators asked reservists working in the prison to prepare the interviewees, physically and mentally for questioning (Rather, 2004, p.2). These reservists claimed to have never seen a copy of the Geneva Convention rules and therefore claimed ignorance. Within

the prison, therefore, the abuse was seen to be a daily event, the reality of the cruelty was not acknowledged, or corrected, or in any way recognised as illegal.

It could be said that the problems inside the prison were not hidden from senior commanders. Indeed, during Karpinski's seven-month tour of duty there were apparently at least a dozen reports of escapes, attempted escapes and other security issues, some of which led to the killing or wounding of inmates (Hersh, 2004, p.9). At this level of command there were massive administrative problems, meaning that many Iraqis in the facility, picked up in random military sweeps and highway checkpoints, were innocent, and being wrongly detained – indefinitely at times.

Interesting to note, Karpinski, in an interview with Major General Antonio Taguba, appeared to be hiding the reality of the abuse within the prison from even herself “What I found particularly disturbing in her testimony was her complete unwillingness to either understand or accept that many of the problems inherent in the 800th MP Brigade were caused or exacerbated by poor leadership” (Taguba in Hersh, 2004, p.10).

Leaping up the chain of command, the abuse was also concealed at a political level. In focus group studies, many of the participants did not believe that the US government had concealed the abuse, because they were unaware of the delay between the abuse occurring, and the photographs being released. The US military cannot say they were unaware prior to the photograph release; over the past year the International Red Cross has repeatedly complained about the American's treatment of Iraqi prisoners, and in a case which was only disclosed last month, in an administrative review three officers were fined “at least five hundred dollars and demoted in rank” for assaulting a female inmate at Abu Ghraib. The Army received the series of abuse photographs on January

the 13th, three days later a “blandly worded, five sentence press release” (Hersh, 2004, p.2) about the investigation into the mistreatment of prisoners was released. In April, General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, then without hearing any reports or seeing the photographs, persuaded *60 Minutes II* to delay its story into the abuse. This concealed knowledge of the abuse from the public.

Devalue the target

In the months between January and April 2004, when the military was aware that they would have to reveal the abuse photographs soon, the US bombarded the media with images of wounded soldiers, stories of ‘terrorist’ attacks in Iraq. The US knew at this stage that they would have to release the photographs

soon. Press releases coming out of Iraq at this time were stressing the dangers of those detained in the prisons, and congratulating the US military forces on their bravery and behaviour in such a situation. These actions, taken before the release of the photographs,



definitely did inhibit the potential backlash to come out of the event. Questions arose, in the focus group, and on discussion pages “Why was this guy in jail being guarded by Americans in the first place?” (Tribune7 in IRAQPOW thread, Memory Hole, 7/05/2004) after reading (or being read in the case of the focus groups) an interview with Hatder Sabbar Abd, the man beneath the hood and made to stand on a box in Abu Ghraib. The public wanted to know how bad these criminals were being abused by the US reservists. For months prior to this the military has been informing the public of the dangers and ruthlessness of Iraqi terrorists, therefore by creating this context for the photographs to be released in, the backlash of the photographs was minimised.

The targets of the abuse in this case study are also devalued because they are not identified. Their faces are covered with bags and masks, or they are piled on top of one another facing away from the camera. In releasing these photographs to the public, the US military has ensured that the victims remain nameless and faceless. Even when Hatder Sabbar Abd identified himself within one of the photographs, before he was



believed tiny scars visible on his body, and those of the man in the photograph had to be matched up “In that photograph a smiling woman soldier, identified as Private Lynndie England, who is giving the thumbs up, points towards Abd’s genitals” (Huggler & Buncombe, 2004, p2.). The

targets of the abuse were devalued in the photographs as faceless nameless terrorists.

Abd proves that these victims do have identities and feelings, as the interview says “he will go home to his family in Nasiriyah but his shame will not allow him to stay”

(Huggler & Buncombe, 2004, p4).

Reinterpret the abuse

The reasoning behind the abuse in Abu Ghraib is at best superficial at worst a cover-up. Military intelligence and interrogators were seen as the driving force behind the abuse, encouraging the reservists to “fear up” prisoners so that they would be ‘ready’ for interrogations. “Military intelligence encouraged us and told us ‘Great job’” claimed Frederick (Rather, 2004, p2). The reasoning for military intelligence officials and CIA agents feeling they had this power to order and intimidate could be seen to come from the response to the insurgency against the Coalition Provisional authority

last autumn when Brigadier General Martin Dempsey, commander of the 1st Armoured Division, told a reporter in Baghdad “This is a fight for intelligence. Do I have enough soldiers? The answer is absolutely yes. The larger issue is, how do I use them and on what basis? And the answer top that is intelligence... to try and figure out how to take all this human intelligence as it comes in to us [and] turn it into something that’s actionable”(Hersh, 2004, ii, p.5). Following this, the military police on guard duty were told that military intelligence should be supported and made a priority in prisons. On November 19th 2003 an order was issued to give Military Intelligence Brigade tactical control over the prison. In contrast to the propaganda released after the military became aware of the abuse photographs “there are a large number of Iraqi criminals held at Abu Ghraib. These are not believed to be international terrorists or members of Al Qaeda” (Taguba in Hersh, 2004, ii, p.5). These actions made a MI Officer, not a MP Officer, responsible for the MP units conducting detainee operations at the jail. The military intelligence officers and civilian contractors at Abu Ghraib were dressed in ‘sterile’ plain clothes, therefore the prisoners and the military policemen on duty were unable to tell who was doing what to whom, and under whose orders they were acting. With intelligence put as the high priority in the prison facility, and the actions of abuse used as a mechanism for getting the detainees to talk, the abuse was inaccurately portrayed in a sense of a means to a justifiable ends. Though the actions were brutal and unnecessary, by placing MI in charge of the facility the abuse was reinterpreted from cruel taunting and attacks into standard military tactics.

Deny the action caused harm

When the photographs of prisoner abuse were released to the media humiliating and cruel images were met with outrage. Naked Iraqi prisoners forced into degrading acts

were what the international public saw in these photographs. It was made even worse by the cultural differences, as Abd explained in an interview “The interpreter told me to strip. We told him ‘You are Egyptian, you are a Muslim. You know that as Muslims we cannot do that’. When we refused to take off our clothes they beat us and tore our clothes off with a blade.”(Huggler & Buncombe, 2004 p3). This was coupled with being forced to imitate homosexual acts. Hersh indicates the degradation of these acts

“Such dehumanisation is unacceptable in any culture, but it is especially so in the Arab world. Homosexual acts are against Islamic law and it is humiliating for men to be naked in front other men, Bernard Haykel, a professor of Middle Eastern studies at New York University explains. “Being out on top of each other and forced to masturbate, being naked in front of each other- it’s all a form of torture” (Hersh, 2004, p 4.)



However humiliation does not equate to torture for all of the public, one article noting that “The Jihadists and Saddam loyalists we are fighting do not follow the Geneva Conventions, nor do they care about humiliating prisoners.” (Crespo, 2004, p3). This denial that the humiliation caused any harm is a common perception of the events. A source in the Australian Defence Force even commented “I have friends who have done things, overseas, stupid thing, but it was just messing around” (Bloggs interview, May, 2004). However, these perceptions are directly related to the photographs which have been released. Many people in the public are aware that there are more photographs, but not of the vastly different conditions the prisoners are exposed to in those which have not been released. The genuine brutality which occurred includes

“Breaking chemical lights and pouring phosphoric liquid on detainees; pouring cold water on naked detainees, beating detainees with a broom handle or chair; threatening male detainees with rape; allowing a military police guard to stich the wound of a detainee who

was injured after being slammed against the wall in his cell; sodomising a detainee with a chemical light and perhaps a broom stick, using military working dogs to frighten and intimidate detainees with threats of attack, and in one instance actually biting a detainee” (Hersh, 2004, p2) To support these allegations was extremely graphic photographic evidence. Other incidents include a civilian translator, hired to work at the prison, raping a juvenile prisoner, “They covered all the doors with sheets. I heard the screaming...and the female soldier was taking pictures” (Rather, 2004, p.3). Other pictures not released include images of military officers “severely beating an Iraqi prisoner nearly to death, having sex with a female Iraqi prisoner, and acting inappropriately with a dead body”” (Hersh, 2004 ii, p.4). Currently underway are investigations into twenty-five suspicious deaths in the jail. Interestingly, the only face of an Iraqi prisoner visible in the photographs is the battered face of the prisoner, coded, not named, as No. 153399 (Hersh, 2004, p4.) but the second is the face of an unprocessed prisoner. In an interview Fredrick recalls the prisoner in question “They [MI] stressed him out so bad that the man passed away. They put his body in a body bag and packed him in ice for approximately twenty-four hours in the shower... The next day the medics came and put his body on a stretcher, placed a fake IV in his arm and took him away” (Hersh, 2004, p7). Apparently this dead man never entered the prison’s inmate-control system, and was never given a number, hence there is no record of his time, or death at Abu Ghraib apart from the photographs. To reduce the effects of backlash and backfire, the public was not shown the disturbing images of



these more heinous acts of violence against the Abu Ghraib prisoners.

Though this report was able to find media articles describing further abuse, it appears that the public only sees the images of humiliation which have been plastered across newspaper front pages and television news stations.

The underlying detail preventing a major backfire appears to be the thought that “Yes, they attached wires to that guy and threatened to electrocute him,



but at least they were fakes and they wouldn't really do it” (Focus group two), but it appears that these soldiers did kill and inflict far more than emotional pain in their attempts to extract intelligence information from prisoners. The man placed upon a box

with fake electrodes attached to hands, body and genitals was told that if he fell off he would die. Even if the electrodes were not attached the reality of Abu Ghraib is that under Saddam Hussein there were active electrodes coming out of the walls for torture (Rather, 2004, p.1). Just because they were not activated it does not mean there was not emotional pain inflicted upon the prisoner, or that the potential to follow through with the threat was not real.

Launch official procedures

Numerous official procedures have begun in response to the photos leaking out of Abu Ghraib. Firstly there was the investigation authorized by Lieutenant General Ricardo S. Sanchez in Autumn 2003 conducted by the Army's chief law-enforcement officer, Provost Marshal Donald Ryder. Ryder's report, filed on November 5th, was intended

to review the prison facility and recommend any improvements to be made. It concluded that there were “potential human-rights, training, and manpower issues, system-wide, which needed immediate attention” (Hersh, 2004, p.7). The report also noted the tension between the Military Police and the Military Intelligence teams. His report found that General Kapansjki’s brigade had “not been directed to change its facility procedures to set the conditions for MI interrogations, nor participate in those interrogations” (Hersh, 2004. p.7). Ryder

wrote “Recent intelligence collection in support of Operation Enduring Freedom posited a template whereby military police set favourable conditions for subsequent interviews” (Hersh, 2004 ii, p.6). Ryder dated these roles back to the Afghan war. Ryder’s



report concluded that there were no military units applying inappropriate ‘confinement practices’, but it was recommended that the role of military police officers be defined and clearly separated from that of military intelligence. Ryder, however, undermined his recommendations by saying that the situation was not at crisis point yet. How he could have been at Abu Ghraib prison during the time of these abuses, and not noticed is a lingering mystery, but Ryder defended himself in a Pentagon press briefing that his journey to Iraq was “not an inspection or an investigation...It was an assessment”(Hersh, 2004 ii, p7). In January of 2004, one month after General Kerpinski was relieved of duties, another report was requested by Sanchez. Written by Major General Antonio M. Taguba this fifty-three page report completed in February was never meant to be released to the public. Taguba found that there had been numerous cases of “sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses” at the prison (Hersh,

2004, p.2) .The 327th Military Police Company (attached to the 320th which reported to Karpinski's brigade headquarters) were found to have systematically exposed prisoners to repeated illegal abuse. This second report found that many of the 'systematic problems' which arose in Ryder's report were in fact the same issues creating the need for the second investigation, that the abuses suffered to detainees would have occurred during, or very close to the time of the first 'assessment', and that contrary to the findings of Ryder that the MP's were asked to 'set the conditions' for MI investigations (Hersh, 2004, p.8). Taguba found that army intelligence officers, CIA agents, and private contractors would actively request "That MP guards set physical and mental conditions for favourable interrogation of witnesses" (Hersh, 2004, p.8), a fact which was supported with sworn statements from two of the accused, Specialist Sabrina Harman and Sergeant Javal Davis, to a similar effect. Also the 'hard wing' where the abuse took place was run by MI "[It] belongs to MI and it appeared MI approved of the abuse" (Davis's statement in Hersh, 2004, p8). Taguba suspected that



civilian contractor for CACI International Steven Stephanowicz, MI brigade commander Colonel Thomas Pappas, director of the Joint Interrogation and Debriefing Centre Lieutenant Colonel Steven Jordan, and another CACI International employee John Israel were either

directly or indirectly responsible for the abuse at Abu Ghraib. It was recommended that these individuals be immediately reprimanded and receive immediate disciplinary action. It is not known at this stage whether the civilians could be found guilty, if tried, under Iraqi or American law.

Intimidate those who expose the torture

It was through the circulation of digital photographs amongst different battalions that the US military was forced to acknowledge the abuse at Abu Ghraib. Those individuals who circulated the photographs, and posed in them, are not the Military Intelligence officers or contractors who requested that the prisoners be softened up, rather they are the reservists. It has been found that these individuals guilty of inflicting the abuse were under supervised and untrained in their positions. Interviews reveal none of them can recall ever being shown a copy of the Geneva Convention's outline for treating prisoners of war, nor being shown, or explained what their role as a Military Police officer entailed. The US government requested that the media delay their expose of this story for a fortnight. This gave them time to prepare their line that "This is not representative of the 150,000 soldiers over here... do not judge your army on the actions of few" which was released by Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, deputy director of coalition forces in Iraq in the *60 Minutes II* interview story on April 29th. These reservists face military prison for their actions, and were therefore able to be manipulated and intimidated by the army. In an interview shown on Australian *60 Minutes*, Lynndie England explained that there was no support or training; they were just put in charge in the prison. These reservists are the only ones who could reveal that there were many more perpetrators of the abuse, and that it was MI that was encouraging and instigating it, and they have been discredited by the army choosing to release the photographs which have their faces in them. Thus, the army silenced these people, discrediting the reservists; the



army discredited and silenced the claim that the abuse stretches beyond these individuals.

Intimidation is also most likely the key reasoning behind Ryder's initial flawed report on the conditions at Abu Ghraib. Described by former CID agent Willie J. Rowell, "Ryder was a man in a no win situation" (Hersh, 2004, ii, p.7). Apparently in Autumn of 2003 an army revision of the command structure placed Ryder, as a Provost Marshal, as commanding officer of all Military Police Units, and also CID, which meant he was quintessentially asked to investigate himself (Hersh, 2004, p.7). Therefore Ryder, by being asked to investigate the state of the facilities himself was threatened with being the man who turned loose a CID task force, or the man who headed the violent boastful military police, fully aware of the damage it could do to him personally and to his career. Therefore the torture was not revealed.

This has demonstrated six ways in which backfire, or backlash, was inhibited by the US military leading up to the exposure of the photographs of prisoner, based on a hybrid theory of Brian Martin's Backfire process theory, and his Countershock process theory.

Backlash as an ongoing process

One feature of the backfire, backlash process, is that quite often it perpetuates itself over and over as one issue extends to another which backlashes, and so on. Firstly, there was not just the public outcry over democratic countries inflicting such torture on

their prisoners, but when asked backfiring consequences s/he saw as a result of the photographs being released Australian Defence Force source, 'Bloggs', responded that "All you have to do is look at the approval ratings for George Bush and you can see backfire occurring. You cannot expect such a horrific breakdown in command to not have repercussions." (Bloggs interview, May, 2004). Bloggs was right, as statistics revealed a near fifty percent drop on the approval rating of the US president since going to war in Iraq. Bush has established himself up as a 'war leader', and he has certainly sought out a war to prove this status, but by setting himself as such he has exposed himself to 'unprecedented scrutiny' (Sieff, 2004. p2). With the continuation of time, though, President Bush had far more to worry about than backlash affecting his approval.

The public called for the resignation of Donald Rumsfeld, head of the US Defence Department. Fighting these claims, and subduing public desire to see if knowledge of the prisoner abuse went beyond himself all the way up the chain of command to the US President, Rumsfeld still holds his position.

As the media and the international public continued to deliberate over the nature of the photographs released from Abu Ghraib another event occurred in apparent retaliation to the release of the photographs. On May 11th 2004 a gruesome videotape began circulating in emails, the television news would play portions of it, but this clip recording the slaughtering of Nick Berg was violent and confronting. Those performing the acts of violence had been able to take their actions all the way to viewers watching their television or surfing the internet in Australia and America. This graphic and confrontational image of those who are perceived as enemies of the US, sadistically decapitating Berg, was viewed by the media and the public as a direct



backlash by Iraqi terrorist organizations in response to the release of the prisoner abuse photographs. Many people believe that the death of Nick Berg was a direct backlash to the photographs coming out of Abu Ghraib, especially considering that Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, the man behind the violence has the photographs mentioned as a justification for murder claiming their “reactions will be violent and bloody”(Phares, 2004, p.1). But the majority of people in the three focus groups performed (8/12), along with Bloggs, said they felt that Zarqawi and his group had merely used the photographs as an excuse to legitimize their actions. When looking at the death of Nick Berg it is interesting to note a few points before deciding how backlash applies to the fate of the twenty-six-year-old Pennsylvanian. Berg was detained by Iraqi police in Mosul, who then informed the Americans, leading to the FBI questioning Berg three times about his reasons for entering Iraq. Berg was not a private contractor, just an electronics expert who claimed to want to help the Iraqi people. Berg was wearing an Islamic style beard at the time of his death, however reports that he was in possession of anti-Semitic and Koran materials question this image (Devine-Molin, 2004, p.2). Berg had been travelling around the most dangerous sections of the country by local taxi, without private security escorts, appeared totally caught off guard by his death, he appeared to believe he was aiding a ransom video (Devine-Molin, 2004, p.2). Michael Berg, Nick’s father, an outspoken radical Leftist, claimed that “My son died for the sins of George Bush and Donald Rumsfeld” (Devine-Molin, 2004, p.2), considering the US attempted to stop Berg from entering Iraq, these were certainly extreme statements. In the statement at the opening of the murder video, the speaker explains that they had offered the US an exchange of Berg, for prison detainees, and as this

request had been refused Berg would die. Zarqawi's actions make Al Qaeda the vicious criminals again, however by allowing the public to believe this the US government is left open to the backlash of those who can interpret the 'terrorists' words.

Conclusion

Backlash occurs when the public is made aware of an issue, and is then able to cause an outcry, increasing awareness of the issue. Following a six point process derived from a combination of Brian Martins Backfire and Countershock processes it has been found that the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib definitely caused a backlash on the presence of American troops in Iraq and all the way up the chain of command of the US military. The US attempted to inhibit this backlash by: concealing the abuse; devaluing the target; reinterpreting the abuse; denying that the actions caused harm; launching official procedures; and intimidating those who could expose the torture. These processes were vital, the US knew that it could not conceal the photographs forever, hence setting up the situation for their release as Charles Klotzer points out

“While the degree of openness of this war, of course, will be written well in the future, it is obvious that compared to Grenada, Panama and the first Gulf War, the flanks of the Pentagon have learned too many restraints ultimately backfire. Moreover, the accessibility of the Internet shortcuts any attempt to suppress unwelcome news” (Klotzer, 2003, p.1).

In a society where digital technology allows for photographs, such as those of the prisoner abuse, to be readily circulated, and creates opportunities for 'terrorists' to publicize their brutality online, it becomes clear that the strategies for inhibiting backlash shall become more frequently utilized in suppressing public outrage at an issue. Because of this, it is important to recognize and acknowledge the backlash

inhibition process, as outlined in this report, so that topics which may otherwise be permitted to be suppressed can be exposed. Public action being the ultimate goal of instigating backlash, exposure is only the first step in this counter process, but an important one none the less.

Bibliography

Crespo, P. (2004) 'The media's double standard on Iraq prison abuse'
<http://www.townhall.com.columist.GuestColumns/Crespo20040517.shtml>

Posted 17/05/2004

Accessed 18/05/2004

Devine- Molin, C, (2004) 'The curious case of Nuck Berg'
<http://www.enterstageright.com.archive/05040504berg.htm>

Posted 17/05/2004

Accessed 18/05/2004

Hersh, Seymour, M (2004) 'Torture at Abu Ghraib' *The New Yorker*, May 10 Issue 3 ppNA (1-11)

<http://newyorker.com>

Posted 30/4/2004

Hersh, Seymour, M. (2004 ii) 'Chain of Command' *The New Yorker*, May 17 issue 4pp. NA (1-7)

http://newyorker.com/?Fact/040517fa_fact_2

Posted 9/05/2004

Huggler, J. & Buncombe, A. (2004) 'The humiliated man beneath the hood (he wants to come here)' *New Zealand Herald* 7/025/2004.

Kattan, V. (2004) 'This war is out of control. The Last moments in the Life of Nick Berg'
Counterpunch Weekend Edition Feature 15-16 May 2004

<Http://www.counterpunch.org.kattan05172004.html>.

Accessed 18/05/2004

Klotzer, C. L. (2004) 'Censorship: a two-front war' *St Louis Journalism Review (Late Edition)*
April 2003 v33 i255 p28 (2)

Knowlton, B (2004), May 17th Article 'New Iraq abuse accusations emerge. *Sphere*
<http://www.iraq.net/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=3653>

Accessed 18/05/2004

Martin, B., Jansen, S.C. (2003) 'Making censorship backfire'. *Counterpoise* Vol7, No 3 July 2003, pp.5-15.

Martin, B., Wright, S (2003). 'Countershock: Mobilising Resistance to Electroschock Weapons'
Medicine, Conflict and Survival. Vol 19, No 3 July-September 2003, pp 205-222.

Martin, B. (2004) 'Iraq attack backfire' – Draft

Martin, B. (2004) 'The beating of Rodney King: the dynamics of backfire' - Draft

The Memory Hole at <http://freerepublic.com>
(Internet discussions IRAQPOW thread 7-8/05/2004)

Accessed 10/05/2004

The Mirror (1/05/2004) 'Shock, outrage over prison photos'

<http://www.mirror.co.uk>

Accessed 18/05/2004

Phares, W, (2004) 'Don't mistake beheading as a response to abuse'

Opinion 16/5/2004

<http://www.indystar.com/articles/1/146626-4611-021.html>

Accessed 18/05/2004

Pryce-Jones D. (2004) 'Steady On, George: The costs of going wobbly. (Support for war against Iraq)' *National Review* November 25, 2002, v54 i22 pNA

Rather, Dan (2004) April 29th 'Abuse of Iraqi POWs by GIs Probed. *60 Minutes II*

<http://cbsnews.com/stories/2004/04/27/60II/printable614063.shtml>

Accessed 18/05/2004

Schell, J. (2004) 'Imposing our will' *The Nation*. August 4, 2003, v277 i4 p10

Sieff, M (2004) 'Analysis: 'War Leader' Ploy may Backfire'

United Press International, 18/03/2004

60 Minutes Australian broadcast – interview with Lynddie England,

Additional Research:

Focus Group 1 – Conducted May 10th 2004 (4 participants)

Focus Group 2 – Conducted May 17th 2004 (4 participants)

Focus Group 3 – Conducted May 21st 2004 (4 participants)

Interview:

Australian Defence Force contact – unnamed, 24/05/2004

Named Bloggs in the report

Appendix.

Collection of released photos from Abu Ghraib (Cropped by media)









