

BBC complains of Pentagon lies

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The BBC has become so concerned at false and misleading information being put out on the war against Iraq that it has stressed to its journalists that they must clearly attribute military sources.

According to the *Guardian*, BBC news chiefs met to discuss the problem after the broadcaster carried several reports later shown to be inaccurate. The misleading reports were all favourable to the US/UK forces and so their exposure has undermined the BBC's claims to be providing unbiased coverage.

On Sunday March 23, British military sources claimed to have taken the port of Umm Qasr in southern Iraq. Three days later, they were still fighting to quell resistance.

The BBC then ran headlines with reports of the discovering of a chemical weapons factory in An Najaf, which was later dropped.

On Tuesday, March 25, the British news was filled with reports of an uprising under way in Basra, Iraq's second largest city. Claims of the "popular uprising" were first made by British military forces, but were later found to be untrue.

On Wednesday, March 26, the British military were cited reporting that "up to 120 tanks" were leaving Basra. The convoy was later found to be just three-strong.

Numerous other examples can be cited, including the continuous downplaying of the extent of popular opposition to the US/UK invasion and the particularly cynical claim that the Iraqi regime was responsible for the missile attack on a Baghdad market that killed 17 civilians.

A BBC spokeswoman confirmed that a meeting had been held to discuss recent events.

"There's been a discussion about attribution and it's been reinforced with people that we do have to attribute military information," she said. "We have to be very careful in the midst of a conflict like this one to be very

sure when we're reporting something we've not seen with our own eyes that we attribute it."

An unnamed "senior BBC news source", cited by the *Guardian*, went further, stating: "We're getting more truth out of Baghdad than the Pentagon at the moment."

"We're absolutely sick and tired of putting things out and finding they're not true. The misinformation in this war is far and away worse than any conflict I've covered, including the first Gulf war and Kosovo."

Many news sources in Britain are now admitting that much of the key information they are relaying has been proven to be inaccurate. But this is often put down to the pressures of 24-hour coverage and the "fog of war". For example, the BBC source cited by the *Guardian* went on to claim that the misinformation was an accident, rather than deliberate deceit: "I don't know whether they [the Pentagon] are putting out flyers in the hope that we'll run them first and ask questions later or whether they genuinely don't know what's going on—I rather suspect the latter."

In truth, much of the British and US media is simply a propaganda tool of their respective military forces. Some 900 journalists and reporters are "embedded" with US/UK troops, effectively functioning as part of an act of armed aggression against the Iraqi people and paid to conceal that fact. The concern expressed by the BBC's top brass is that this fact has become so obvious to millions in Britain and around the world that its own credibility—and hence its considerable political influence internationally—will never recover.



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