

Release of Hussein sons' photos: Washington exposes its own barbarism

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The world was subjected to a gruesome and barbaric spectacle on Thursday when the Bush administration released photographs of the mutilated corpses of Saddam Hussein's sons, Uday and Qusay, ambushed and killed by American forces on July 22.

The American cable news networks wasted no time in displaying blowups of the bloody heads and torsos of the dead men and beaming the images into homes across the US and around the world. US government spokesmen and media commentators could barely conceal their glee at the sight of the shattered bodies, and their satisfaction over inflicting the pictures on a global audience.

Nothing the *World Socialist Web Site* could say would be a more devastating indictment of the degenerates who wield power in the US and their media accomplices than their own self-exposure. The overwhelming majority of people around the world, and especially in the US, will feel only revulsion and shame at this exhibition of sadism.

Whatever one thinks of the deposed Iraqi ruler and his sons—who were undoubtedly guilty of reprehensible crimes—the actions of the Bush administration in slaughtering Uday and Qusay Hussein and then gloating over their dead bodies demonstrate that the US ruling elite has nothing to learn from its enemies when it comes to savagery and contempt for human life.

Bush administration notables such as Paul Bremer, the American proconsul in Iraq, and Donald Rumsfeld, the secretary of defense, justified the release of the photos as a supposed boon to the Iraqi people. The aim, they said, was to convince the Iraqis that Saddam's sons and right-hand men were well and truly dead. This, they claimed, would reassure the people that the Baathist regime was finished and would not return.

Not only that. It would, said Bremer, encourage

ordinary Iraqis to come forward with information about the whereabouts of other Baathists (above all, although Bremer did not name him, the still-at-large Saddam Hussein) and demoralize those who are waging a guerrilla war against the American occupiers. Rumsfeld claimed at a joint press conference with Bremer that the showing of the photographs would save the lives of American troops.

Speaking in Philadelphia, Bush exulted, "Now, more than ever, the Iraqis can know that the former regime is gone and is not coming back." The previous day, Bush stood alongside Bremer, Rumsfeld and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Richard Myers and boasted that the killing of Hussein's sons meant the US military was "on the offensive" in Iraq" against a "few remaining holdouts" of the Baathist regime.

To the extent that Bush and company truly believe such claims, they reveal the degree to which they are suffering from political dementia and self-delusion. The display of American arrogance and contempt for human sensibilities—let alone deeply felt cultural feelings about the desecration of the dead—will only fuel the hatred of the Arab masses for the invaders and their quislings within Iraq. Indeed, even as the photos were being broadcast, news reports were circulating about the death of three more American soldiers in Iraq.

Despite all of the "winning the hearts and minds" blather, it was impossible to conceal a more ruthless motive behind the release of the photos—namely, to intimidate and terrorize the Iraqi people and show in the most graphic manner possible who is "boss" in the new Iraq.

There are indications that the pressure to release the photos came primarily from the White House and the civilian leadership of the Pentagon, headed by Rumsfeld, not the military. On Wednesday, Lt. Gen.

Ricardo Sanchez, the commanding Army officer in Iraq, told reporters the military was reluctant to release the grisly images. He was doubtless concerned about the ramifications of issuing the photos for the safety of American soldiers on the ground.

But that evening, Rumsfeld told reporters, “There will be pictures released,” and on Thursday he claimed responsibility for the decision to release them. Significantly, the photographs were issued by Bremer, an appointee of the White House, not by the Army.

The fact that those who wield power in Washington are blind to the mass revulsion that will arise in response to the showing of these photos highlights the insular and degenerate character of the American ruling elite. These traits are concentrated in the man who sits atop the government.

The political calculations of Bush and his associates, such as his chief adviser Karl Rove, are of the most crude and backward sort. It is no exaggeration to say they reflect a criminal mentality.

Bush’s inner circle was intimately involved in the decision to massacre the Hussein sons and release the photos of their corpses. They believed that such a “success” would reverse the unfavorable political momentum of recent weeks, which have seen a mushrooming controversy over administration lies, mounting US casualties in Iraq, and a failing economy—the combined effect of which has been reflected in plummeting poll numbers for Bush.

The *New York Times* reflected the thinking in the White House in a July 24 article headlined, “Deaths of Hussein’s Sons Allow Change of Subject.” The author wrote: “With the deaths of Saddam Hussein’s sons on Tuesday in Iraq, a bad political month for President Bush got palpably better.” The author went on to write that “privately, advisers to the White House said the development marked an important turn of fortune...” He quoted a top Republican adviser as saying, “But the death of the Hussein brothers has a tactical political meaning because it changes the subject from the 16 words in the State of the Union.”

It will come as no surprise to those—the vast majority—who retain a sense of humanity and have not lost their political bearings that the American media played a particularly despicable role in these events. On Thursday morning, Jerry Nachman, the editor-in-chief of MSNBC, the cable news network jointly controlled

by NBC and Microsoft, indulged in commentary with overtly racist overtones while photos of the shattered corpses played across the TV screen.

Nachman justified the showing of the photos on the grounds that the US was obliged to tailor its tactics to the mentality of the Arab people, who, he declared, routinely witnessed public executions and had come to expect public beheadings. He was seconded by the pundit of the moment, Con Coughlin, author of a book entitled *Saddam: King of Terror*. Coughlin opined that the display of the photos would “win respect for the Americans” in the Arab world.

On CNN, moderator Wolf Blitzer opened up the telephone lines for comments from the public, and was taken aback when the first caller denounced the broadcast of the photos as a moral abomination, and reminded him that among those killed in the American assault on Tuesday was the 14-year-old son of Qusay Hussein, Mustapha. “Why don’t you show his photo too?” she demanded.

It should be recalled that during the US invasion, the Bush administration publicly denounced the Arabic network Al-Jazeera for displaying photos of American soldiers killed and taken captive by Iraqi forces, calling it a flagrant violation of international law. The White House demanded that US media outlets refuse to broadcast or publish the photos, and the major media meekly complied.

The contrast to the media’s current role in emblazoning the photos of the dead Hussein brothers at the behest of the government only underscores its corruption and subservience to political reaction and the Bush White House.



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