



CHAPTER 8

Covering War's Victims

A Content Analysis of Iraq and Afghanistan War Photographs in the *New York Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*

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“The lie in war is almost always the lie of omission.”
Chris Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*

Sparing use of photographs is central to the management of war news. Consider two cases in point. In May 2004, photographs from Abu Ghraib of US captors abusing Iraqi detainees made torture starkly real to many US citizens. On May 7, 2004, before the *Washington Post* published a series of the photographs, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told the Senate and House Armed Service Committees that the images in question showed “blatantly sadistic, cruel and inhuman” torture of Iraqis. He worried publicly that, “If these are released to the public, obviously it’s going to make matters worse.”¹ In September 2005, US District Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein ordered release of additional Abu Ghraib photographs, asserting that “the freedoms we champion are as important to our success in Iraq and Afghanistan as the guns and missiles with which our troops are armed.”²

In 2004–2005, Russ Kick (editor, *The Memory Hole*) and Ralph Begleiter (professor of communication, University of Delaware) used the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to make public over seven hundred photographs of flag-draped coffins containing US military personnel killed overseas.³ The Pentagon and the Bush administration had strenuously resisted news coverage and photography of dead soldiers’ homecomings on all military bases. Professor Begleiter called the government’s release of the Dover Air Force Base photographs

254 | CENSORED 2008

an important victory for the American people, for the families of troops killed in the line of duty during wartime, and for the honor of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. . . . This significant decision by the Pentagon should make it difficult, if not impossible, for any US government in the future to hide the human cost of war from the American people.⁴

If, as Susan Sontag suggests, most contemporary citizens' knowledge of war is "camera-mediated," rather than experiential, then photographic images from Dover Air Force Base, not to mention Abu Ghraib, are necessary to the US public's full understanding of war's human cost.⁵

This chapter presents a case study in how two major national newspapers present photographic images of war in Iraq and Afghanistan to the US public. Analyzing front-page coverage in the *New York Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle*, we have examined, coded, and analyzed twenty-five months of photographs related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Visuals, including news photographs, play a crucial role in how readers experience newspapers and engage the stories that they contain. For example, the Poynter Institute's ongoing "Eyes on the News" study demonstrates that: 90 percent of readers enter pages through large photographs or other visual images; running a visual element increases the likelihood by three times that the reader will read at least some of the accompanying text; and readers' comprehension and recall increase when photographs or other visuals accompany stories. Overall, under ideal circumstances, readers take in 75 percent of the photographs in a newspaper. By comparison, they are aware of only 25 percent of the paper's text, and read just 13 percent of its stories in any depth. This research shows that readers' experience of newspapers is holistic and visual.⁶

This study focuses on news photographs appearing on the front pages of the *Times* and the *Chronicle* during two periods, March–December 2003 and January 2006–March 2007. Examining these data, we ask:

- how frequently do front-page news photographs depict war in Afghanistan or Iraq? And,
- to what extent do these photos portray the *human cost* of those wars?

CENSORED 2008 | 255

Based on content analysis of over 6,000 front-page news photos spanning 1,389 days of coverage, we find that only 12.8 percent of the photos analyzed relate in some way to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. A mere 3.3 percent of those front-page news photos represent war's most fundamental human cost, by depicting dead, injured, or missing humans. We find an enormous gap between the number of actual deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq during this time span, which numbers in the tens of thousands (and hundreds of thousands, by some estimates) and the number of deaths depicted visually, through front-page photographs—just forty-eight images of human death, in our data collection.

Based on this evidence, we argue that front-page news photographs “cover” the human cost of war in ways that run contrary to popular understandings of the press's role and responsibilities in a democratic society.

In journalism “to cover” a story usually means to be responsible for reporting an event, with the aims of drawing attention to it, and enhancing public understanding of it. However, “to cover” can also mean to put something (like a blanket) over something else, to hide, protect, or decorate it. We argue that the corporate media's coverage of the human cost of war in Afghanistan and Iraq amounts to the second—and, for journalism, problematic—meaning of the action, “to cover.” When only 202 of the 6,037 front-page news photographs we analyzed depict the human cost of war, we conclude that the *Times* and the *Chronicle* do more to hide that cost from the public, rather than bring it to their attention.

The absence of front-page news photographs depicting bodily injury and death contributes to what Elaine Scarry describes as “the disappearance of the body” in contemporary war, despite the fact that “injuring is, in fact, the central activity of war,” its “obsessive content.” This central fact, Scarry notes, “often slips from view.”⁷ The body's disappearance allows the state and the press to direct the public's attention to the “mythic reality” of war, rather than its “sensory reality” in which “we see events for what they are” and “war is exposed for what it is—organized murder.”⁸

Our analysis proceeds by considering perspectives on the political values and journalistic conventions that shape contemporary war photography, a review of our data and methods, and more detailed presentation of our findings. The concluding discussion raises

256 | CENSORED 2008

important questions about the social significance of this limited coverage.

POLITICAL AND JOURNALISTIC VALUES

Institutions, as much as individuals, produce and present news photographs. Political and journalistic values strongly influence the content and placement of news photographs.⁹ However, as Barbie Zelizer has argued, standards regarding the usage of images in news “remain generally unarticulated in the journalistic community.”¹⁰ During wartime, when the topic of death becomes the focus of news images, the lack of consensus becomes pronounced:

Arguments—about our dead versus their dead; about civilian versus military dead; about showing the faces of the dead; about class, race, and the dead; about identifying the dead before their next of kin are notified—inevitably draw in news editors, media ombudsmen, and readers in letters to the editor, suggesting at a fundamental level that Western journalism has no problem using words in news to verbally recount the stories of death in war time but it has many problems using news pictures showing those who have died. In this respect, journalists’ decisions about what to do with images of death reflect more broadly on the role and function of journalism as a whole.¹¹

By and large, however, Zelizer argues that news organizations tend to depict war as “clean, heroic and just” by limiting images of war “to those that are consonant with prevailing sentiments about the war.” These images “tend not to be graphic.”¹²

US government restrictions limit the type of images that photojournalists make, both overseas and at home, in covering the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. The Pentagon’s fifty-point Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) Ground Rules Agreement (known informally as the “embed rules”) specifically prohibits:

► “photographs or other visual media showing an enemy prisoner of war or detainee’s recognizable face, nametag or other identifying feature or item” (point #40)

CENSORED 2008 | 257

- “photographs or other visual media showing a deceased service member’s recognizable face, nametag or other identifying feature of item” (#43)
- Photographs of patients in medical facilities are allowed “only with the consent of the attending physician or facility commander and with the patient’s informed consent, witnessed by the escort. ‘Informed consent’ means the patient understands his or her picture and comments are being collected for news media purposes and they may appear nationwide in news media reports” (#48 & #49).¹³

These restrictions’ impact on photojournalists’ ability to report the war cannot be overstated. Consider, for example, the account of Michael Kamber, a photographer for the *New York Times*:

The embedded restrictions have tightened up considerably since I was last here. You now need written permission from a wounded soldier to publish his photo if he is in any way identifiable and even if his face is not visible. If unit insignias or faces of others soldiers are visible, that also disqualifies a photo from being used, according to one of the highest-ranking PAO’s (Public Affairs Officer) in Iraq. . . . When I was here in ’03 and ’04, the military was much more welcoming. I was invited to shoot memorials (now off limits) and when I embedded with the 1st Cav, they just invited me out. No papers to sign, no written conditions. They just asked that I show respect for the soldiers if they were killed, which I would do anyway. Now there are these new restrictions make it nearly impossible to shoot the dead and wounded. . . . I seriously question who these restrictions are for. . . . The question I pose is: What would have happened to our visual history if Robert Capa and Gene Smith were running around the battlefield during WWII trying to get releases signed as they worked? What if this had been required in Vietnam? Or any war?¹⁴

Testimony by other war photographers, including the *New York Times*’s Tyler Hicks and the *Los Angeles Times*’s Pulitzer Prize winner Carolyn Cole, corroborate this account.¹⁵

Of course, US government regulations also impose limits on



258 | CENSORED 2008

images of war dead at home, as indicated by the Pentagon's resistance to the efforts of Russ Kick and Ralph Begleiter, mentioned above, to secure release of photographs from Dover Air Force Base, depicting the flag-draped coffins containing US military personnel killed overseas.

Many factors—including restricted access, hazardous logistics, and professional ethics—combine to limit the number and type of news photographs of war's victims. We sought to evaluate quantitatively the extent of this limitation by asking: 1. how frequently do front-page news photographs depict war in Afghanistan or Iraq? And, 2. to what extent do these photos portray the *human cost* of those wars?

DATA AND METHODS

We examined two newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, as our primary data sources. We chose the *Times* as the widely acknowledged national paper of record, and the *Chronicle* as a major metropolitan newspaper. We focused on the front page of the *Times* and the *Chronicle* for two periods, 1. the first calendar year of the war in Iraq, from 19 March to 31 December, 2003, and 2. the most recent year up to the four year anniversary of the Iraq conflict, i.e., from 1 January, 2006 to March 20, 2007. We have coded a total of 1,389 days of front-page coverage from the *Times* and the *Chronicle*, including 708 days of the *Times* and 681 of the *Chronicle*.¹⁶ We conducted a content analysis of the front pages of the *Times* and the *Chronicle*, coding for the number of *days* that included stories on Iraq and/or Afghanistan, the total *number of photographs* appearing on the front pages for those days, and the frequency with which those photographs depicted the wars in Afghanistan or Iraq. We intentionally employed broad definitions of what counted as a story or photograph related to Iraq or Afghanistan to maximize the counts for each of these categories. Thus, for example, a photograph of President Bush speaking at a press conference about congressional funding for the war in Iraq, was counted as a war photo, even though it does not depict actual combat or its aftermath.

For photographs depicting Iraq or Afghanistan, we also coded the location of the photograph on the front page (above or below the

fold), and whether the photograph depicted dead, injured or missing humans. For those photographs that did portray the human cost of war, we also coded the age, gender, nationality of the victim(s) photographed. We also sought to determine the status of dead, injured, or missing persons as “official” (i.e., combatants) or “unofficial” (non-combatants, i.e., civilians). If photographs depicted dead humans, we coded whether the image revealed the face of the victim.

Our coding framework included not only images of actual human bodies, but also images that symbolically represented dead or missing human bodies. For example, in some news photographs, a grave marker, a soldier’s empty boots, or a life portrait held by a relative might stand as a symbolic representation of a dead or missing human.

Finally, for each war photograph we noted its accompanying caption and, when applicable, the headline of the news story associated with the photograph.

Working as a team to code this enormous data corpus, we were concerned with the reliability of our coding. Therefore we attempted to develop coding categories that required a minimum of subjective interpretation. At the project’s onset, we met regularly to compare coding decisions and to refine our sense of how to code complicated, “borderline” cases. This effort paid off with a high degree of inter-coder reliability. Even our most difficult, “interpretive” categories (for example, official vs. unofficial status) produced inter-coder reliability rates greater than 90 percent, and our reliability reached 100 percent for more “objective” categories (e.g. number of photographs, location above/below the fold, etc.) Thus, we report the following findings with the highest degree of confidence in their reliability.

FINDINGS

For the two periods we coded (March 19, to December 31, 2001, and January 1, 2006 to March 20, 2007), the *New York Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* devoted considerable attention to the war in Iraq, but less to the ongoing war in Afghanistan. Overall 71 percent of the days we coded included stories on Iraq. During the same period, only 6 percent of the coded days included stories on the war in Afghanistan. In the *New York Times*, over 84 percent of the days

260 | CENSORED 2008

coded included some coverage of the war in Iraq; and the war in Afghanistan appeared on the *Times*' front page on 9 percent of the days coded. The *San Francisco Chronicle* included coverage of the war in Iraq on 58 percent percent of the coded days, and Afghanistan on three percent of the days analyzed.

During this time span we counted a total of 6,037 news photographs on the front page of the *Times* (N=2487) and the *Chronicle* (N=3550). We coded 774 of these front-page photographs as depicting persons or events related to the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. Table 1 summarizes these findings:

Table 1: Front Page News Photos, by News Source

	ALL NEWS PHOTOS	IRAQ & AFGHAN	IRAQ ONLY
NY TIMES	2487	408 (16%)	396 (16%)
SF CHRONICLE	3550	366 (10%)	357 (10%)
TOTAL	6037	774 (13%)	753 (12%)

Over 16 percent of the photographs on the front page of the *New York Times* depict either the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. The figure is slightly greater than 10 percent for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Overall, combining the two papers' coverage, just 12.8 percent of the front-page photographs relate to conflict in Iraq or Afghanistan. This is a remarkably small figure given both the global importance of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and our coding framework's inclusive definition of what counted as photographs related to Iraq or Afghanistan. The war in Afghanistan is especially invisible, accounting for less than 1 percent of front-page news photographs in the *Times* and the *Chronicle*.

If images of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan appear infrequently on the front pages of the newspaper, then images depicting the human cost of war are even less common. Most photographs related to the wars depict them in *political* terms (see, for example, Figure 1). In our data, we counted just 202 images that depicted the *human cost of war*, by representing dead, injured, or missing humans. Put another way, on average, just one out of four front-page photographs depicting the wars in Afghanistan or Iraq also depicted dead, injured, or missing bodies; overall, just three percent of the front page news



Figure 1: Casual Update: President Bush, joined by Condoleezza Rice, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, Vice President Dick Cheney and Gen. Richard B. Myers, walked to a news conference at his Texas Ranch yesterday. He reported “good progress” in Iraq but said more work needed to be done. (*New York Times*, August 9, 2003) AP

Most news photographs depicting war in Iraq (or Afghanistan) depict it as a political matter. Note how the image, in tandem with the language of “more work . . . to be done,” obscures the human cost of war.

photographs in our data depict the human cost of war in Afghanistan or Iraq. Table 2 summarizes these findings.

Table 2: Front Page News Photos Depicting Human Cost of War, by News Source

	WAR PHOTOS	HUMAN COST PHOTOS	DEATH PHOTOS
NY TIMES	408	115 (28%)	73 (18%)
SF CHRONICLE	366	87 (24%)	48 (13%)
TOTAL	774	202 (26%)	121 (16%)

Of the 6,037 front-page news photographs we coded, including 774 that depicted war in Iraq or Afghanistan, just 121 depict dead humans. Most of these photographs (N=86) are *symbolic representations* of human death—for instance, the life portrait of a deceased US

262 | CENSORED 2008

Figure 2: Lynn Bradach and her son, Nick Nall, are at the center of a close-knit clan grieving the death of Cpl. Travis J. Bradach-Nall. (*New York Times*, July 27, 2003) ALAN S. WEINER

American fatalities are typically portrayed in life portraits, accompanied by their surviving relatives.

soldier in the presence of the soldier's surviving family members (see, for example, Figure 2), or the beheaded body of a child's doll lying in blood in an Iraqi marketplace after a car bomb detonated. Only thirty-five of the "death" photos depict actual, dead human bodies. Table 3 summarizes our findings regarding photographs that depict US and Iraqi dead.

Table 3: Photographs Depicting US, and Iraqi Dead, by News Source*

	US DEAD			IRAQI DEAD		
	Total	Actual	Symbolic	Total	Actual	Symbolic
NY TIMES	25	5 (20%)	20 (80%)	34	16 (47%)	18 (53%)
SF CHRONICLE	21	0 (0%)	21 (100%)	22	11 (50%)	11 (50%)
TOTAL	46	5 (11%)	41 (89%)	56	27 (48%)	29 (52%)

*Note: The sum for photographs of US and Iraqi dead in this table (112) is less than the total for photos of the dead, reported in Table 2, because a number of photos depict either (i) fatalities from other nations (for example, Afghani, or Coalition Forces from the UK) or (ii) dead whose national identity we could not determine with certainty.

CENSORED 2008 | 263



Figure 3: US troops guard the body of a soldier killed in an attack by rocket propelled grenades on a convoy on the main road west of Baghdad. (*New York Times*, July 17, 2003) AP

A rare photograph of a dead US soldier in the battlefield. Note how the soldier's body is obscured, by both a blanket and the fencepost, and heavily protected.

264 | CENSORED 2008

Images of actual Iraqi dead (N=27) appear far more frequently than images of actual US dead (N=5); US dead are more likely to appear in photographs that represent them symbolically.

Table 4 summarizes our findings regarding the combatant status, gender, and age of the dead humans depicted.

Table 4: Photographs Depicting Official Status, Gender, and Age of Dead; by Nationality*

	OFFICIAL STATUS			GENDER			AGE			
	Total	Uniform	Not Uni.	Total	Male	Female	Total	Adult	Teen	Child
US DEAD	46	42 (91%)	4 (9%)	34	30 (88%)	4 (12%)	46	38 (83%)	4 (9%)	0 (0%)
IRAQI DEAD	56	16 (29%)	21 (38%)	58	28 (48%)	3 (5%)	56	25 (45%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)
TOTAL	102	58 (52%)	25 (22%)	92	58 (63%)	7 (8%)	102	64 (57%)	6 (5%)	2 (2%)

*Note: Due to photos where the status, gender, or age of the dead could not be determined with certainty, sums are not identical and percentages do not necessarily total 100 percent.

Predictably, images of US dead depict uniformed, official combatants, with just four exceptions: In these cases, all from the *Chronicle*, photographs depict the life portraits of US military personnel, not in uniform. Notably, none of the photos of US dead in our data depict civilian contractors, despite increasing public awareness and concern regarding this aspect of contemporary war.¹⁷ Images of Iraqi dead are a mixture of civilian (N=21) and combatant (N=16), with a comparable number (N=19) indeterminate, based on the image and its accompanying caption. Images of US dead comprise thirty men, four women, with fourteen indeterminate; images of Iraqi dead include twenty-eight men, three women, with twenty-seven indeterminate. The front-page war photographs rarely depict child fatalities (N=2).

The most graphic—and controversial—war photographs depict the faces of the dead. Images of this type are exceedingly rare in our data set (N=67). Table 5 summarizes our findings regarding these photographs:



Figure 4: The body of a man lay in the street of Falluja, Iraq, yesterday after American soldiers clashed with demonstrators for a second time this week. (*New York Times*, May 1, 2003) AP

Camera angle obscures the victim's face, but in contrast with Figure 3, above, the Iraqi fatality is shown unattended.

Table 5: Images Depicting Faces of the Dead, by News Source

	Total	Life Portrait	Face Obscured		Face Visible
			By Camera Angle	Covered	
NY TIMES	31	9 (29%)	4 (13%)	12 (39%)	6 (19%)
SF CHRONICLE	37	26 (70%)	2 (5%)	9 (24%)	0 (0%)
TOTAL	68	35 (51%)	6 (9%)	21 (31%)	6 (9%)

By far, most photographic images of the dead took the form of life portraits (N=35), largely due to the *Chronicle's* use of this image type. Twenty of these depicted US military personnel, nine Iraqis, and two other (coalition troops from the U.K., and Brazil.) Six times in our data, the photographer framed her/his shot so that the face of the victim, which might have otherwise been visible, was obscured. These were evenly divided between US and Iraqi casualties. All six photographs where the victim's face is visible depict Iraqi casualties.

ANALYSIS

Journalists value photographs as evidence of “having been there,” establishing their authority as eyewitnesses; newspaper publishers value photographs because they compel public attention, officials and politicians regard images as “tools for shaping public opinion and justifying policy in wartime,” and members of the US public see news photographs as “a way of coming to grips with the news of war.”¹⁸ Each of these four groups, Zelizer contends, “has been consistent in its assumption that seeing is believing.” Of course, as she subsequently shows, news photographs of war not only *denote*—depicting the world as “it is”—they also *connote*, depicting that world “in a symbolic frame that helps us recognize the image as consonant with broader understandings of the world.”¹⁹

Our findings raise questions about *both* the denotations and connotations of front-page war photographs in the *New York Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle*. The (in)frequency with which the *Times* and *Chronicle's* front-pages include photographs depicting the human cost of war diverges radically from the frequency with which humans have killed or injured one another in Afghanistan and Iraq. During the two periods that we coded, comprising twenty-five months of coverage, photographs on the front page of the *New York Times* depicted US dead twenty-five times and Iraqi dead thirty-four times; and, for the same time span, photos on the front page of the *San Francisco Chronicle* depicted US dead twenty-one times and Iraqi dead twenty-two times. This contrasts sharply with even the most conservative publicly available mortality figures: For example, during the same time period, the Department of Defense reports 1,531 US military fatalities.²⁰

Our findings substantiate and elaborate the results of the *Los Angeles Times's* six-month study of six newspapers and two news-magazines.²¹ The *Times's* study included photographs from all pages of the newspapers studied, not just the front pages; this study covered the period between September 2004 and February 2005. Table 6 summarizes the *Times's* findings for photographs depicting US and Iraqi dead and wounded:

Table 6: Newspaper Photographs of US and Iraqi Dead and Wounded, by News Source (*Los Angeles Times* Study, September 2004–February 2005)

	US		IRAQI	
	Dead	Wounded	Dead	Wounded
Atlanta Journal-Constitution	0	4	3	9
Los Angeles Times	0	10	22	19
New York Times	0	10	30	25
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	0	6	8	7
Seattle Times	1	4	5	5
Washington Post	0	6	5	13
TOTAL	1	40	73	78

At first glance, the *Times*' findings may be interpreted as conflicting with ours (recall Table 3, above). The *Times* data shows newspapers overwhelmingly more likely to publish photos of Iraqi dead (N=73) than US fatalities (N=1). From this perspective, our data *contrast* with the *Los Angeles Times*' findings: Photographs on the front page of the *San Francisco Chronicle* depict roughly equal Iraqi (N=21) and US (N=22) fatalities, and though the *New York Times* publishes more photographs of Iraqi (N=34) than US deaths (N=25), this difference is less than for any of the newspapers examined in the *L.A. Times* study.

Differences among specific newspapers' coverage of war's human cost certainly matter, and such comparative analyses deserve further attention. However, to emphasize differences—between either the findings of the *L.A. Times* study and ours, or the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *New York Times* in our study—is to obscure more fundamental similarities. In both studies, the most striking finding is how infrequently newspapers publish photographs that depict the human cost of war. This is so despite the conventional wisdom (often mobilized as a critique of news content) that “if it bleeds, it leads.” This also runs contrary to Barbie Zelizer's argument that, during wartime journalism is characterized by a “turn to the visual.”²²

Instead our findings (and those of the *L.A. Times* study) support Elaine Scarry's argument. Recall that Scarry contends that 1. “[t]he main purpose and outcome of war is injuring” and 2. this fact “may

268 | CENSORED 2008

disappear from view simply by being omitted.”²³ Though Scarry’s argument focuses on the uses of *language* (for example, the active reformulation of actions or events, as in the phrase “neutralizing the target”), she tells us that, when discourse about war *does* acknowledge injury to “the sentient tissue of the human body,” the body is “held in a visible but marginal position.”²⁴ This aptly describes the use of front-page photographs in the newspapers we have examined. Overall, the *New York Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle* front pages *omit* photographic representation of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. When front-page photographs include images related to these wars—which, in our data, occurs only 12 percent of the time—these images tend to portray war in *political terms*, i.e., as a policy matter (recall, for example, Figure 1) or a domestic contest between Republican and Democratic politicians. Front-page photographs of the human cost of war, as depicted through images of dead, injured, or missing humans, are exceedingly rare, constituting in our data, as we have seen, just three percent of the front-page photographs published by the *Times* and *Chronicle*. Thus, we conclude that the human cost of war is permitted a visible but marginal position on the front pages of US newspapers.

CONCLUSION

“What does it mean to protest suffering, as distinct
from acknowledging it?”

Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

Photographs shape our understandings of the world and our place in it. This is especially true of war. In wartime, publishing photographs that depict injury and death may be the closest that newspapers can come to depicting for their readers what Chris Hedges calls “the sensory reality of war.”

Amid public discussion of how the government’s rules for “embedding” journalists impacts news coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, journalists within the corporate press have raised concern about the absence of newsworthy war photographs appearing in newsprint.²⁵ Of course there are exceptions to these claims. The cover of the *New York Times*’ “2006: The Year in Pictures” featured a dramatic series of fifteen photos, by Tyler Hicks,

CENSORED 2008 | 269

depicting in vivid, grim detail the wounding and eventual rescue of US Marine Lance Corporal Juan Valdez-Castillo;²⁶ on April 2, 2007, *Newsweek's* special “Voices of the Fallen” edition featured life portraits of US military personnel, in and out of uniform, who have since been killed in the Iraq war, accompanied by poignant testimony from their letters, journals, and e-mails. Images and text such as these do much to convey to the US public the true costs of the war.

Furthermore, visual representations of the human cost of war need not be limited to photographs. Adrianna Lins de Albuquerque and Alicia Cheng’s “31 Days in Iraq” exemplifies the potential of original, clear graphics to bring home the magnitude of human injury in ways that mere numbers do not. In a paragraph preceding their “31 Days” graphic, Albuquerque and Cheng note: “While the daily toll [of soldiers, security officers and civilians killed] is noted in the newspapers and on TV, it is hard for many Americans to see these isolated reports in a broader context.” Their graphic, centered on a map of Iraq, visually depicts the number of American, Coalition, and Iraqi forces, as well as police officers and civilians killed in Iraq in the month of January 2006, locating the dead geographically and identifying the cause of death (e.g., “car bomb,” “accidental death,” “US strike,” etc.).²⁷

Assisting the public to “see in a broader context” and to understand beyond “isolated reports” should be a fundamental job and a basic responsibility of news media in democratic societies such as the United States. Governmental regulation—taking the form of the “embed rules” for journalists with the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan—constitutes one primary *external* constraint on the ability of the press to fulfill its duty to the US public; self-censorship—often in the name of “taste” and “decorum”—and inadequate funding comprise two *internal* constraints on this.²⁸ Thus, a truly informed public needs to understand not only the human cost of war, but also the political and journalistic forces that may limit, or prevent, news organizations from reporting the real human cost of war.

Photographs of dead bodies constitute the most blunt form to depict visually war’s human cost. In the case of the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, given constraints of access imposed by the US military, we might have expected journalists to respond—and, perhaps, even resist—by creating new, innovative means of conveying the human loss that war entails. Instead, as this study demonstrates,

270 | CENSORED 2008

the press has chosen to “cover” the casualties of war by essentially hiding them from the public’s view.

Of course, active opposition to war “does not necessarily require an accurate perception or description of the relation between injuring and political goals.”²⁹ However, in the absence of news photos and stories that depict the sensory reality of war—including the significance of injuring as its central activity—acceptance of war, with varying degrees of attention to its human cost, becomes much more likely.

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7. Elaine Scarry, “The Structure of War,” pp. 60-157 in *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985; quotes at pp. 67 & 80. See also John Taylor, “The Body Vanishes in the Gulf War,” pp. 157-192 in *Body Horror: Photojournalism, Catastrophe and War*. New York: New York University Press, 1998.
8. Chris Hedges, *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*. New York: Random House, 2002; quote at p. 21. Hedges adapts the distinction between the “mythic” and “sensory” realities of war from psychologist Lawrence LeShan.
9. In addition to Sontag and Scarry, cited above, see Stuart Hall, “The Determination of News Photographs,” pp. 226–43 in *The Manufacture of News: Social Problems, Deviance and the Mass Media*, rev. ed., edited by Stanley Cohen & Jock Young. London: Constable, 1981[1972].
10. Barbie Zelizer, “Death in Wartime: Photographs and the ‘Other War’ in Afghanistan.” *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* v. 10, n. 26 (2005); pp. 26-55; quote at p. 27.

11. Ibid., p. 27. See also, Barbie Zelizer, "Which Words Is a War Photo Worth? Journalists Must Set the Standard," *USC Annenberg Online Journalism Review* (April 28, 2004). <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/ethics/1083190076.php>.
12. Zelizer, "Death in Wartime," p. 31. Zelizer's observation that newspapers' use of photographs in war coverage is "consonant with prevailing sentiments about the war" echoes Daniel Hallin's study of televised news coverage of the Vietnam War. Hallin shows that US television news media did not adopt an oppositional stance toward the war until after Congress became divided in its support for the war. See Daniel C. Hallin, "The Media, the War in Vietnam, and Political Support: A Critique of the Thesis of an Oppositional Media," *Journal of Politics*, v. 46, n. 1 (1984), pp. 2-24.
13. For the full text of the CFLCC Ground Rules Agreement, see http://www.rsf.org/article.php?id_article=5334. The "embed rules" also appear in Susan D. Moeller, *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat*. New York: Basic Books, 1989; pp. 218-221.
14. Michael Shaw, "Reading the Pictures: *Have We Just Seen the Last Combat Injury in Iraq*," The Huffington Post (June 6, 2007). http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-shaw/reading-the-pictures-em_b_50927.html?view=print. A slideshow of Michael Kamber's photographs, titled "The Reach of War: A Deadly Search for Missing Soldiers," with his narration, can be see at http://www.nytimes.com/packages/khtml/2007/05/22/world/20070523_SEARCH_FEATURE.html. We are grateful to David Abbott for bringing Kamber's comments to our attention.
15. See James Rainey, "Portraits of War: Unseen Pictures, Untold Stories," *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 2005. http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-warphotos21may21_0625844.story?coll=la-home-headlines
16. The number of days' coverage for each paper is not identical because certain days were not available to us in any of the three formats required for our coding: microfilm, online with images, or hard copy.
17. See, for example, Peter W. Singer, "Outsourcing War: Understanding the Private Military Industry," *Foreign Affairs* (March 1, 2005), <http://www.brookings.edu/views/articles/fel-lows/singer20050301.htm>. Casualties.org documents a minimum of 398 civilian contractor deaths in Iraq, through May 2, 2007, in a list that is flagged as "incomplete." See <http://icasualties.org/oif/Civ.aspx>.
18. Zelizer, "Death in Wartime," pp. 29-30.
19. Ibid, p. 31; see also Stuart Hall, "Determination of News Photographs," op cit.
20. "Military Casualties: By Month" <http://icasualties.org/oif/> (accessed June 5, 2007).
21. James Rainey, "Portraits of War," op cit.
22. Barbie Zelizer, "When War is Reduced to a Photograph," pp. 115-135 in *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*, edited by Stuart Allan and Barbie Zelizer. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
23. Elaine Scarry, "The Structure of War," op cit., at pp. 63, 64.
24. Ibid., p. 80, emphasis in original.
25. See, for example, James Rainey, "Portraits of War," op cit., and, more recently, David Carr, "Not to See the Fallen Is No Favor," *New York Times* (May 28, 2007) pp. C1, 6.
26. See www.nytimes.com/picturesoftheyear.
27. Adrianna Lins de Albuquerque and Alicia Cheng, "31 Days in Iraq," *New York Times* (February 6, 2006) p. A23. See http://www.nytimes.com/imagepages/2006/02/06/opinion/20060206_IRAQ_GRAPHIC.html.
28. In *Regarding the Pain of Others* (p. 68) Susan Sontag warns that "good taste" is "always a repressive standard when invoked by institutions."
29. Elaine Scarry, "Structure of War," p. 64.