

NYT, WaPo Send Top Reporters to Stenograph Five O'Clock Follies

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When the U.S. military takes a bunch of journalists on a press junket to a foreign country it has a certain intention and prepares every detail in advance. There will be witnesses and local people who are briefed for their two minute talk with the journalists to convey exactly what the military wants them to convey. After enjoying local flair, for ten minutes max, some U.S. diplomatic official or a general will treat the journos to some good whiskey and a genuine local steak. The official will speak a few prepared lines on the record that will reinforce the story the locals were tasked to tell.

The outcome is predictable. The stories the *journalists* will write will be the same.

Michael Gordon in yesterday's New York Times and David Ignatius in yesterday's Washington Post both *report* of their latest junket, a visit of Tabqa in Syria.

Gordon's piece: [In a Desperate Syrian City, a Test of Trump's Policies](#)

The young man unburdened himself about the dark years of living under the Islamic State as a crowd of curious onlookers gathered in front of a weathered storefront in the town marketplace. The militants, said the man, a 22-year-old named Abdul Qadir Khalil, killed many residents, doled out precious jobs and severely limited travel to and from the city. ...He ticked off a list of the things Tabqa needs: electricity, water, fuel and a sizable bakery. Then, laughing about his new freedom to openly denounce the militants, he said, "If they ever come back, they will slaughter all of us."

The Ignatius' piece: [As the Islamic State falls in Syria, one city offers a preview of the country's future](#)

A boisterous group of young Syrian men is gathered outside a tire and vehicle-parts shop across from the warehouse. American military advisers aren't sure at first that it's safe to talk with them, but the men press eagerly toward two visiting reporters. Abdul-Qadr Khalil, 22, dressed in a bright blue-nylon jacket, speaks for the group. He complains that there's not enough food, water, gas or bread, and there are no jobs. But he dismisses the idea that the Islamic State will ever take hold here again. "No, never!" says Khalil, and the young men around him nod in unison. "It will be impossible to live if they come back. They will kill all of us."

Gordon:

.. small children greet visitors with a “V” sign for victory.

Ignatius:

Young children flash V-for-victory signs.

Gordon:

“A fundamental problem in our society is that ISIS’ ideology has been implanted in little kids’ brains, which means it will carry on in the future,” said Ahmad al-Ahmad, the co-president of the council.

Ignatius:

Ahmad al-Ahmad, the co-president of the newly formed Tabqa Civil Council, ... Young boys who were indoctrinated at Islamic State training camps are trying to find their balance in a new world where beheadings and the chanting of Islamist slogans are over.

Gordon:

Nearly 50 tons of flour, paid for by the Pentagon, were trucked in from Iraq to an American-funded warehouse on Wednesday.

Ignatius:

At a warehouse near the town center, the first shipment of American food arrived on Wednesday; sacks of flour and rice are stacked on pallets, ready for distribution, ...

Gordon:

“We are not going to get beauty; it’s about pragmatism,” said Maj. Gen. Rupert Jones of the British Army, the deputy commander of the coalition force.

Ignatius:

“This is not a work of beauty. This is pragmatism,” says Maj. Gen. Rupert Jones, the British deputy commander of coalition forces in Iraq and Syria ..

I agree with the British general. The *reporting* in the Washington Post and New York Times from this military press junket is not a work of beauty but *pragmatism*. These highly paid *journalists* do not want to get their new desert dress dirty. They *pragmatically* repeat what the well briefed (and bribed) *locals* say, picture the children that make V-signs (and receive the promised candy) and they stenograph whatever the military or some diplomats

say. No real reporting, no thinking and no dirty boots are required for their job.

The military wanted to convey that nearly everything is fine now in Tabqa. The people love the U.S. occupation and all that is needed now are a few billion \$\$\$ for some minor nation building. The *journalists* ate up the prepared bites and transmit exactly what the military wanted them to say.

The mainstream media want their readers to believe that their narratives from war zones are genuine reporting. The above examples show that they are not. Their *journalists* are simple recording highly choreographed shows the Pentagon and State Department press advisors made up and the local press officers prepared in advance. A modern version of [the Vietnam war's five o'clock follies](#).

Richard Pyle, Associated Press Saigon bureau chief during the war, described the [military press] briefings as, "the longest-playing tragicomedy in Southeast Asia's theater of the absurd."

Back then most media did not fall for the nonsense. Now they willingly join in.

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