

VIDEO: CNN Silences War-Skeptical Soldier

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Exclusive: *By obsessing over Iran gaining a nuclear weapon “capability” – even with no actual bomb – while ignoring Israel’s undeclared nuclear arsenal, the U.S. news media proves the point of its own bias. There’s also the usual hostility toward dissenting voices, as ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern notes.*

When CNN interviews a U.S. Army corporal preparing for his third deployment to Afghanistan, should TV viewers be permitted to hear him out on a front-burner issue like Iran’s alleged threat to Israel? For those who might think so, watch what happens when 28-year-old Cpl. Jesse Thorsen touches a neuralgic nerve by suggesting that Israel can take care of itself.

It’s impossible to say exactly what happened to the remote feed that suddenly got lost in transmission back to CNN Central, but the minute-long video is truly worth a thousand words



CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer

The interview, which dates back to Jan. 3 when the Iowa caucuses were the evening’s big news, is at least symbolic of how our Fawning Corporate Media treats dissident voices that clash with the prevailing pro-war-on-Iran bias. I missed the segment when it aired, but I think it still merits comment today as war clouds thicken, again.

In the aborted one-minute segment, Cpl. Thorsen is interviewed by CNN’s Dana Bash, who presumably picked him out for the live interview because he had a large tattoo on his neck about never forgetting 9/11. The tattoo – plus two tours in Afghanistan behind him (and yet another in front of him) – may have suggested to Bash and her CNN producers that Thorsen was unlikely to say anything to muddle or muffle the new drumbeat for war.

Based on Thorsen’s military appearance alone, the typical CNN viewer could almost settle back in an easy chair and anticipate some stirring patriotic bathos about America standing tall – and the interview ending with the obligatory “thank you for your service,” which any right-thinking journalist utters to show that he or she is part of Team America.

But Bash got more than she bargained for when Thorsen turned out to be a well-informed and articulate young man who began endorsing Ron Paul’s non-interventionist views on U.S. foreign policy, i.e. that the United States should go to war only when absolutely necessary to defend its vital national interests and shouldn’t be picking a fight with Iran on behalf of Israel.

Such comments, of course, are almost literally heretical at places like CNN, which accepts unquestioningly the idea of “American exceptionalism” and abides by the neoconservative dogma that U.S. and Israeli security interests are one and the same.

That’s why CNN and the rest of the FCM typically dismiss Ron Paul’s views on foreign policy as dangerously “isolationist,” if not laughably loony. “Can you believe it? He doesn’t want to station American troops all around the world! He doesn’t believe in preemptive wars to disarm our enemies of weapons that they may not have now but might someday in the future have the capability of building! Ha! Ha! What a nut!”

The FCM’s dismissal of Paul’s foreign-policy views was a key reason why comedian Jon Stewart once compared Paul to “the 13th floor” of a hotel, the level that often doesn’t exist because customers consider the number unlucky. So, when the FCM would lavish attention on other Republican candidates, who finished both above and below Paul in some poll or in early balloting, the pundits would pass over Paul as if he didn’t exist.

Going ‘Off-Script’

So, what happened when Cpl. Thorsen veered “off script” – so to speak – and began reprising Ron Paulish views on the appropriate use of soldiers like himself? Well, CNN suddenly lost the feed. As Thorsen disappeared from the screen, CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer explained, “Sorry, we just lost our tech connection, unfortunately.”

It’s true that connections can be lost for any number of reasons – and I can’t say for sure that some alert CNN producer hit the “kill” switch as one might if Cpl. Thorsen had begun cursing uncontrollably – but Blitzer and other CNN honchos didn’t seem very eager to resume the interview, just as they generally don’t book anti-war activists who disagree with the imperial orthodoxy.

You might remember, for instance, how CNN, like the other networks, stocked its pre-Iraq War “debates” with hawkish retired generals and admirals who would face only the mildest and most respectful questioning from Blitzer or some other anchor. In the rare moment when some war skeptic got on the air, he or she was treated with disdain, if not outright hostility, all the better for the network to demonstrate its “patriotism.”

Some cable networks devoted more time to American restaurants that were renaming French fries into “Freedom fries” than to the millions of people who took to the streets to protest the looming invasion of Iraq. After all, what could those “activists” know about Iraq hiding all those stockpiles of WMDs?

But why mention the case of Cpl. Thorsen now? Because this one-minute video-that-is-better-than-a-thousand-words could come in handy as at least a symbolic reminder of the bias at CNN and other parts of the FCM when it comes to allowing a full and fair discussion about going to war against some “designated enemy.”

This reality is bound to assume increased importance next week when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu touches down in Washington to press his case for a preemptive war against Iran’s nuclear program – which has yet to produce a single nuclear bomb (and Iranian leaders say they don’t intend to build one) – while Israel has an undeclared nuclear arsenal of an estimated 200 to 300 bombs.

Just for fun, keep track of how many times Netanyahu and other war advocates get to weigh

in on the unacceptable danger of an Iranian nuclear weapon “capability” compared to how many times they are asked why Israel has not signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and why it won’t let inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency into Israeli secret bases to examine Israel’s actual nuclear weapons.

The FCM’s latest drumming for war is likely to reach a crescendo during the first days of March, with Netanyahu crashing the cymbals loudly and the propaganda orchestra swelling in a martial symphony designed to stir the American people into another standing ovation for another preemptive war.

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