

# ★ AMERICAS ★ MAJORITY ★



## War of Words DAILY DISPATCH

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### **NBC's Seigenthaler and Engel Mislead Audience on Casualty Trends in Iraq**

"Battle for Iraq -- New Violence, more American casualties," intoned the announcer on **NBC Nightly News**, Sun. April 16, 2006.

"This was an especially deadly day in Iraq," explained host John Seigenthaler. "Word [is] tonight that 4 U.S. marines have been killed, and at least 35 Iraqis died in several different attacks."

Richard Engel, reporting from Baghdad, elaborated the theme. "[E]ven though U.S. plans call for American troops to step back, and let Iraqi troops take the lead, U.S. casualties continue to rise."

As Engel spoke, a "chart" was displayed, headlined "U.S. troops killed in Iraq"

<b>March</b>
31
<b>April</b>
47

A casual viewer of this broadcast might infer first, that April 16 was an unusually violent day in Iraq, and second, that coalition casualties were rising, despite coalition efforts to train Iraqi troops.

Both inferences follow logically from the editing decisions made by NBC News. Both are essentially untrue.

Coalition casualties have averaged 2.3 per day since the end of major combat – roughly the murder rate of New York-plus-Philadelphia over the same period. Four deaths in a day -- like no deaths -- is hardly atypical. For instance, there were four deaths on April 1<sup>st</sup> and April 6<sup>th</sup>. And there were no U.S. fatalities on April 3 or April 5<sup>th</sup>.

The thirty-five reported civilian casualties are somewhat above the post-major-combat average, but well below the Saddam era norm.

International Body Count, an anti-war organization that has tallied Iraqi war-related civilian deaths since January 2003, gives a low estimate of 25 deaths per day, and a high estimate of 28 deaths per day. Dr. Stephen Cass, an Iraqi historian at Oxford, estimates the average regime-caused civilian death toll in Saddam's era at 70-to-125 deaths per day.

We get as tired of saying this as you get of hearing it: **A BAD DAY UNDER THE COALITION IS RARELY AS VIOLENT AS AN AVERAGE DAY UNDER SADDAM.** But it's true, and if we don't say it, nobody will – certainly not Seigenthaler or Engel.

Even excluding the 500,000 casualties from Saddam's wars of aggression, Saddam's Iraq was a bloody place. You just didn't see it on the nightly news. The death toll from the Anfal massacres, the post-Gulf War slaughter of Shi'ites, and the routine atrocities of the Makhabaret approached 700,000.

NBC's second point – that coalition casualties are trending upward – is simply a untrue. *Coalition casualties have been trending sharply downward for two years now*, as the chart below illustrates:

### Casualty Patterns: U.S. Troops in Iraq

Year	Died all causes	Wounded RTD	Wounded not RTD	Total Casualties
2004	848	4565	4875	10288
2005	846	3946	2228	7020
2006 1 <sup>st</sup> quarter	148	774	461	1383
<u>2006 extrapolated</u>	<u>592</u>	<u>2322</u>	<u>1383</u>	<u>4940</u>
Trend: 05-to-06	<b>(-) 30%</b>	<b>(-) 41%</b>	<b>(-) 38%</b>	<b>(-) 30%</b>
Trend: 04-to-06	<b>(-) 30%</b>	<b>(-) 49%</b>	<b>(-) 72%</b>	<b>(-) 52%</b>

(Note: Wounded RTD means that a soldier returned to his unit within 72 hours of the injury. Wounded "not RTD" is therefore a rough index of more severe injuries.)

The 31 U.S. fatalities of March 2006 represented the second lowest monthly tally since major combat ended. To portray March as a "baseline" was cynical. January '06 saw 62 fatalities. In February, there were 55.

Taking a longer view – i.e., a relevant one – there is indeed a trend line in U.S. troop injuries and deaths: **they are declining**. In the first quarter of 2006, the total U.S. casualty rate dropped 30% from last year, and 52% from 2004. The rate of severe injury was down 38% from '05, and 72% from '04. And fatalities are trending 30% lower than in either '05 or '06.

A major reason for the precipitous (and virtually unreported) decline in U.S. casualties was precisely what the NBC report trashed: the training and deployment of Iraqi security forces. These now number 250,000 – almost twice the size of our current deployment. The same day that Engel was implied the futility of this development, DOD press releases celebrated it.

Coalition forces, DOD informed us, transferred operational control to the Iraqi Army in the portion of Salah al Din province containing Balad, al Duluyah, and Tethrib. Iraqi forces played the lead role in Operation Cobra, which broke up a kidnapping and bomb-making ring in Babil province that had terrorized Haswah and Iskandariyah.

But to mention these accomplishments would involve reporting *war news*. NBC can't be bothered with that.

### General's Defending Rumsfeld Against the Hexagon Intifada

By J.D. Johannes

Following last week's PR offensive by 6 retired Generals, occasionally referred to as the "Hexagon," calling for Rumsfeld's head, two retired general have stepped up to defend him.

In Sunday's New York Times, Lt. Gen Michael DeLong (USMC Retired) writes:

"As the No. 2 general at United States Central Command from the Sept. 11 attacks through the Iraq war, I was the daily "answer man" to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. I briefed him twice a day. Few people had as much interaction with him as I did during those two years....When I was at Centcom, the people who needed to have access to Secretary Rumsfeld got it, and he carefully listened to our arguments.

"Mr. Rumsfeld does not give in easily in disagreements, either, and he will always force you to argue your point thoroughly.

This can be tough for some people to deal with. I witnessed many heated but professional conversations between my immediate commander, Gen. Tommy



Franks, and Mr. Rumsfeld — but the secretary always deferred to the general on war-fighting issues.

“Ultimately, I believe that a tough defense secretary makes commanders tougher in their convictions. Was Donald Rumsfeld a micromanager? Yes. Did he want to be involved in all of the decisions? Yes. But Mr. Rumsfeld never told people in the field what to do.”

General DeLong has been joined by Air Force General Richard B. Myers, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The AP writes that Myers, “dismissed criticism that military leaders failed to stand up to Rumsfeld and President Bush when they disagreed with those civilian officials.”

Myers is quoted by the AP as saying, “You’d have to believe that everybody in the chain of command is intimidated, and I don’t believe that...We gave him our best military advice, and I think that’s what we’re obligated to do. If we don’t do that, we should be shot.”

The ‘drive-by media’ spent last week covering all six of the retired generals who criticized Rumsfeld. Is anyone naive enough to think the same amount of ink and bandwidth will be given to the generals who support Rumsfeld?

The media will barely cover anyone supporting Rumsfeld because that does not fit their preferred narrative.

Another point the legacy media will never cover is that there are currently 6,995 retired General/Admiral Officers. In other words, .00084 of the retired Flag officers have called for Rumsfeld to resign.

Not exactly a mandate, except with the media.

Even if you only consider the recently retired flag officers, the 847 under 60 years old, only .007 have called for Rumsfeld to resign.

Some may say that because a few of these Generals served in Iraq, they should be given extra weight. But I would suggest that they travel to Camp Victory Baghdad and hang around the Aw Faw palace counting stars, or hang around the International Zone counting stars.

There are a lot of Generals out there.

While the immediate steam from the ‘Hexagon Intifada’ may die down, it will become a standard Democrat talking point until the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November.

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