

The Mad, Mad Year that Was

Posted by

Tuesday, 02 January 2007 00:18 - Last Updated Tuesday, 02 January 2007 00:18

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Media Channel - Danny Schechter - ?The year was memorable only for its madness?

HONORING THE DEAD
UNIONS MERGING WORLDWIDE
A SONG FOR PEACE

www.mediachannel.org

THE NEWS DISSECTOR BLOG

Danny Schechter

Mediachannel.org
January 2, 2007

Since 2001, Your Daily Counter-narrative to the News

A Year "Memorable For Its Madness"
HEADLINE IN THE WORCESTER TELEGRAM

The Times of India summed it up: ?At the moment Saddam Hussein was being hanged, George Bush was apparently fast asleep in his Texas ranch. That actually sums up the state of American foreign policy quite nicely.? Actually, let us not forget an earlier comment our President made about the late president of Iraq: "The war on terror involves Saddam Hussein because of the nature of Saddam Hussein, the history of Saddam Hussein, and his willingness to terrorize himself." - Grand Rapids, Mich., Jan. 29, 2003.

Meanwhile, the NY Times reports today that the last big US imposed security plan backfired: "The plan to turn over security to the Iraqis collided with the country?s ferocious unraveling, which took most of the president?s war council by surprise." Oops.

The countdown has now begun as the media waits expectedly for President Bush to announce yet a new policy. What a joke. Can you picture this president pacing around the oval office as he deliberates on what to do, as if the plan is not already in place. Yesterday I was thinking of W

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as I watched CSPAN's replay of the funeral of Lyndon Johnson with Leontyne Price singing
?Onward Christian Soldiers.?

How far have we come? The Washington Post reports: As Troops' Lives Are Forever Changed,
Much of U.S. Is Largely Unaffected
letters.washingtonpost.com

BBC Reports "The number of civilians killed in political violence in Iraq reached record levels in
December, according to Iraqi government figures. The interior ministry says 1,930 Iraqis died
last month, three-and-a-half times the number killed in January 2006. "

HONORING THE PAST

And speaking of memorials, the "we saw that" blog comments:

The nation will be subjected to six days of watching a corpse being dragged around the country!
I would like to know who gave one sob for the hundreds of thousands slaughtered in East
Timor. Bet Ford won't be remembered for this 'accomplishment'!!

Here we go again, making a famous personage (President Ford) into some larger than life
American hero - His minister sobbed, "He and Betty are the folks Heaven was made for"others
lauded his 'healing of the nation', 'a gentle, kind man - of great integrity'. Blah blah blah. Now
that he's dead he has the 'courage' to leave a written note about the being against the Iraq
(invasion) war.

For the next week, (much like the Reagan debacle) we'll see his body dragged all over the
nation - and moved from pillar to post in Washington - such is the pageantry that surrounds our
favorite occupation in this country - death.

These words sound harsh, or perhaps, not harsh enough.

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BAGHDAD BLOGGER RIVERBEND ON THE KILLING OF SADDAM

www.informationclearinghouse.info

TARIQ ALI?A COLONIAL HANGING
tinyurl.com

COULD THIS BE WHY THERE WAS SUCH A RUSH TO EXECUTE

Hussein Era Secrets May Lay Buried
www.latimes.com

FOT PROTESTS IN THE USA, READ THE HINDU IN INDIA

NEW YORK: Groups of Americans opposed to the Iraq war and the death penalty decried Saddam Hussein's execution, and the centre headed by one of the former Iraqi leader's lawyers said the hanging was part of a plan by President George W. Bush to escalate the war.

The rallies on Saturday in New York's Times Square and in Boston, led by a group affiliated with former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, were among several condemnations of the hanging. Activists in Detroit also planned their own demonstration.

Mr. Clark, who leads the New York-based International Action Center and was one of Saddam's defence lawyers, predicted during the Iraqi leader's trial that a bloodbath would follow if he was executed.

www.hindu.com

THE REVENGE BEGINS

AP: BAGHDAD, Iraq - Enraged crowds protested the hanging of Saddam Hussein across Iraq's Sunni heartland Monday, as a mob in Samara broke the locks off a bomb-damaged Shiite shrine and marched through carrying a mock coffin and photo of the dictator.

The demonstration in the Golden Dome, shattered in a bombing by Sunni extremists 10 months ago, suggests that many Sunni Arabs may now more actively support the small number of Sunni militants fighting the country's Shiite-dominated government. The Feb. 22 bombing of the shrine triggered the current cycle of retaliatory attacks between Sunnis and Shiia, in the form of daily bombings, kidnappings and murders.

ON THE KILLING OF SADDAM: REVENGE POSING AS JUSTICE

Professor Juan Cole writes:

Dec. 30, 2006: The body of Saddam, as it swung from the gallows at 6 a.m. Saturday Baghdad time, cast an ominous shadow over Iraq. The execution provoked intense questions about whether his trial was fair and about what the fallout will be. One thing is certain: The trial and execution of Saddam were about revenge, not justice. Instead of promoting national reconciliation, this act of revenge helped Saddam portray himself one last time as a symbol of Sunni Arab resistance, and became one more incitement to sectarian warfare.

Saddam Hussein was tried under the shadow of a foreign military occupation, by a government full of his personal enemies. The first judge, an ethnic Kurd, resigned because of government interference in the trial; the judge who took his place was also Kurdish and had grievances against the accused. Three of Saddam's defense lawyers were shot down in cold blood. The surviving members of his defense team went on strike to protest the lack of protection afforded them. The court then appointed new lawyers who had no expertise in international law. Most of the witnesses against Saddam gave hearsay evidence. The trial ground slowly but certainly toward the inevitable death verdict.

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Like everything else in Iraq since 2003, Saddam's trial became entangled in sectarian politics. Iraq is roughly 60 percent Shiite, 18 percent Sunni Arab and 18 percent Kurdish. Elements of the Sunni minority were favored under fellow Sunni Saddam, and during his long, brutal reign this community tended to have high rates of membership in the Baath Party. Although many members of Saddam's own ethnic group deeply disliked him, since the U.S. invasion he has gradually emerged as a symbol of the humiliation that the once-dominant Sunni minority has suffered under a new government dominated by Shiites and Kurds.

Saddam was a symbol of Sunni-Shiite rivalry long before the U.S. occupation?

www.Juancole.com

Pledging revenge, hundreds flock to Saddam's tomb:

In an outpouring of grief and anger from Saddam's fellow Sunni Arabs at the Shi'ite-led government that rushed through the execution, mourners knelt and prayed by the tomb in Awja over which the Iraqi flag had been draped.

www.alertnet.org

INVESTIGATION PROMISED

The Iraqi government has announced it will launch an investigation into the guards who taunted and filmed Saddam Hussein during his execution. The authorities say the video has turned his execution into a TV show which will only serve to increase sectarian violence in Iraq.

The clandestine recording, which was made with a mobile phone, was posted on the internet this weekend. While Saddam Hussein was standing on the trapdoor with the noose being fastened around his neck, guards insulted him and told him he was going to hell.

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The Iraqi government is especially eager to find out how someone managed to smuggle in a mobile phone while this was specifically forbidden.

www.radionetherlands.nl/news/international/#5132442 - Radio Netherlands

FROM THE HORN OF AFRICA

Iqbal Jassat writes:

"What these spin doctors won't reveal is the fact that by disregarding multilateral institutions such as the African Union, the Bush administration has ulterior motives in igniting a war in the Horn of Africa."

As the African Union stands by, silently and perhaps helplessly watching Somalia's return to anarchy, the Bush administration has claimed another 'victory' for its discredited 'war on terror'.

Undignified as it may be in this recent undertaking, the US government is nevertheless, unashamedly proud of backing Ethiopia in unseating the Somali Council of Islamic Courts [SCIC].

Reports confirm that with full US backing and military training, thousands of Ethiopian troops accompanied by tanks and fighter jets have invaded Somalia to forcefully impose a regime change.

As the sound of gunfire reverberated around the capital Mogadishu, the Guardian's East Africa correspondent, Xan Rice reports that within hours, warlords who had been driven out by the Islamists were reclaiming their turf. Looting and anarchy that plagued the country before the SCIC came to power has returned with a vengeance.

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And to cap it all, Meles Zenawi, the Ethiopian prime minister, sounding as aggressive and arrogant as his funder and chief-backer George W Bush, threatened to pursue ?the SCIC leaders, Eritreans and international jihadists????.

ANOTHER ?EVIL DOER? HEARD FROM

AlJazeera reports:

Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban, has promised to drive foreign forces out of Afghanistan in a new message timed to coincide with the Muslim Eid al-Adha festival.

Speaking on an audio-tape released on Friday by the Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency, Omar also called on his fighters to avoid harming Afghan civilians.

"I am confident that the enemy will run away in degradation and embarrassment," Omar said.

"Afghans have always expelled their enemies by force and no enemy or aggressive force has left Afghanistan at its own will... They have committed aggression and we will drive them out."

FROM THE UN

Incoming U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Sunday appointed veteran Indian diplomat Vijay Nambiar as his chief of staff and award- winning Haitian journalist Michelle Montas as his spokesperson.

The appointments were the first by Ban, who officially takes the reins of the United Nations on New Year's Day. In a statement, he said he intends to make further appointments in the coming days.

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Montas was the wife of Jean Dominique, the murdered Haitian radio journalist profiled in Johnathan Demme's film The Agronomist.

SOLIDARITY FOREVER

US Unions May Merge with Euro Counterparts

Britain's Observer is reporting today that two US unions (Steelworkers and Machinists) will announce plans that are seen as the first step to the creation of a merged international union of 6 Million workers in the US, UK, and Germany.

www.dailykos.com

British, American and German unions are to forge a pact to challenge the power of global capitalism in a move towards creating an international union with more than 6 million members.

observer.guardian.co.uk

MAIL & GUARDIAN: MUGABE CRACKS DOWN ON PRESS

Robert Mugabe's government has moved to close Zimbabwe's remaining independent press by stripping newspaper owner Trevor Ncube of his citizenship. The action against the publisher comes as Mugabe (82) and president for 26 years, pushes for an extension to his term of office by a further two years.

Dissector Daily Forum And More
Sarah Meyer writes from England:

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?I just heard from friend that the US is "not allowed" to watch Jazeera .. presumably because no one will sponsor such wonderful programmes. This is

SHOCKING,

How can the US public EVER be educated with CNN and Fox? Or even BBC for that matter?

I truly despair of America.

ON THE JAPANESE EMPEROR CELEBRATING AN HEIR

Joe Dunphy writes:

I missed the announcement of a male heir in Sept., but this second-chance newspeg revives a historically significant story. Allowing an emperor to remain, even ceremonially, preserves a tradition of militarism. At the end of WWII, just as Japan was about to be conquered, there was an internal debate among the allies as to whether Japan should be allowed to retain an emperor, or not. I gather that MacArthur's support for preserving an Emperor carried the day. Thus, the actual terms of "unconditional surrender" is technically inaccurate, as a considerable amount of negotiation at the end of the war revolved around whether or not the Emperor system should be preserved. The journalistic malpractice in this piece is that none of that debate is referred to. The public is being conditioned to take Japan's side in an inevitable conflict, trade or worse, with China. The story also omits reference to the political hot potato that the Emperor of Japan did not admit guilt for the rape of Nanking, once the capital of the Chinese Republic. If Iris Chaing were still alive, she would have been the perfect person to quote on this story. AP's standards are alipping...

Japanese emperor celebrates heir's birth - Yahoo! News

news.yahoo.com

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Army Times: German Army Orders Dead Dog To Report For Pre-Induction Medical

There might be a lesson from Germany for U.S. politicians talking about reinstating a military draft to provide the armed forces with a cross-section of society in the ranks. Germany has compulsory military service, and its recent round of orders to report for pre-service medical examinations included a notice for Tommy Jakob to show up with his swim trunks and identification.

The notice was sent to the home of Helga Koehlke, a 53-year-old whose pet dog, Tommy Jakob, a Pekingese, was not able to report as ordered. Besides the whole being-a-dog thing, Tommy Jakob died in 2002.

"I thought it was a joke, but then I saw the official stamp," Koehlke said, noting that even if Tommy were still alive, he might not have been much use to the German army because "he was almost completely blind."

German army officials said it was all a mail mix-up and are looking for the two-legged Tommy Jakob so he can get his pre-induction physical.

2006 ACCORDING TO HARPERS

? Thousands of people died in the Iraqi civil war, which was costing the United States \$100,000 a minute. U.S. forces began to negotiate with Sunni insurgents, and the Pentagon, short of buglers who can play taps at military funerals, ordered 700 automated digital bugles. Oil companies announced record profits; President George W. Bush said that America is "addicted to oil" and also asked Congress to pass laws outlawing human/animal hybrids. Scientists in Taiwan bred three glowing pigs.

Samuel Alito was confirmed to the Supreme Court, and a study found that Antonin Scalia is the funniest of the Supreme Court justices. Robert Grenier, director of the CIA counter-terrorism center, was fired for opposing "excessive" interrogation techniques like waterboarding, and U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney shot and severely injured a fellow hunter while aiming at quail.

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Osama bin Laden released a tape in which he warned of new attacks on the United States; he also called on his followers to travel to Sudan and fight against the U.N. forces in Darfur. Al Qaeda members were communicating via social networking website MySpace.com, and the Taliban established a "mini-state" in Peshawar. Iran announced that it had successfully produced low-grade enriched uranium; to celebrate, men in traditional dress danced with uranium samples. U.S. senators insisted that attacking Iran must remain an option. "I can drink beer out of my leg," said Matthew Braddock, a 25-year-old National Guardsman who lost his left foot and nine inches of his left leg to a mine in northern Iraq. "How many people can do that?"

harpers.org

And so the new year begins and this ?old blog? oontinues to attempt to offer up a counter-narrative to the daily news. I would be pleased to find some volunteers who might like to help me update the look, add photos and graphics and help engineer more of an impact. This takes a lot of doing but it is but one dissector?s effort and I know how much better it could be with some folks willing to help it be all it could be.

See my tribute to my media faves at

www.mediachannel.org

And sing for peace as this new year begins:

www.brasscheck.com

Thanks you singer/songwriter Ester Sparks
[Http://www.Estersparks.com](http://www.Estersparks.com)

WATCH A CHENEY PROBE TONIGHT AT 9 ON PBS
9:00 PM FRONTLINE -- The Dark Side

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IT AIN?T FAIR, JOHN SINCLAIR

John Sinclair - founder of the pot-based white panther party who also managed the mc5 will be performing his poetry, music, etc on January 3-5, 2007 at the yippie museum cafe, 9 bleecker street, n.y.c. at 8 pm
call 212-677-4899 for more info.

Comments or suggestions or queries from volunteers with some idea of what they think they can do , write to:

Dissector@mediachannel.org

The News Dissector Blog is written by Danny Schechter for
Mediachannel.org. Your comments to

Dissector@mediachannel.org .