

A Brookings/Newseum Forum

RUNNING TOWARD DANGER
How the News Media Performed on 9/11...and Beyond

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ALAN MURRAY

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MR. STEPHEN HESS: Good morning, welcome. I'm Steve Hess of Brookings. The program is "Running Toward Danger, How the News Media Performed on 9/11 and Beyond."

We're particularly happy that we are in collaboration on this program with the Freedom Forum's Newseum. It's the first time we've joined together on a program and we're sure that we'll have many opportunities in the future. Also as you can see when you join forces with the Newseum you get an awful lot of wonderful visuals here and out in the next room for which we thank Susan Bennett of the Newseum for providing them.

This program is in a sense the culmination of a series that has been going on since last October at Brookings called "The Media and the War on Terrorism," which I co-hosted with Marvin Kalb, who unfortunately is out of the country right now.

The good news is that we are going to publish these conversations as a Brookings book sometime next year.

This program, let me explain the architecture of it a bit and introduce the participants as we go along. I see this as a three-story building. The first story is a celebration. It's a celebration to quite a remarkable book which bears the title *Running Toward Danger*, and it was published by the Newseum. It's co-authors Cathy Trost and Alicia Shepard, on my right. She is our co-moderator today.

Our first section of this three-story building then is going to be this remarkable story that she tells through 100 interviews with journalists who were part of the story.

Alicia, if you are a devotee of the *Washington Journalism Review* as I am, you know for her wonderful articles which is why every year she seems to win a bushelful of awards. So we're very happy to have her with us to co-moderate the program.

Two of the participants here had a very unique role on 9/11 and I'm sure that Alicia will bring them into the story.

On my left is John McWethy who is the Chief National Security Correspondent of ABC News. I am terribly pleased to have Jack McWethy here for several reasons, but one reason is that he was advertised as being with us on January 9th for a program in which you see the schedule says there were the panelists -- Victoria Clarke, Sanford Unger, Bernard Kalb, Michael Getler, and John McWethy. John McWethy didn't show up that day -- [Laughter] -- and Torie Clarke explains why in the transcript. She says the reason Jack McWethy isn't here is because "he's still trying to get back from Afghanistan where he spent a week embedded with one of the Special Forces teams."

Jack has been at the Pentagon essentially forever, but it's only since 1983?

MR. JOHN McWETHY: On and off.

MR. HESS: On and off. He was before that the Chief White House Correspondent for *U.S. News and World Report* and for the last quarter century for Jack McWethy it's been deja vu again and again as you just think of Kosovo and Bosnia and Liberia and Somalia and the Persian Gulf and Grenada and Panama. So we are terribly happy to have him here.

He of course on 9/11 was covering the Pentagon when it was under attack.

The other person who had a very special role on 9/11 and in fact I think the story of his newspaper in many ways runs away with this wonderful book *Running Toward Danger* and he is Alan Murray who was at the time the Washington Bureau Chief of the *Wall Street Journal*. As you may know, the headquarters of the *Wall Street Journal* was across the street from the World Trade Center. It was knocked out of business, if you will, but not really because somehow they got across the river to New Jersey to put out a newspaper and in the process of doing it happened to win the Pulitzer Prize. But as the book shows, they turned over the substance of it to Alan who was Bureau Chief in Washington at that time, and that is a most remarkable story.

He is now a columnist for the *Wall Street Journal* but he is also the Bureau Chief of CNBC and for those who happen to be up from 9:00 to 10:00 in the evenings on Tuesdays through Thursdays, he hosts a program called Capital Report. You also recognize him, I'm sure, from his appearance as a regular panelist on the PBS show Washington Week in Review and for those of us who particularly care about the inside, real skinny of Washington, he was the co-author of a book that we still cherish called *Showdown at Gucci Gulch -- Lawmakers, Lobbyists, and the Unlikely Triumph of Tax Reform*.

So that is the first story of the building we're going to build. But we want to move from there to the last word in the title -- Beyond. The beyond is what the press has been doing, or its interaction with government both here in Washington and of course abroad.

We have our next panelist with a unique ability to speak and involve us in both Washington and abroad. He's our own E.J. Dionne of Brookings who is also a columnist for *The Washington Post*. E.J., I should say, I first met in Rome when he was the *New York Times* Bureau Chief, and something happened with the Pope that night and he didn't get to dinner until about midnight and then we went back to his really kookie little apartment until all night and talked, and what we talked about was not what I expected to talk about with E.J., but is what I later wrote in a book called *International News and Foreign Correspondents*. In a chapter called "The Culture of Foreign Correspondents" I write, "From my first interviews with foreign correspondents in Paris in 1983 they talked of dealing with danger, often of being scared, sometimes of exhilaration. 'You get hooked on your own adrenaline,' said E.J. Dionne in Rome in 1985, thinking of Beirut." I hadn't realized that Rome was sort of a staging point in which foreign correspondents went into operations in Beirut.

So E.J. joins us for his insight in Washington but also into the question of war correspondents. E.J. I should say is also the author of two books, many books, but two with titles that I particularly love.

That is *Why Americans Hate Politics* and the second is *They Only Look Dead -- Why Progressives Will Dominate the Next Political Era* which I think you probably are going to brief George W. Bush on any minute. [Laughter]

MR. E.J. DIONNE: Let's not get into Florida. [Laughter]

MR. HESS: I should say one more thing about E.J. while I'm having fun introducing all my friends here. That is David Brooks accuses E.J. of being the only person whose eyes light up when the word "panel" appears. [Laughter] E.J. is by far the world's greatest panelist. We at Brookings fight to get him on our panels, and I won the fight this morning.

So that's story two in our building, what's happened beyond. And then story three which I think I will turn back to my co-moderator Alicia, because it's a remarkable thing about they hated the press on 9/10, they loved them on 9/11, and they hate them again now. It's almost an exact spike up and down where we're actually exactly back where we were before they loved them.

What does this mean? What happened? Did the press somehow lose a great opportunity to do something? Or do people only trust them in times of cataclysm, or as a new *Washington Journalism Review* shows in a poll on the First Amendment, maybe they don't understand them anyway.

So that's our program this morning. Alicia will start with story one, 9/11, when the press really was quite significant.

MS. ALICIA SHEPARD: First I'll say that it's now *American Journalism Review* for any of you who follow it. *Washington Journalism Review* shows you how long Stephen's been around. [Laughter] And I mean that --

MR. HESS: -- before the flood. [Laughter]



MS. SHEPARD: I'm going to begin just explaining to you how the book came about, and that was that on September 12th Cathy Trost who is a friend of mine, and we both happen to be contract writers for the Newseum, as we were talking on the telephone and we were talking about what an amazing story it was about what the press has done. I've been writing about the press for years and there's no shortage of things to say or criticize, and yet I was just blown away by what an incredible job the media had done and how much I personally relied on television that day to get my information. So we just started playing around, talking about how the Newseum ought to do a book. So we eventually got everyone on board and the Newseum was just incredibly generous in spending the time for us to report the book, which we interviewed over 100

journalists. And we wanted it to be diverse.

There is another book which I won't mention, but it just focuses on the electronic media and we felt that we wanted to create an enduring historical document that would be used by generations to come, that would really explain the crucial role the media played on that day. As our introduction begins, who didn't turn to television that day or radio or even the Internet for those people who were in offices? I think we saw a really noble, brilliant side of journalists that day and it's one that I wish the public had a greater appreciation for.

On September 11th, 2001 because of the hideous attacks, there was another strange, rarely occurring phenomenon that happened in the U.S. Everyone in the country, whether they lived in Ketchum, Idaho; Compton, California; Palm Beach, Florida; or New York City, was suddenly startled out of their daily routines and focused on the exact same event. If you think about it, how often does that happen? Maybe when the Challenger blew up in January 1986, or definitely when President Kennedy was killed in 1963, and yet in all of those three events it's inescapable to note that the very first place nearly every member of the public turned was to the news media.

They learned about the first plane hitting the north tower at 8:46 a.m. only minutes later from television and from the Associated Press, and actually it was the Dow Jones Wire, Alan's publication, that broke the story first because of its proximity to the World Trade Center.

Peter Jennings said, "There's never been anything like this. Not a single event in a single moment in a single day. I realized that we had a very special job."

And on this day of unimaginable tragedy and terror, journalists acted on instinct. They literally ran toward danger.

It's my opinion that that's just what journalists do. It might even be in their DNA, although as of yet there's no scientific evidence of this. I think the psychology of a journalist's psyche might be worth exploring. But we do know what we saw on television that day. We saw journalists at their best, determined to get to the scene and report the facts.

And just getting to the crash sites of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and also rural central Pennsylvania was a logistical nightmare. Bridges and tunnels were shut down at 9:21 a.m. in New York City. That was after the second plane hit. After the Pentagon was hit at 9:38 a.m. roads around D.C. were shut down. In Pennsylvania, reporters didn't even hear about the crash that occurred at 10:10 until almost 10:45. They didn't know where it was. It was in a rural strip mine. Many of them listened on radios and followed the directions that were being given to rescue workers and they just got in and got behind fire trucks.

What was remarkable to me was that journalists, and this is all documented in their stories in *Running Toward Danger*, they commandeered taxis, they hitched rides in cars, they jumped on boats,

they rode bicycles, they walked miles, and some of them even flat-out sprinted just to get to the site. It didn't matter if they were pregnant, terrified, jogging on a treadmill, sitting in a barber shop as the managing editor of *The New York Times* was, or home asleep or even like John McWethy, sitting at their desks inside the Pentagon. They had to get there. They had to get the story and report it to the world.

I listened to Maggie Farley who is a New York based correspondent for *The Los Angeles Times* and was also eight months pregnant at the time. She said, "I felt this journalistic desperation to get to the scene." En-route to getting to the Brooklyn Bridge to get into the city, Maggie Farley ran into her husband, Marcus Bauchli, the national news editor for *The Wall Street Journal*. He looked at her and said, "Don't even try." He was heading back to their Brooklyn home where he would then go on to coordinate a lot of the coverage that day using BlackBerries and the Internet. He said, "I don't want you to go." And Maggie said, "But I felt like I had to try. I went to the Brooklyn Bridge and there were thousands of people coming across like a parade of refugees. Suddenly the stream of people turned into a throng that looked like *The Night of the Living Dead*. I tried to find people who were coherent enough to interview. Though I had a police pass, the police wouldn't let me get on the bridge because so many people were coming from New York to Brooklyn. But I was in the reporter mode and I felt the journalistic desperation to get to the scene."

Well Maggie didn't get there, but she didn't go home either. Like many others who weren't able to get to the scene they went out and found other stories. She went to the mosques, the hospitals, the restaurants in her neighborhood.

I think Maggie's determination and drive embodies what all journalists that we interviewed for *Running Toward Danger* felt on this seismic day. They want to know, they feel a deep responsibility to share that information with the public, and they strive to do it fairly and accurately.

As we know, it's the journalist's job to document history whether it's in pictures or photographs, and every journalist that we talked to, and we didn't interview Alan, we didn't interview E.J., but I'm sure that they would talk about how they were keenly aware of their social responsibility to calmly and reliably explain what was happening to a public that was desperate to understand.

I think the fact that we were so well informed on that day and that there were so few mistakes, kept people feeling calm because they had a sense that they knew what was going on.

Every journalist of every stripe from the lowly cub reporter to the celebrated TV news people all volunteered for service that day. In fact Cathy and I joked that we wished there had been a journalistic reserve because we were more than willing to volunteer for service that day.

There was no star system. There was no competition. Whoever got there, whoever had the best information, whoever could provide the best photographs, the best videos, that was what was viewed. I think in that sense it was truly a unique day for journalism. One audience all wanting the same story and

all journalists acting as one trying to deliver it.

I think I'll stop there and I will let Jack tell his story which is in the book and I hope it will match. [Laughter] Anyway, Jack has a really dramatic story because he happened to be sitting inside the Pentagon when the plane hit at 9:38.



MR. McWETHY: I don't know how dramatic the story is. Like everyone, we all know exactly where we were at that moment. I was watching the World Trade Center scene, and ABC tends to come to me when there are potential terrorist threats. They wired me up. I was ready to go on a small camera in my booth with them yelling in my ear, "Are you ready? Are you ready?" and me yelling back at them, "But I don't know anything." [Laughter] Which often doesn't stop them. [Laughter]

Then I felt the jolt in the Pentagon. About a third of the way around is where the aircraft hit, and because of the oblique angle it hit, much of the explosive impact went in one direction around the hallways of the Pentagon.

Almost immediately the place was full of smoke and chaos. But as many military officers will tell you, if anyone is going to strike at the United States this is a good place to strike because the military folks know how to deal with this and they did.

I got out of the building, made my way around, and tried to get as close to the crash scene as I could and determine what had happened. One of the first people I ran into was a reporter from *USA Today* who was one of the eye witnesses, who had been commuting down the highway. We were all trying to get it straight, what was it that hit the Pentagon, and he said "I saw American Airlines right above my head". Then I interviewed a taxicab driver who watched it clip off the light poles as it came in low and careened into the side of the building.

We all just wanted to get the story that day. It was a dramatic day. Communications were awful, as everyone remembers. The cell phones were totally jammed. I commandeered a pay phone at the Citgo station across from the Pentagon. It was just minutes after the place had been hit and they were worried about a fourth aircraft coming in. They were yelling at us, "Clear the area, there's another airplane in-bound to Washington. This is a potential target. This gas station."

I had finally gotten on the phone to ABC and I wasn't about to give up this pay phone. Some rent-a-cop came along and started to make like he was going to pull his gun on me, and I just looked at him and said, "Look, I'm a reporter. I have to report to my network. Shoot me." [Laughter] He just, his eyes sort of glazed and he ran on yelling at other people, threatening them. [Laughter]

It's the kind of typical scene that you run into again and again. In some ways, thank God, it was in this country. I've been threatened many times with guns in other countries in war zones, and I tend to

take them a lot more seriously than I did this young man who was getting ready to threaten me. But it was an amazing day. As we all had.

MR. HESS: Alan?



MR. ALAN MURRAY: Jack and I were talking about this beforehand, you don't want to spend too much time patting yourself on the back for what a wonderful job you did on September 11th because there are so many things that I think need to be looked at critically in what the press did afterwards.

But I said to my staff, or what was my staff at the *Wall Street Journal* at the time, that it was both the worst day of life and one of the most exhilarating days of my life. The worst day for all the obvious reasons, all the coworkers who were in the building right across the street, and we didn't know what had happened to them. My wife had family who lived in the building immediately behind the *Wall Street Journal* building who were separated from young kids for most of the day. And yet as Alicia said, and as she and Cathy capture so wonderfully in the book, you were working with reporters who just were doing what reporters do. All of them. Without any particular regard -- It wasn't a love of danger, it was just sort of a lack of regard.

I remember walking out at 11:45 that night and going to get my car from the parking lot which is, in my head I was saying, "the parking lot's open until 12:00" and getting there and realizing well the parking lot's been closed for six or seven hours and everybody else had left long ago. And not having, until that point, ever thought about the fact that we shouldn't all be sitting there two blocks away from the White House, that we should perhaps be worried more about families or whatever.

Let me just take you quickly through the story of that day, and I think you have to put this in context.

Remember that the big story of August of 2001 was Chandra Levy, and we got a break from that. We only got a brief break from that when the fellow dove into the water and pulled his son's leg out of the shark's mouth. That was the kind of journalism that was capturing national attention before September 11th. We had Jim Steinberg from Brookings with us on that Tuesday morning. He was going to be at our regular Tuesday morning breakfast meeting when I got a call from one of the reporters in the bureau who was staying at the Marriott Financial Center two blocks away from the World Trade Center and called up and said hey, "here's what just happened."

That's what reporters were doing all day. I got another call from Ted Britus who was driving up 95 on his way to work and said hey, "I just saw a plane fly into the Pentagon", an hour and a half later.

At about 9:15 I got a call from the paper's managing editor. At that point we knew about both planes, and he said "We're leaving. We have to get out of this building. We're going to head over to South Brunswick, New Jersey where the paper's corporate offices are. He said I don't know how long

it's going to take us to get there. We're going to try and put out the paper from there, but in the mean time, you have to handle the coverage, put together stories so when we finally get things up and running we can put together a paper.

I called together the staff. I think everybody instantly recognized this was one of those days. This was our generation's Pearl Harbor. That the world was changing before our eyes. And everybody -- I cannot remember a single incident during the course of the day when somebody said hey, "I've got to get home to my family, I have to leave, I can't stay here." I'm sure people dealt with those things over the course of the day. I'm sure people did have to get home to their families. Schools were dismissed. People dealt with all those things. But the only thing I remember is reporters walking into my office saying what can I do? What can I do?

MS. SHEPARD: Can I just interrupt here? Jim Pensiero who we interviewed who is the assistant managing editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, just to give you an idea of what Alan is talking about, he said, "I walked through the streets of Jersey City in a daze." He was trying to get to their off-site office. He heard people listening to radios. He knew the Pentagon had been attacked. "I was thinking okay, this is a real major attack." He said, "I kept walking west to the other station which was open, I got out to where my car was parked. I tried at that point to call my wife but couldn't get through. Eventually I got my car phone to work. Her first words to me were, and this will probably get censored, but you know what she said? She was upset that I hadn't called. 'You asshole.' 'Hah,' I said. 'I'm alive.' She was relieved and I knew she was okay and I knew the kids were okay," but his first instinct was he had gotten already to Jersey City from New York before he even let his wife know, and I'm sure he was in touch with Alan or Paul Steiger first.



MR. MURRAY: I had actually talked to Jim a couple of times on BlackBerries (wireless hand-held e-mail). And that's one of the things that I think needs to be pointed out about this. I don't know how we could have done what we did on that day. And by the way, let me register a complaint here. The front page of the *Wall Street Journal* is not displayed anywhere in the lobby, and I know why that is, Stephen. But that was the front page that won the Pulitzer Prize for breaking news that day, but it shows what we've all suspected, that Brookings has an incredible bias towards sensationalism. [Laughter] So when we don't do the "Bastards" headline across the top -- [Laughter]

MR. HESS: That's the left wing bias that E.J. -- [Laughter]

MR. MURRAY: But four of the six stories on the front page of the paper that day were compiled and written in the Washington bureau. But the most compelling of those, other than probably the first person account by John Bussey which was on that page, but the most compelling was pulled together by Brian Gruley. But it was a first-person account of what was happening in New York.

What was amazing was reporters -- For those of you who aren't reporters I will let you into a

little secret which is reporters don't get to the office very early in the morning. So at 9:15 most people weren't there. They were walking into the office. A lot of them were getting off the subway stops, walking down the street when they saw this specter unfold in front of them. So many of them never had -- Then of course the communication systems went down. Many of these reporters in New York never had any contact with their editors, had nobody to tell them what to do. They just couldn't communicate with anybody so they did what reporters do. They took out their notebooks and they just started writing.

Later in the day when they finally got to some place where they could at least get a phone line, plug their computer into their phone line, they just started filing these accounts into the ether. They didn't know who to send it to, because there was nobody in New York organizing coverage. That to me is the most remarkable story of the day is that we as editors and managers think the paper would never go out if we weren't there telling people what to do, but in fact what you had at the *Wall Street Journal* was this totally chaotic situation where people are running around just taking notes, looking, seeing, and then they just filed into the ether. There's an e-mail address that goes to virtually everybody at the *Wall Street Journal* and Brian Gruley sat here and just pulled these incredible stories down from the e-mail and put them together in what I think has probably got to be the most fascinating account of that day that anybody put together. Again, done without any direction, any top-down management, just reporters doing what reporters do.

I remember reading these things as they were coming in. There was one incredible account written in the third person about someone trying to get onto the boat to New Jersey after the towers had collapsed. You had this incredible concentration of dust and grime chasing people down the street. Again, this account written in the third person talks about how this person was trying to get onto the boat and he fell into the river and had to be lifted out of the river back onto the boat. And only when you got to the end of this account did you realize that the person involved was the reporter. [Laughter]

So it really was a remarkable thing to watch and be involved in. The instinctive way that people went about doing their job even when they had no one to tell them what to do, even when they didn't have the normal communication tools, they did it, they filed, and it made up the paper the next day.

MR. HESS: Let's move on from this remarkable day to this remarkable year and what's happened in the war on terrorism as it relates to the press and as it relates to government and the press.

Some impressions, E.J., and then I want to get Jack in on the Pentagon and the Don Rumsfeld angle of the story.



MR. DIONNE: I like the way you've organized this because I've always wanted to be a second story man, so now I get to do it. [Laughter]

I just wanted to make a few quick points. First, this is really good, it's very valuable that this book was produced, and what's striking about it is you get -

- Reporters are actually kind of romantic sentimentalists disguised as tough guys or tough women. And you get some of the thoughts of this – “I am a reporter, I am not supposed to cry.” I like that line as sort of revealing that. Then the plaintive line that I liked is "I am a reporter. Can I just talk to you?" The notion that reporters are out there all the time, desperate to have cooperation, knowing in many cases that asking a person in the middle of a terrible situation any sort of question is really, by most rights, a terrible thing to do. Reporters are actually aware of that. Then they go on and ask the question anyway.

MS. SHEPARD: In the book many of the photographers who were in New York particularly were taking pictures and the police or the people who were the subjects were saying why are you taking my picture? What's the matter with you? And several different photographers said, “We have to document this. We need to tell this story. This is an important story to tell.” In each case the people agreed instantly. The police backed away. So I think that was one of the remarkable things, that this story, this event, whether you were in Pennsylvania, New York, or aboard Air Force One or in D.C., it was happening to the journalists at the same time. It wasn't that they were there dispassionately covering it.

MR. HESS: And the picture on the cover, the photograph on the cover is by a photographer who died taking the picture. And by the way, one thing I forgot to mention. With the cooperation of Barnes and Noble, there are some books for sale at the end of the program outside, if anybody wants to see the book. I suspect that Alicia might be willing to sign a copy or two. But go on.

MR. DIONNE: Actually I wanted to make that point too, about photographers. The day before I went to Lebanon for the first time, I had never covered a war, and was absolutely petrified. The late Flora Lewis, who was then, then I guess she was a columnist then but had been the past Bureau Chief and had actually given me my first job as an intern knew I'd be scared and took me out to dinner. She gave me some advice on how to cover war for the first time. The first piece of advice was, “Stay away from the photographers, they have to get a lot closer than you do.” It was excellent advice.

My favorite story from Lebanon was of a photographer/TV cameraman talking to a group of Marines, the Marines who were later blown up in that terrible attack. But the photographer describes what he does for a living and here this big tough Marine says, "You guys are nuts. We would never do anything like that." I think it's just an indication of what they do.

Since Alan so kindly derided editors and praised the workers I want to just whip it around and make one point that I think is often overlooked and this comes from the title of the book, *Running Toward Danger*. Editors are actually very concerned about the lives of their reporters.

The one story I have to tell about that was in my first week in Lebanon, I will never forget this man. It was Bill Borders who was then the Assistant Foreign Editor. I was going to go up into the mountains to report on the fighting. Here I'd been there a week so I was a really experienced war reporter.

MS. SHEPARD: How old were you?

MR. DIONNE: I was in my early 30s I guess. And Borders gets me on the phone and said you're not going up there. He said you are at your most dangerous stage. You've been there long enough to think you know what's going on and you're too dumb to know that you don't know how to do this yet. I'll always love him for that. I think it's important that editors do do that in these circumstances.

MR. MURRAY: Just to reinforce that, had editors been able to talk to those reporters who were on the streets in lower Manhattan, they would have told them get the hell out of there. It's only partly because there was no way to communicate with them that many of them stayed in. One of the things that, it's really not the day, it's the whole year that has been such a painful mix of emotions and tragedy and great journalism, having lived through the Danny Pearl episode which was a really tough one for all of us. And yet I sat in on daily phone conferences with the Chairman of the Board and the Editor of the paper, and you can say this is a good thing or you can say it's a bad thing, but I can tell you that every single decision that was made was made with only one concern in mind, which is what we can do to get Danny out.

It was not always the right decision journalistically. Journalistic values were put aside for the concern of getting Danny out. It certainly wasn't always the right decision from a business standpoint in terms of the amount of money or effort. It was we're going to do whatever we can to get this guy out of there and you can criticize that or you can support it but I can tell you that's the way it was.

MS. SHEPARD: How about in terms of when you were talking about the story before he was kidnapped? Was there a "Danny, don't do this?"

MR. MURRAY: No. But I don't think -- It was not sufficiently appreciated, this was not -- Danny actually was one of these reporters who did not throw himself into an incredibly dangerous situation. He didn't want to go to Afghanistan and cover "the war". I don't think either he or his editors appreciated the danger of the situation he was talking into on that night.

MR. DIONNE: What also comes through in this book is the sense of good fortune you have to have in a situation like this. The phone story, the need for communication is so critical and that day they were all messed up.

My personal favorite communication story was after the Achille Lauro hijacking back in the '80s and I found my way, I was interviewing people as they came off the boat, I was in no danger, but I had to get my story back to New York. I walked into a hotel that appeared to have been a house of ill repute during the Crimean war but they did have telephones that appeared to work. Remember, these were in the days before -- you often sent on teletype. It was before the technologies existed. An editor managed to get through to me and said forget about filing a story, just talk to me. And it's actually one of the favorite stories I have ever written because A, I had a great editor at the other end; but B, there was

an intensity that came from those stories.

And in Lebanon I had the experience of going up the mountain the day after the USS New Jersey shelled Druize's position, and by sheer chance in a little town ran into a person who had read, a Druize American who had gone back to the mountain during the war, happened to read some of my stories, and took me all the way to see the guys who had been shelled that day. If I had not run into that guy and he had not read the stories -- What are the chances of that in a little town in a mountain of Lebanon? So I think in order to get -- I think all of us who have been in this line of work say a prayer for luck because it's very important. Then you try to make the best of it.

I want to take the term Steve suggested. Why was there that spike and why did it go down? I just want to offer a couple of theories.

The first is I think everything documented in this book was visible to the people in the country. So I don't think it as -- At some level it wasn't any more complicated than that, and in an odd way, because it was so raw, because you didn't have the ease of making every seamless transition, it actually, I think, looked extremely honest to people the way the press was trying to report that. And in a lot of news outlets there was great effort to explain as things went along, what do we know and what we don't know.

I am told, and I never want to look it up as a journalistic concept too good to check, somebody once told me that Hagel of all people said the job of journalists is to convey information and hide ignorance at the same time.

On that day we were actually quite honest about information and ignorance, what we knew and what we didn't know. Obviously the courage and what people were actually doing was visible on the TV screen and was visible in the next day's paper. So I think that had something to do with it.

Then there's the second question about what happened in the days after. The press did become, if you will, red, white and blue in the days following that. I don't think that was put on, I think reporters got affected by this in much the same way as the rest of the country did. That it was the first attack on the mainland of the United States since 1812 and the first attack on the United States since Pearl Harbor.

I think in that sense reporters were no different than people in the country which may surprise others. So I think there was a kind of red, white and blue quality to the coverage if you looked at the coverage of President Bush on that first day which was his shakiest day in the whole business.

There was enormous restraint.

Now parallel to that restraint was an enormous amount of pressure and I think we'll look back on those columnists, there were a couple of columnists out in the country who were critical of the

President for those two days and got kind of ridden out on a rail.

On the one hand feeling the way almost all of us felt about that day you can understand the reaction, but I think it's something that we're not going to look back on with pride.

I think that also gets to the second stage of this why were we so popular. We did look red, white and blue patriotic in that period and I think a lot of people who had been hostile to the press as a sort of critical agency, always tearing down the government and whoever was in it, and other institutions, saw us in a different light.

And I think as well there was a kind of a partisan element of this. The polls from Andy Kohut that he cites, there was a very interesting question that Andy asked: When covering the war on terrorism journalists should, and the choices were "dig for hard news or trust officials."

Liberal Democrats said dig for hard news, 60-33. Moderate conservative Democrats, dig for hard news 56-37. Moderate to liberal Republicans were on the same side, 53-42. But on the other side, conservative Republicans said trust officials 55-38 percent.

I think in that period what you had was a sense that the press was in fact being more trusting of officials or at least we conveyed that sense, and that it took awhile for the press to make a turn back to more critical reporting.

I think it's perfectly normal for the country to sort of like it in a sense when we seem terribly nice, and to dislike it when we become critical again, but it is the natural role of the press eventually to turn to digging for information that makes public officials uncomfortable.

MR. MURRAY: There seems to be an undercurrent of what you're saying that the public liked the press more because they weren't, in your view, doing their job as well.

MR. DIONNE: No, I don't think it's so much doing their job. I think first of all the job to be done, especially in that immediate period was so clearly an information gathering role not about what went -- We weren't looking at what went wrong. We weren't looking at my God, what did the CIA do or not do, what did the FBI do. We were trying to collect raw factual information which always makes us popular. But I think in the second instance some of the things that make the press unpopular in normal times, whether under Clinton or under Bush. I think the ideological numbers can change depending on who's President, what people, some segment of the public doesn't like is when we become critical. The segment of the public that doesn't like an Administration at the time loves a critical press. The people who support that Administration hate a critical press. The people in the middle probably lean towards a little skepticism of criticism.

So I think in that period it was because we were behaving in the ways we did, in some ways I think quite justifiably, but I think in retrospect we may pose some questions about it. There was a kind

of artificial spike where we picked up people who were normally critical of us, and it's not at all surprising that when we returned to behaving the way we normally behave those numbers flipped around.

I think when people study this, and I'll stop with this, I think these numbers, I'm glad Steve brought them up because I think they're very much worth studying. I think there is one element of them that is purely about the success of the press that day in doing its jobs and some of it was genuine admiration for the work. Another piece of it was indeed the shift from a sense of us as a critical agency to us as a fact-gathering, more patriotic agency and it would be intriguing for somebody to look at these numbers to figure out which was which and why, to explain this fantastic U-curve. Because as Steve showed me the numbers yesterday, they are almost identical today to what they were a year ago. It is almost a perfect U, and I think that's an intriguing question for us to ponder.

MR. HESS: Let me get back to Jack McWethy for several reasons. First of all, we go from 9/11 to Afghanistan. He wasn't here when we invited him last because he was there. Afghanistan was a remarkably difficult exercise for the press. It was the most dangerous war per moment. Eight reporters, --

MR. McWETHY: More reporters died in the early days than soldiers.

MR. HESS: Yes, eight reporters died. He was there, but there in a special role as an embedded, that is he was there as a guest of the Pentagon which apparently was a very difficult position from what we gather from other reporters.

But then as you go back to where the war was most explained to us, it was at the briefings with Rumsfeld, who somehow had you caught in a pincer between the up and the down. He became the patriot and what were you guys?

But the public loved him in a very special way.

MR. McWETHY: The dynamic begins on the day of the event. I have never felt such a thirst for the information and the perspective that I provided as I did actually in the five days that ABC News took over the network and we just did it for five days straight.

There was an unbelievable thirst and connection that I felt in being a journalist, a very special trust.

But the worm began to turn as the issues of what are you? An American? A journalist? Those two issues immediately began to be debated within my news division. The issue of, do you wear an American flag lapel pin on the air? ABC decided no. You're a journalist first. Though you are an American, it's undeniable. The greatest criticisms of the American press during this period is that international journalists saw us as being nothing more than cheerleaders for the Administration, so we

walked a very delicate and difficult line, especially those of us that cover national security, and we were immediately into disagreement with the Administration over how we cover this war and what steps we are going to be allowed to take, what steps we took, even though we were not being allowed to take them in terms of providing the American people with some perspective as to where the United States was headed. And it continued to be a very delicate and interesting debate among those of us that cover this sensitive subject area which is not just the Pentagon, but it's what the CIA is doing and what other parts of the government are doing in trying to cover the aftermath of 9/11.

Don Rumsfeld has become what I regard as CSPAN's greatest day-time soap opera. When he takes to the air, CSPAN's numbers go right off the charts. He is enormously popular. If you watched any of his hearing yesterday the members of the House Armed Services Committee acted as though they had a TV star in their midst. They were so excited to be in Don Rumsfeld's presence. He has a persona now.

The press in dealing with him, in trying to get answers to very difficult questions. Alternately the press, we hold our head up high and sometimes we are made to be fools in the daily briefing. Rumsfeld, in my opinion, is a very skilled communicator. He slam dunks the press with great regularity. And he has begun doing it with such regularity that I have called it to the attention of Torie Clarke, the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Defense Department, because I see a danger.

When Rumsfeld goes out and talks to the troops and basically portrays the press as the enemy, which he does to a degree, I feel that it has implications far beyond just a debate. It has implications for the safety of reporters who deal with the military in combat zones and when soldiers are told by the highest-ranking man in a civilian suit at the Defense Department that we are in essence an enemy, it creates a real danger and a perception among the troops that I feel is something that need to be corrected and dealt with.

We began pushing in the very early days for answers to some of the things that were unfolding before our eyes in the war in Afghanistan. What kind of commitment was the United States making to governments who had suddenly decided to allow the United States to put their troops on their soil? Many of them are countries that the United States would not have touched with a ten-foot pole prior to this and it was very much marriages of convenience. But to this day I do not feel that the United States public has a very good idea of the financial, the moral, the ethical, and the legal commitments that the United States has made to these various governments for which we have now a very deep and abiding relationship. There are not answers to those questions and those are important questions.

To this day the public has absolutely no idea how many civilians were killed in Afghanistan, not a clue. There are classified estimates. The military argues, and there's some validity to this, that they have no way of knowing. And that's true to a degree. They don't have a way of knowing accurately, but they do have estimates and they do know about collateral damage, and these are issues that the press did not push on hard enough. I didn't. But I began pushing and it became a very difficult issue.

A third one is how close are reporters going to be allowed to be with the troops when the troops go into the field? There has been a constant debate within the Pentagon over the decades of various wars about how close reporters are going to be to the front line and to the forces that are conducting the combat.

This was a war that was very different. It was conducted primarily by about 200 to 250 Special Forces soldiers on the ground. There were no reporters with those soldiers until after the fall of Kandahar, until the war was essentially over.

There were no eyes and ears, and that's the way the Pentagon wants it. They make absolutely no apologies for it. Reporters were allowed on aircraft carriers to watch planes take off and that's about as close as we got. There were reporters later who got to go with the Marines as they established rear bases but the Marines fundamentally didn't do anything. The war was over by the time the press got close enough to actually cover it. To this day, we do not have a good idea, other than the rudimentary routes that were taken and some of the aspects of the political and military things that happened on the ground. To this day we do not have a good outline of what occurred during the two months of intense combat that overthrew a government and defeated an army in Afghanistan. It continues to be a very troublesome aspect of the issue right now as the United States prepares to deal with yet another conflict in Iraq and I feel the exposure and ability of the press to cover that conflict will be as bad or even worse than it was in Afghanistan.

MR. HESS: Part of the reason that Don Rumsfeld became so popular is that no one else in the Administration was available to tell the story. Ken Walsh, who is the White House correspondent for *US News and World Report*, was giving a speech this week, quoted in the *San Antonio Express News*, and he says that "the White House is now much more secretive than it was under his father," under George Bush I. "Today, it's hard to get people to talk and when they do they're all saying the same thing. You get the same rhetoric over and over."

It strikes me, being in Washington and Alan from your Bureau Chief chair, that the degree to which these people have been buttoned down have serious consequences for how much information we get and also for how the press will ultimately respond when they slip on a banana peel which they ultimately --



MR. MURRAY: I think that's absolutely right. I agree with everything that John McWethy just said but there's one point I want to make and this is what I was asking E.J. about as well, that I feel very strongly about. I agree completely with the problems at the Pentagon. I disagree with the decision of the networks to not allow reporters to wear flags on their lapels.

I do not believe that being a patriot is somehow inimical to being a good journalist. We are Americans. My publication probably more than most has something of a global audience but it's small

compared to the American audience, our readers are Americans. I think for us to pretend to deny that is a huge mistake.

It doesn't mean that you can't ask the tough questions. I was frustrated because I was asking my reporters every day, what about civilian casualties? What damage are we doing? We have to know that. We have to report that. It doesn't mean you can't ask the tough questions about civil liberties. What's more American than civil liberties?

In the process of this war what are we doing to American values and American civil liberties. It doesn't mean that you can't try to understand what's going on in the Muslim world. The great tragedy, to me, of Danny Pearl's death is that he was one of the few reporters out there who was really doing sympathetic reporting about how the Muslim world viewed the events that were going on here.

So you can do all the things you need to do to be a good or great journalist and still love your country and care about your country, and I think --

MR. McWETHY: It's like waving a flag. When you are on television you are a symbol for your network. I would no more wave an American flag while I am trying to report in a non-biased way about conflict overseas than I would a Canadian flag or a British flag if I were a citizen of those countries. I'm a reporter.

MR. MURRAY: I think for your management to suggest that wearing a flag on your lapel is somehow inimical to being a good reporter adds to what happened to journalists after September 11th. If we buy into the notion that we can't do our job and do it well without somehow not having the natural feelings about our country that you have to have after an incident like that, I think we will only feed -- And this isn't you. This is a decision by your network. I think we will only feed the feelings people have about us. That has nothing, in my mind that has nothing to do with not asking much tougher questions and getting much better answers than we were getting about how many civilians were being killed in Afghanistan.

MR. DIONNE: I don't want to get too sidetracked on this, but can I ask John a question? It was my understanding that one of the reasons for that policy was that people can be equally patriotic but some may want to wear the flag and some may not, and that people at the network, reporters at the network were running into sort of difficulty, well I believe the guy that has the flag on but I don't believe the person who doesn't have the flag on. So the decision was made that either you had everybody wear the flag or nobody should wear the flag.

Was there any of that? I read that somewhere about some network and I honestly don't remember which one.

MR. McWETHY: To be quite honest I had no participation in management's decisionmaking on this. I've never worn flag lapels. I've never worn any designation for anything on my suit, whether it

indicates what my religion is or my nationality or anything else. I don't wear ball caps that root for the New York Yankees. [Laughter] I think I need to be dressed in a way where I am not a distraction. This is all part of a medium which is different than the print medium, but I try to remove all --

MR. MURRAY: You're wording that very cleverly.

MR. McWETHY: I try to remove all distractions from my primary job which is communicating the story at the scene. And whether it is something there or a funny hairdo or a baseball cap, all of those things I try to remove from my --

MR. MURRAY: As a personal choice I respect that 100 percent. I'm talking about the network's decision to say no one can do it.

MS. SHEPARD: I think that what Alan just brought up speaks to why you had the spike, in terms of greater respect for the press, was that on that day I think the public really saw the press as human beings who were scared, who were terrified, who were trying to do their job in tremendously dangerous situations.

Think about photographers who ran when the first building fell and then went back to photograph more. You're saying in the same sense that seeing them as patriots made them seem more human, and I think that is probably one of the key reasons why you then had the drop. The public sees the press not as human beings but as just some sort of institutional function.

MR. HESS: E.J., explained the spike in part because, I think, all of the conservatives that hated you suddenly momentarily love you and then they start to hate you again which is very interesting but it doesn't add to the question about why the conservatives hate you in the first place.

This has also been a year in which we've had best sellers by Bernard Goldberg and Colter and Bill O'Reilly. Last week --

MS. SHEPARD: Bill O'Reilly, Hannits, and Combs --

MR. HESS: Yeah, but Gene Weingarten is a very funny columnist in the *Washington Post* on Sunday, this Sunday had his ten "Hates." Hate number ten was the "fact that the general public—afloat as it is in its reactionary, bigoted, Neanderthal self-interest-posing-as-conservatives—thinks all journalists are sanctimonious liberals." [Laughter]

As our representative of the liberal persuasion, what's going on this past year?

MR. DIONNE: Two points I want to make. I cited that piece of data. There's some other data in Andy's poll that suggests that there was an up and down among all groups. I don't want to over-represent that. I think that data is interesting and that's why I raised it. But there was an up and down

across all groups and that's why I think it is more complicated than just a conservative-liberal thing, although I do think that's fair.

I think it's obvious that for going back to the days of Spiro Agnew there has been a concerted effort on the part of conservatives, quite successful from their point of view, very intelligent, to put the press on the defensive, to say "the press are a whole bunch of liberals so don't believe them, believe us." I think that's continued, it's had an effect, it's entered deep into the conservative movement.

My own view is that the biases of the press are not so much liberal or conservative, they tend to be the biases of the educated upper middle class. Therefore on social issues such as abortion you probably do have a more liberal bias. That is not true of economic issues such as trade or budget balancing.

So I always joke that the two things you don't want to be when you're confronting a reporter are a leader of the Christian Coalition or a trade union leader because both of them are likely to get hammered. But for a lot of conservatives who are social conservatives, this upper middle class bias translates as a liberal bias. Then you do have those studies that show how journalists vote which is different from the way publishers vote and I would say it's different from the world of opinion which I think has shifted much in the past 25 years, has shifted in the conservative direction. There were more people who thought like I do doing opinion work 25 years ago than I think there are today.

MR. HESS: You had that spike up for everybody here, all the journalists. Isn't there something you should do or could have done or didn't do during that period where indeed they all loved you that would have made a difference in this? Or is it all as the *American Journalism Review* in the current issue has its new poll on the First Amendment. The least popular First Amendment right is freedom of the press. Forty-two percent saying that the press has too much freedom. Maybe it's just that they don't understand you or what your role should be.

What could you have done?

MR. McWETHY: What we do is sometimes difficult for the public to deal with. For those of us that have spent a lot of our careers overseas doing things, the most profound difference that I observed and that people I run into overseas observe about the United States is freedom of the press. There is no country that has an institution like this and we as journalists sometimes abuse it, and we as journalists sometimes honor it tremendously.

I think one of the points of great tension since 9/11 is the issue of classified information and how much journalists find out about military operations and secrets of the government and these are places that we walk on very shaky and difficult ground, especially those of us that come into contact with classified and secret information every day.

Don Rumsfeld would like to throw the people we talk to into jail. He has made absolutely no bones about it. But for those who know anything about classified information, a lot of it is the same stuff

that's in the *Wall Street Journal* every day and they classify it.

So there is an inherent conflict and tension I think with journalists and there is also a blurring of the lines of serious journalism versus what other people do -- Geraldo, Oprah. Those are all considered to be journalists and to a degree I suppose they are, but they are not some of the dinosaurs that you see sitting up here, who's view of sort of great reporting on issues of great significance.

MS. SHEPARD: There is definitely a tendency to see "the press" as monolithic and to not distinguish between the *New York Times* and the *National Enquirer* and I think that's very frustrating for a lot of journalists because it's always the squeaky wheel that gets the attention and so much of the good reporting that goes on every day and the journalists with integrity and honesty and dedication are just overlooked and it seems to me very unfortunate.

MR. HESS: We have representatives of various segments of that media here today, all of whom may have to answer some tough questions. Alan Murray who has escaped one of the great newspapers, at least as a Bureau Chief, has become the Bureau Chief of 24-hour-a-day cable news channel.

Shouldn't we serious people have some worry about stations that go on 24 hours a day and when they only have one hour of news fill the other 23 with people shouting at each other, or retired generals pointing their sticks at maps of the world? You made a big move. Defend yourself, Murray. [Laughter]

MR. MURRAY: I don't think you can blame the medium. I think there is good journalism on television and there is bad journalism on television, just as there is good journalism in print and bad journalism in print. And in both mediums there is probably more bad journalism than good. All right?

It is a very different medium. I wouldn't be terribly happy if I didn't have a weekly column in the *Wall Street Journal*. I mean, I love what I'm doing for CNBC. I'm having a great time. But I am constantly amazed at how little depth you can achieve even with a full hour of television to play with every night. And with a pretty sophisticated and intelligent audience relative to the average TV audience. I'm amazed and frustrated and shocked at how much more I can do with an 835 word column, which isn't a lot.

So it's a medium with limitations and it is a medium that requires you to be visual. Does it require crazy people shouting at each other? I don't think so. In fact I think there's a little bit, you can see a bit of a turnoff with that kind of television going on right now.

You look at somebody like Aaron Brown on CNN cultivating an image and some success by being the opposite of that.

So I think it's a reflection of the face of the people watching television, not a reflection of the

box.

MR. HESS: We're going to get McWethy to defend, he works for a broadcast network who after the Berlin Wall came down closed up all their bureaus around the world, or almost all of them. America seems to be interested in the rest of the world again, if only in self-defense. Are you going to open any bureaus? Are you going to go back to the good old days of Murrow's boys and others?

MR. McWETHY: It's been an interesting 10 or 15 years since the Wall came down. ABC and all of the networks closed many of their overseas operations and it was a straight line function of economics. And I believe a lot of newspapers have closed their overseas operations as well.

Is it because the American people don't want to know about what's going on? Maybe. I think the network has an obligation to continue to report what is happening out in the world.

I am proud to say that ABC, especially World News Tonight with Peter Jennings does more overseas coverage than any other evening broadcast, which is still not enough for my taste.

But I take these periods of conflict, as someone who has covered them intensively for several decades, as wonderful opportunities for this powerful medium, what I call teachable moments for our vast, many millions of audience. When there is a conflict in Afghanistan the network goes and teaches people who couldn't care less about Afghanistan all about the ethnicity, the religion, the economics, the history, the geography, the theology, all of that gets put before an audience in small bites, but it's done again and again and again. The same was true with Bosnia, the same is true with Kosovo, with Somalia, Haiti, you name it. Those are the teachable moments when the medium for which I work is magnificent. We pour resources into it and we explain in ways that people who may not have an abiding interest in it learn an incredible amount. So for that I am so grateful. It is a powerful communications tool and it's very effective in those teachable moments. And when we're left with Chandra Levy and the OJ Simpson trial and stuff like that, I just go mute. [Laughter]

MR. DIONNE: In some ways I'm happy that it is only 42 percent that are not, seem not to be wild about the First Amendment because you can really take a bunch of components and say it's pretty easy to build up to that number.

There are some people who use their democratic right to support whatever Administration is in power and some of them will be unhappy about what they see. Over a long period of time of a number of conservatives distrusting the press on general principle, that builds up that percentage. Then you have the sort of the Howard Cosell effect in the sense of people seeing reporters as people who go to others who are suffering, put a mike in their face or get out their notebook and say, "So how does it feel to have been..." or they say "some people think that's awful what you guys do, why do you do that?" Then, as McWethy said, there is the component of journalism where we go off and cover Chandra Levy, and this sentiment is shared by a good segment of the public. You put all of that together and you have a lot of people, then the blurring of the lines. I sit here as someone who personally blurs the line,

since I spent 17 years as an old fashioned journalist and now nine years in opinion. But I think it gets even worse now because you don't know who is what any more and a certain segment of people love people yelling at each other on television, but a lot of people don't like that.

You put all that together and you have a lot of skepticism about what is called journalism and so I think that leads unfortunately to that number. But fortunately most people still would say at the end let's keep the First Amendment and thank God for that.

MS. SHEPARD: Can I just add that I had the fortune to go to Botswana and Swaziland, two small countries and burgeoning democracies in southern Africa. They were at that time thinking of restraining and licensing reporters and licensing them so they asked me to come over and speak to government officials about the First Amendment and how it worked. They couldn't fathom the idea that we didn't have government control over our press. And this was during the time that Bill Clinton and his escapades with Monica Lewinsky were in the front of the news.

I said to many different legislators that I spoke to that I bet my life that if Bill Clinton, who hated the coverage he was getting, had a choice between getting rid of the First Amendment or not, that he would be one of the most vigorous champions of it. And they were just in disbelief that a government official, a President of a country, would actually defend what was embarrassing him. And I think we are really fortunate to have the First Amendment. And I think that figure would change if there were any talk of getting rid of it.

MR. MURRAY: Clinton might have had --

MR. DIONNE: There were certain days I think.

MS. SHEPARD: But overall --

MR. HESS: The old Jeffersonian comparison, remember he said that too until he got to be President, then he changed his mind. [Laughter]

I've been having such a good time that I've ignored you out in the audience, but let's have at least a couple of questions if anybody has strong feelings about it.

I'm sorry. There is a woman down there who has written me from Taiwan and I promised if she came on this date I would call on her. She's from the *Taipei Times*. Please, if you'll introduce yourself.



QUESTION: Thank you, Steve, for your attention.

My name is Monique Chu, a reporter with the *Taipei Times* which is an English-language daily in Taiwan. The reason why I'm here is I got a journalism award in June so because of that great treatment from a local

foundation, I'll be able to travel in the U.S. and Europe for the next two months to explore a very interesting question related to this panel discussion.

I'd like to explore the European and American news coverage and analysis of the war on terrorism. So far I've talked to actually Alan's former counterpart at the *Wall Street Journal*, Marcus Brauchli.

I have two questions. The first question is directed to all the participants. Last time when I talked to David Laventhol at the *Columbia Journalism Review* he argued that to be patriotic in the minds of reporters who cover the war on terrorism is for reporters to do their jobs. That is, we have to put the government into scrutiny, you have to ask tough questions.

Do you agree with his observation and to what extent do you think reporters in this country have done their job very well?

The second question will be directed to John. John, you mentioned about there are acts that the public is still yet in the dark, for example the number of casualties in the Afghanistan and so forth, and then later you mentioned that you didn't push hard enough to ask the questions.

So my question is, was it because of the sort of self-censorship among reporters to ask questions, or was it really because of the Pentagon's powerful ability to try to simply say no or to try to decline to answer your questions?

The second one is, I know that Torie Clarke has held various regular press briefings with all these Bureau Chiefs, so to what extent do you think these meetings are actually helpful to help reporters get information they want? Thanks.

MR. McWETHY: That's a day's worth of questions you just asked.

The Bureau Chief meetings I think were marginally productive. They helped in some of the nuts and bolts coverage of things. I was drafted to go to some of them and found them numbingly boring and they have stopped doing them because they're not terribly productive any more. I think Alan's more of a Bureau Chief than I am.

MR. MURRAY: I had the same experience. I went to the first couple and it was sort of trying to be helpful but you're still dealing with an Administration that really isn't terribly interested in being terribly helpful. So they were frustrating. And add to that the fact that for me I had to go across the river and get into a secure building to go to them, and I stopped going.

MR. HESS: Can I pursue that a little, if you'll forgive me, because Torie Clarke asked Brookings early on if we would organize a session with her public affairs people and the Bureau Chiefs, and they came here in early November and we had a bomb scare and we went across the street to

another auditorium and continued it.

Two things happened at that meeting that I thought were interesting. One was the reporters badgered her, if you want to call it that, about nuts and bolts questions. They had a lot of concerns about how they ran their jobs and so forth.

Now it struck me that this was an opportunity at least to ventilate, at least to expose these questions in what was a systematic way and what was on the record. No matter how boring they may have been, that certainly distinguishes it from other countries where the Defense Ministers probably are not being exposed to those sorts of questions. And maybe indeed they could have an effect.

The other thing was when Tom DeFrank, the Bureau Chief of the *New York Daily News*, got up and said this is all very nice but this problem is insoluble. You people think that we're in the way. You people want to get rid of us because you want to fight a war and we're getting in your way and this is all very nice but let's be sensible about it, we just have different institutional needs. That was challenged by some of the admirals there, but nevertheless.

So I'm a little surprised that our two working stiffs right now, that includes on --

MR. MURRAY: You have to understand the nature of these meetings. These were not meetings to say hey, I want to get this reporter on this ship or with this -- These were meetings to talk generally about the issue and they all covered the same -- Tom DeFrank is absolutely right. They all covered the same issue. It was the reporters saying, "with each successive war access to the battlefield is getting more infrequent, scarcer, harder to do and you guys clearly don't want us around," and them saying, "well no, we're trying to help you, embed you in this and embed you in that."

There was, as Tom DeFrank said, no solution to the problem and so going to meetings every two weeks to hear it hashed out again didn't seem like a terribly productive use of time.

I'm not, I think Torie has worked with news organizations and tried to work things out. John knows this better than I do. It seems to me it's sort of a combination of the nature of modern war plus the natural penchant of this Administration reflected very clearly by Don Rumsfeld or by John Ashcroft or by the President himself to not be terribly helpful to the press that creates the problem.

MR. McWETHY: The truth of the matter is you could not satisfy reporters' questions no matter how much you told us. I mean that's a reality. You can reveal to us the entire war plan of every war there is and it's not going to be enough. So there is an inherent tension between what the government does and what the press does which is what makes this inherent tension so interesting. It is a living organic line that moves back and forth on different issues, whether it is dealing with the Justice Department on detainees or whether it is going to war.

The fact of the matter is, and Torie will argue this again and again, Don Rumsfeld has had more

press briefings than any Secretary of Defense in history, and he has. He has been out there talking to us.

Now does moving his lips and saying the words mean that he is communicating? Well yes he is communicating, but he's communicating a very strict and well thought out message.

MS. SHEPARD: Over and over, right?

MR. McWETHY: You discussed it earlier. Message control is the way that this Administration is trying to communicate what it is trying to do. Reporters don't like message control because we know that the government, that democracy is sloppy, that there are debates within the government and people disagree and we love to write about the disagreements as you are coming to a policy formulation. So there is this inherent tension.

I'd say a couple of things about the way war goes today in the modern battlefield. Never before has the military faced the kind of challenges they now face in trying to conduct a war given the technologies that are available to us as reporters. We have civilian satellite images of bases that they are operating in and we drive them crazy.

During the war in Afghanistan, the Pentagon bought up all of the output of these satellites, but they realized it's not going to work because other companies outside of the United States are putting up their own satellites and we're buying the images and we can tell that things are changing.

International satellite phones, believe it or not, work in Afghanistan. When you were wandering around without the government wanting you there you can see things and I can be on the air with my little satellite phone from Afghanistan. It's astounding.

Then there is the Internet which we discovered in the air war in Kosovo. We couldn't get people on the ground in Kosovo, but all of us had Internet conversations with people in the cities that were being bombed, and there was all of this communication going on.

Then there are other television networks, the famous Al-Jazeera example, where images are coming out whether the U.S. government likes it or not. Their challenge is to figure out how to respond to images of 120 dead bodies stacked up and they say we didn't bomb the village. Well, something happened there, what was it?

So the whole notion of them trying to figure out how to conduct a war and us trying to figure out how to cover it, I think is changing, and in fairness we are, both sides are struggling with how to come to grips with this. No military plan for a major military campaign is absent a plan to deal with the press. In one way or another they do factor it in. Now it may be that their idea of what accommodating us is not satisfactory for us, and usually it's not, but it's always part of their plan.

MR. HESS: To go on to the second part of the question, the whole panel, which had to do

with self-censorship. Some wear their flag pins and some don't but it's clear you're all patriots and how does that enter into the things you cover and the things that you feel perhaps are indeed, you shouldn't write if indeed that's a fact?

MS. SHEPARD: Maybe either Jack or Alan have personal examples. Have you ever felt like gee, how do we handle this in case of patriotism or --

MR. McWETHY: It's not patriotism. In my case it's lives at stake.

There are operations that are underway that I bump into, and if at the highest level of government they can make an argument to me that lives are at stake, I have to consider that and my management considers this, and frankly I don't always tell my management because my great big bureaucracy is very sloppy. Is that patriotism? I don't know.

MS. SHEPARD: No, it's responsible journalism.

MR. McWETHY: It's what I --

MR. MURRAY: that's the point I was making. When I see that flag on somebody's lapel, as much as anything that says to me the First Amendment. Patriotism is not inimical to good reporting. You don't hold back information. You might hold back information because lives of American soldiers are at stake. You don't hold back information because you think it somehow undermines the republic. In fact our duty as reporters is to do the exact opposite.

There is no question that the way the U.S. press covered what happened after September 11th was very different than the way the European press covered it. But of course you have a different audience.

As somebody who has spent the last 20 years working for the *Wall Street Journal*, this is an issue that we struggle with a lot.

I know that the people who pick up that newspaper in the morning by and large, for the most part, are businessmen. So when I'm writing a story, whatever I'm writing about, I have to make sure that I write about the aspects of that story that they care about.

If you're approaching a regulatory issue or something you cover it different. That doesn't mean that I adopt the biases of the people who are reading that paper. There's a difference between knowing your audience and pandering to your audience and that's the difference that I'm trying to get across.

So I think the European papers should have looked different than the American papers, but they shouldn't have been asking any tougher questions than we were asking about how many civilians were dying in Afghanistan and what was happening to the civil liberties of the detainees along the way.

MR. DIONNE: A quick response to the question. When I was in Lebanon a gentleman named William Buckley was kidnapped. We journalists covering the story that day looked at his resume and it was very clear to us that he had been in the CIA. I went back and looked and as far as I could tell not a single journalist, American for sure, I don't know about the rest of the press, but I think it was true abroad as well, just to show how smart we were, wrote in our stories "looking at his resume, he's probably CIA." Why didn't we do that? Well, we didn't do that because we weren't sure it was going to serve any function in addition to just saying what the guy had done; but we did not want to put him in any more danger than he already was. I think John raised an interesting question. whether that's patriotism or a simple respect for an American who's serving the country who's life was at stake.

Now it turns out unfortunately that they already knew from having captured documents at the embassy in Iran in '79 that he was in the CIA and he was tortured and he was killed, but none of us wanted to be responsible for making that happen.

The flip side of, again, the patriotism question, the Marines on the ground in Lebanon knew how vulnerable they were and the military used the press in a very smart way by opening up to us entirely and they sent us -- They told the Marines to be completely honest about how you feel about this. I am convinced that until a bunch of us wrote stories about how vulnerable they felt in the situation they were in, that was to send a message back here. That was in September, in October they were blown up. That is a case where journalists doing their job of gathering information that parts of the government didn't like were in fact, I think if you look at it, were in effect trying to protect the soldiers on the ground. And those two things were not incompatible.

MS. SHEPARD: What E.J. is saying brings up something that a very wise FBI hostage negotiator once said, which is "feed the shark or the shark will feed itself." By opening up the troops to journalists, I think journalists become much more aggressive and hostile when they're told no you can't have this story and they're pushed back. They seem to be much more responsible when they're given the kind of access that they want.

MR. DIONNE: That's true, although in this case I think there was an agenda. In other words, I think it wasn't just to make us feel good. I think they wanted to get back to the Pentagon the message that these guys felt they were in a bad place.

MR. HESS: Alicia, we've come about to the end. You wrote the book. Any final thoughts on journalism at this moment in history?

MS. SHEPARD: It's a thought that I've had and continue to have as being a media critic which is that one of the keys to improving public credibility of the media would be for the media to talk more about how it does its job.

You have just heard several examples of John McWethy saying that they made a decision to, if

lives were at stake they would hold back information. The public doesn't know that. They only see when information is released.

E.J. mentioned William Buckley and the press making a responsible decision to protect his life, to not mention the CIA. The public doesn't know that.

I say this every time I'm asked to speak. If journalists and especially editors and network heads would say more, would explain more how they do their jobs, the tough decisions they make, why they put something on the air, why they don't, I think the public would have a much greater respect for the media.

MR. HESS: My final comment would come from a fellow who I think is a very wise journalist, Jack Fuller, the President of the *Chicago Tribune* who wrote, "It is often said that a society gets the press it deserves. I'm not sure about that, but I know that in the end it gets a press no better than it wants. If the public is led to accept shoddy or dangerous goods, the public will prevail. So it is up to newspapers (call it the media) to make news values compelling enough that people will see in them their deeper interests."



Thank you all for coming. This was a wonderful session, a wonderful way in our 20th attempt to get it right and I think we did and we're most grateful to our panelists. There are books outside to be signed by Alicia. And even if you have to go to the library to get it, it's really worth reading. A wonderful book. Thank you.

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