



The Left's Media Manipulators

[Kenneth R. Timmerman](#)

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During the Cold War, under Ronald Reagan's presidency, the United States government paid special attention to Soviet efforts to manipulate world public opinion against the United States.

They referred to these Soviet efforts as "active measures." A special unit at the United States Information Agency, headed by a top Soviet analyst, Herbert Romerstein, kept track of the most vicious Soviet tricks and exposed them as frauds to the public.

Among the Soviet fabrications were such gems as the claim, which was widely accepted before it was debunked, that the U.S. government had invented the AIDS virus and was spreading it throughout the Third World to decimate non-white populations.

Today, new masters of disinformation have emerged in Iran, Iraq, and the Palestinian territories.

Although the KGB is no longer behind their efforts to manipulate world opinion, a new "corporate" entity has emerged. Its active agents tend to be Palestinians, who have learned the ropes fabricating Israeli "atrocities."

They are now exporting their wares to Iraq, and according to Israeli officials I spoke to recently in Jerusalem, have been personally involved in fabricating U.S. "atrocities" in Haditha and elsewhere in Iraq.

To vehicle their fabrications as fact they frequently turn to left-wing activists working for Human Rights Watch and other NGOs. They are aided by a willing press; from the left-wing *Guardian* and *Independent* dailies in Britain, to the French state-owned France2 Television, now defending its reputation

in a court case for having allegedly fabricated the Mohammad al-Dura "Murder" in 2000 that ushered in the 2nd Intifada and killed off any hopes of a peace agreement between Israel and Palestinians.

The most recent example of this new, KGB-style media manipulation operation hit the big screen on June 9, when international media spread worldwide the image of a bereaved Palestinian girl, wailing on a Gaza beach, after an Israeli artillery shell killed her entire family during a picnic.

The only problem was, it never happened –at least, not as the media first told the story.

A self-styled "military expert" for Human Rights Watch, Marc Garlasco, alleged that an Israeli artillery shell, fired in retaliation for Palestinian rocket attacks into Jewish towns inside Israel, had strayed onto the beach and killed the Palestinian family.

The Israelis agreed a bit too hastily that Garlasco's version may have been true. They had been firing against Palestinian terrorists several hundred meters away, and agreed to launch an investigation. But as the Israeli government investigation proceeded, all the evidence pointed in another direction.

Garlasco, who has no artillery experience or forensics training, has never explained how a 155 mm artillery shell could explode amid sand dunes without leaving a huge crater. Despite this, international media organizations considered him to be

a credible "expert," when he accused Israel of the killings.

[According to a French Media watch organization](#), Media ratings, France 2 television quoted Garlasco as claiming that he had picked up scrapnel on the beach from an Israeli artillery shell.

But even Arab media had reported that the beach had been cleaned of scrapnel by Hamas and Palestinian security officials immediately after the incident.

And Israeli officials told me that the wounded who were eventually transported to Israeli hospitals had been picked clean of easily-accessible scrapnel by Palestinian doctors.

Garlasco also misrepresented a meeting he had with the head of the Israeli military forensics team investigating the incident, Maj. Gen. Meir Klifi.

After a three-hour meeting with Klifi and other Israeli officials in Tel Aviv on June 20, Garasco told the Jerusalem Post that he "came to an agreement with Gen. Klifi that the most likely cause [of the blast] was unexploded Israeli ordnance."

But an Israeli official present at the meeting told me that was not the case. "We agreed that no Israeli shell was fired at the beach that day, and that we could not yet determine what caused the explosion," he said. "It might have been an old Israeli mine, or an unexploded shell. Or it could have been a makeshift explo-

sive device.” The Israelis taped the meeting.

The Israeli government has said that Hamas operated an explosives factory not far from the site of the beachfront accident.

Dr. Gerald Steinberg of Bar Ilan University has been tracking non-governmental organizations operating in Israel for several years. “Human Rights Watch has a political agenda, based on Israel bashing, and Garlasco is not what he purports to be,” he told me in Jerusalem.

An earlier Human Rights Watch report that used Garlasco as a military forensics expert made “unverified and unsubstantiated claims” that Israel had razed Palestinian neighborhoods in Rafah, on the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, he said.

News organizations plastered the photograph of a terror-stricken six-year old girl, grieving the loss of her family on the Gaza beach, on front pages around the world.

But the photograph was staged by Hamas fighters who rushed to the scene after the explosion, new video footage of the immediate aftermath of the attack shows, Israeli officials believe.

Israeli military officials identified a Palestinian photographer with known ties to Hamas from video footage shot in the aftermath of the beachfront tragedy.

The photographer arrived with Hamas fighters after emergency aid workers had covered the bodies and taken them to ambulances, and could be seen giving direction to aid workers to “set up the scene for the photoshoot,” an Israeli official who viewed the footage told me.

The Palestinian photographer coached the girl whose photograph hit the front pages around the world, the official said.

“This is very similar to the Mohammad al Dura case,” the Israeli official said, “where Palestinian stage-managers have created fictional facts that many in the media bought into uncritically.”

The alleged killing of a 6-year old Palestinian boy by Israeli soldiers in September 2000 led to the second Intifada.

An Israeli army investigation, which examined all footage taken by Palestinian camera crews on scene, concluded that it was physically impossible for Israel soldiers to have shot the boy, since they were positioned around a corner.

Mohammad al Dura and his father could be seen looking fearfully at Palestinian gunmen positioned directly across from them just before they were shot, in video footage that was aired on France 2 television.

The Palestinians were now trying to export their “stage-managed massacres” to Iraq, the Israeli official said.

Another Palestinian photographer, Mazen Dana, was killed by U.S. for-

ces in Fallujah in 2004 when American soldiers saw him encouraging Fallujah residents to stage a riot for a camera crew.

The Israelis believe that Dana was just one of several Palestinians who have since gone to Iraq to coach Iraqi insurgents in media manipulation techniques.

U.S. military lawyers defending the Marines on trial for the Haditha "massacre" last November would do well to take a much closer look at

the affiliation of the so-called "witnesses" who shot the incriminating footage of civilian victims after the running house-to-house battles in Haditha between the Marines and anti-U.S. insurgents.

They will find a similar pattern to many of the so-called Israeli "massacres" in Gaza and elsewhere; stage-managed events, planned and coordinated by Palestinian media manipulators, seeking to achieve maximum impact on world public opinion..

*[Kenneth R. Timmerman](#) is the author of *Countdown to Crisis: the Coming Nuclear Showdown with Iran* (Crown Forum, New York), and Executive Director of the *Foundation for Democracy in Iran*.*