

CONCLUSION

This three month analysis of “THE HARTFORD COURANT COVERAGE OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT” is a follow up to last year’s four month chronological review.

Anti-Israel flawed and biased reporting was again found to be pervasive in news articles. The categories of “OMISSION,” “IMAGING” and “DISTORTION” were major offenders, followed by “INACCURATE,” “NO REBUTTAL” and “UNVERIFIED.” Other than “OMISSIONS” there has been no significant improvement when compared to last year’s review.

Word “IMAGING” is chronic. Would anyone consider referring to Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda terrorists that massacred over 3000 innocent Americans as “activists - militants - gunmen - fighters - radicals - combatants - bombers - hard line groups - spiritual/political leaders?” Yet, in the Israeli - Palestinian conflict, they are “imaging” words selected by journalists in describing genocidal Palestinian terrorists and their organizers, who have been responsible for the murder of thousands of innocent Israeli civilians since 1948, whose bodies were often literally torn apart. Not only do “imaging” words sanitize terrorism and distort truth, its repeated chronic use desecrates the memory of the innocent who have been brutally murdered. Other “imaging” adjectives frequently used by journalists reflecting their own bias when reporting news events, are words describing Israel’s temporary incursions into the West Bank and Gaza to round up terrorists, as “occupying,” “storming,” etc. Sharon and other political conservatives are often labeled “right wing,” “hard liners,” or “hawks,” whereas liberals are identified as “moderate” or not labeled at all.

“OMISSION” and “DISTORTION” are the other major segments of unacceptable bias. In news reporting of Palestinian grievances, and at times the opinion of the journalist who should be reporting news objectively, obstacles to peace are Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land (omitting the word controlled) and settlements. Rarely, if ever, is there an Israeli response to these alleged grievances that, in fact, a Palestinian state on virtually all of the West Bank and Gaza was offered by former Prime Minister Ehud Barak. The offer

that would have eliminated “occupation” was rejected by Arafat. Nor is there mention that “occupation” for many Palestinians, such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, PFLP, and other Palestinian groups, is not limited to the West Bank and Gaza, but includes all of Israel.

The following articles are highlighted samplings of unacceptable biased news reporting: August 3; August 7; August 16; August 19; August 22; August 26; September 3; September 7; September 8; September 25; September 26; September 27; September 29; October 8; October 11; October 14; October 22; October 23; October 24; and October 31.

During the development of the three month report, four unedited wire service news articles were obtained and compared with the Courant’s edited version. The following differences were noted:

On August 10 the Associated Press reported:

- **Headline:** *Israeli Official Says Palestinians Must Rein in Terrorism Before Holding Elections*

The Courant headline: *Clashes Resume As Israel Seeks Changes*

The Courant Headline omits the feature of the article, that Palestinians must rein in terrorism before holding elections.

- *Gissin said the Palestinian Authority was responsible for all Palestinians’ hardships and had caused the destruction of infrastructure and prosperity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by encouraging a “campaign of terror” against Israelis.*

This comment that the Palestinian Authority is responsible for Palestinian hardships goes to the very heart of falsely blaming Israel for responding to Palestinian terrorism. It was deleted from the Courant’s edited version of the original wire service.

On August 16 the Associated Press reported:

- **Headline:** *Killing of Palestinian Teenager Sparks Criticism of Israeli Army Policy*

The Courant headline, *“Teen Used As Shield”* is vastly different from the Associated Press headline. The text of the AP unedited version states: *“The army calls it ‘neighbor procedure.’ Critics say the army is using Palestinians as shields.”* The critics are identified much later in the text as the Israeli human rights group B’tselem, who said, *“Palestinians have been used as human shields.”* This is not a statement of fact, but an opinion from B’tselem, a group that is traditionally critical of Israel’s actions and rather silent on Palestinian terrorist activities. The Courant’s headline writer uses the opinion of B’tselem, a false statement of fact, in developing its headline, *“Teen Used As Shield.”*

The Courant did not edit any portion of the original Associated Press story that contains numerous segments of bias. This can be reviewed in PRIMER’s analysis of the August 16 news article.

On August 28, the Associated Press reported:

- *Israel military sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said suspicious figures approached an army outpost. The sources said this was late at night in an area forbidden for Palestinian movement.*

The Courant used the first five paragraphs of the AP text precisely as is, with the exception of the third paragraph noted above, that was edited to read: *“the Israeli military had no comment.”* This revision was taken from another version of the AP wire service article. If the Courant had a space problem, the content of the third paragraph could have been reduced to: *“Israel military sources said suspicious figures approached an army outpost”* – a brief appropriate explanation of Israel’s position.

On August 9th the Courant used a wire service news article from the Chicago Tribune titled *“U.S. Meets with Palestinian Officials.”*

This news article is neutral. However, on August 8 the Associated Press reported a news article titled: *“Sharon calls the P.A. a “terror posse” – repeats he will not talk with the current leaders.”* The text explains Sharon’s position in a televised speech. It also contained numerous pro-Israel statements and included a brief description of the

Chicago Tribune report that was published by the Courant in their August 9 news article. Although the Associated Press is a major wire service for the Courant they bypassed an AP newsworthy story that reflected positively toward Israel and instead selected a neutral news article from the Chicago Tribune.

- **Most troubling is the editing of wire service articles by members of the Courant staff. From a scant random selection of five unedited Associated Press articles, four (80%) contained edited versions that, if published, would have reflected positively for Israel. From our 2001 report several unedited articles that were randomly selected, three articles (over 40%) contained edited deletions that would have reflected positively for Israel. Were the high percentage deletions noted in both the 2001 and 2002 report unintentional or intentional? We don't know, since the sampling was minimal. To dispel any doubt in the future we will do a more extensive study of this problem.**

A summary comparison of PRIMER’s analysis of THE HARTFORD COURANT COVERAGE OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT of the four month report in 2001 with the current three month 2002 report:

CATEGORY SUMMARY	2002 (3 MONTHS)	2001 (4 MONTHS)
Total Occurrence	285	412
Average Monthly Occurrence	95	103
DISTORTION	58 (20.4%)	75 (18.2%)
OMISSION	57 (20.0%)	112 (27.2%)
IMAGING	53 (18.6%)	62 (15.0%)
INACCURATE	26 (9.1%)	49 (11.9%)
NO REBUTTAL	25 (8.8%)	32 (7.8%)
UNVERIFIED/UNSUBSTANTIATED	22 (7.7%)	22 (5.3%)
OPINION	20 (7.0%)	29 (7.0%)
HEADLINE	15 (5.3%)	15 (3.6%)
UNBALANCED	6 (2.1%)	11 (2.7%)
HALF-TRUTH	3 (1.1%)	5 (1.2%)
Neutral Articles	16	N/A

Although the frequency of bias occurrence per month has been reduced in 2002, in the major categories of “DISTORTION” and “IMAGING” there has been an increase (percentage), and in the category of “OMISSION,” a decrease (percentage).

In Editorials, OP-ED’s , and commentary, opinion that is inclined to be biased is acceptable, provided the fundamentals of flawed/biased reporting, such as inaccuracies, omissions, distortions, etc. are not violated. In our review of opinion articles, only glaring violations were analyzed. Many were intensely prejudicial.

We will conclude our review by quoting segments from the “Code of Ethics” published by the Society of Professional Journalists:

- “Truth is our ultimate goal. Objectivity in reporting the news is another goal.”
- “Sound practice makes a clear distinction between news reports and expressions of opinion. News reports should be free of opinion or bias and represent all sides of an issue.”
- “Journalists should be accountable to the public for their reports and the public should be encouraged to voice its grievances against the media. Open dialogue with our readers should be fostered.”
- “Adherence to this code is intended to preserve and strengthen the bond of mutual trust and respect between American journalists and the American people.”