

Captain May – July 15, 2003 (1700 hours) – email:

to Thom Shanker, New York Times

I enjoyed our brief conversation a while ago, especially the couple of minutes of Russian. You speak it well, though like me and all other Americans, you have a heavy accent. I'd like to live in Moscow for a while myself. Let's talk if you get a few minutes about how I can do it on the cheap. You took me back to the old days in military intelligence, the Defense Language Institute and the Cold War. I was an inspector for the 1988 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. Who knows, we may have we met...

Attached is a very long document that will paint the picture you are starting to sketch in the media. By the way, after it's all over, let's talk about the control public affairs had over you. I was trained at the Public Affairs Course in Ft. Benjamin Harrison, after Desert Storm. We officers sat through the classes (mostly boring), and it was pretty clear to us that while we were being taught how to do public affairs *for* the people, in an emergency situation we would naturally use it as psychological operations *against* the people. There was a lieutenant colonel in my department who had worked for years with CNN to learn the ropes. There were a lot of military types who knew how to play media types.

Anyway, here is my specific allegation: I believe the president lied to the American people about the evidence for chemical weapons as well as nuclear weapons, so much so that naïve fools like me believed the Iraqis had the stuff in battlefield concentrations. But I'll bet the general staffs knew there *wasn't* a relevant chemical warfare capacity in Iraq, even though both sides carried protective clothing. If Hussein had possessed such weapons in quantity, he would have used them in the then-90-degree heat. If we had seriously thought he had the weapons, we would not have been so willing to let the winter slip away into the heat because that would have left us way too vulnerable.

I know all this because, back in my enlisted Chemical Corps days, I used to teach NBC courses. You said you'd been in full chemical gear before. You'll remember what I mean. Man, you can't *live* in Baghdad in April in full chemical gear, let alone fight. We had started too late if we were starting into a dirty battlefield. The soldiers were told to be ready for anything, as they always should be, but the high command knew there would be no chemicals. The simple fact is that the Bush folks told us it was going to be a dirty war because Saddam was dirty, and we swallowed it. Saddam only had one chemical of note: oil.

The Bush folks could have it both ways on everything (i.e., lie to the public) as long as we were winning the war. But there is a condign old Arab proverb:

“Success has a thousand fathers, but failure is a bastard.” George W. Bush is about to be unclaimed.

Why not investigate where the break in reality happened? We ought to assume by now that the Bush Team is lying about all its reasons for war, and make the president show us the evidence now that he should have showed us then. He can't, though. He rigged his evidence; he forged his footnotes; he cheated us.

Ask the disaffected generals whom Rumsfeld is bullying. I bet they'll gladly stand up to their boss (behind his back and off record) and let the New York Times pull him down. You can recoup some of the reputation you lost on the Jayson Blair Affair, and I will get the pleasure of seeing the end of the Bush presidency. It has been a disgrace, and I believe I am speaking for all of us in advance when I say that none of us will defend his conduct when it's over. He'll be another Nixon. Shit, that reminds me, I've gotta email the Washington Post with this stuff. I'll just keep pecking at the wall until it tumbles...

If you can't get the heavy hitters to bet their generals' stars, I'll bet the honor of my captain's bars by going on record. Call me an oddity with a theory worth a back pages story, but a search of the Houston Chronicle essay files and find that, based on my experience in intelligence, public affairs and NBC, I have made a few accurate predictions in the realm of intelligence over the years. Here's the stat sheet on my hits:

1. On April 3, the Chronicle essay page carried my “*Visions of Stalingrad: Claim victory in Iraq now,*” in which I made what at the time seemed to be an exorbitant claim that we were going to lose the war in Iraq. The only thing I missed on was the chemicals, but that doesn't count because I got lied to by my own side, and I've paid them back by explaining to you what happened to make me miss on the chemwar.
2. On February 23, the Chronicle essay page carried my “*Don't laugh at duct tape; it saves lives,*” which did a target analysis of the Houston port and petrochemicals district from the point of view of a terrorist and concluded “The Houston area is unquestionably among the top homeland targets for agents of evil.” I didn't do casualty figures, but the feds are using the word “catastrophic” and I think that's conservative. Of course, they didn't make issue their warnings until late June, when they began to specifically refer to the danger peculiar to Houston, and warned of my original scenario. This minor bit of intelligence work should bolster my claim of credibility, since with it I beat the feds by four months on a matter of grave national security. By the way, I still think that hit is coming, and I have my shelter ready. You New York folks don't need to be told that trouble brewed in the Middle East can come home to the USA.

3. On August 12, 1992, the Chronicle essay page carried my “*Success of Desert Storm being judged unfairly*,” in which I defended Bush 41’s decision not to do the dumb thing that Bush 43 did: invade Iraq: “The enlargement of Desert Storm’s object would have taken us back to what we transcended in Desert Storm – the Vietnam quagmire, with its high death tolls, inconclusive results and political divisiveness and home and abroad.”

4. On December 3, 1992, the Chronicle essay page carried my “*Somalia intervention not as simple as it seems*.” In that one I said we were making a big mistake by going into Somalia and that we wouldn’t be able to handle the graphic atrocities. I figured that one out when I saw you media types standing on the beach with cameras to welcome the SEALs to Somalia. “No information discipline,” said Captain May, “so this is going to be a shitty operation,” and I was right again.

What are the odds that in my only four strategic pieces (among hundreds of political, cultural and ghosted pieces) I have never been wrong? They are long, indeed. I have my secrets though and, soldier to soldier, man to man, I’ll share them with you:

1. I hear open-source intelligence, then I use intuition. You’re clearly an intelligent reporter, so you’ll understand this.

2. I only write strategic pieces when *wars* are proximate, like the First and Second Iraqi Wars, and the pending World War III. That’s the only time I’m interested enough to expend the effort to tap sources.

3. I don’t do it for money. You can’t have a muse and be her pimp at the same time, and anyway, work gets in the way of thought.

4. I don’t send it for publication unless I’m sure, otherwise I might embarrass myself or my paper. I don’t care if I go ten years between strategy pieces, so I don’t make predictions every time I get a theory.

5. I try to read, see and hear the American media the same way I used to read, see and hear the old Soviet media. You’d be surprised how often it works.

6. I listen to as much talk radio as I can before I puke from its stupidity. It’s worth it though, because it’s easy propaganda, and tells me just what the Bush Team wants me to know. It takes a lot more thinking to get through the propaganda of the New York Times. (That’s why I say y’all are the best.)

7. One last thing: I never assume that I am more intelligent than the man I speak with for the first time. I have closely worked with a couple of octogenarian WWII veterans who are my Nestors. You can learn the truest things from the strangest people, Thom.

I know my claims are almost too much trouble to check up on, but it's worth it. I'll tell you what, I'll make you my main man at the New York Times and I'll let you in on one more prediction, then you can blow me off at your own peril: We, the people, will soon discover that you media guys either didn't know – or didn't tell – what happened to the 3/7 Cavalry on the Baghdad Airport on the morning of April 5, at c. 0530 a.m., Baghdad time, so I'll tell you:

The 3/7 Cavalry, the lead force for the 3rd Infantry Division, was attacked in force that morning, and suffered heavy casualties. Its later “foray” into Baghdad was really a breakout. The rushed reinforcement of the airport by the 3rd Infantry Division at 0600 supports the case.

Want me to make it easier for you? Ten of our servicemen were getting killed per day *before* the weekend Battle of Baghdad. Ten people a day were getting killed *after* the weekend Battle of Baghdad. So how many people per day got killed *during* the weekend Battle of Baghdad? How high do you think the bell curve should go for those two days, even assuming I'm wrong (which I'm not) about the 3/7 Cavalry? Look at the Pentagon numbers that you have been publishing. They say that *two* people died on the first day of the Battle of Baghdad, and *three* on the second. Oops! Wrong bell curve, ain't it? Did someone get it turned upside down?

You are running (like turtles) to telling the truth that you already know, I guess. Isn't that why, on July 4, you reported about 800 Ft. Stewart wives (most of whom are given calming drugs by Ft. Stewart's physicians) mobbing a colonel who was trying to bullshit them? I guess you let the Bush Team know about the story in advance, though, because by the day the story came out they had already set up a counter-information campaign.

Just hours after your story ran, CNN showed a staged call between a loyal 3rd Infantry Division captain and his loyal wife from Ft. Stewart, Georgia. They talked about lots of spontaneous things – like how proud he was to be in the desert with all the proud soldiers and how proud she was to be at Ft. Stewart waiting with all the other proud spouses. It was straight from Big Brother. Later, the Pentagon announced that they were bringing 900 soldiers home immediately (900 *support* soldiers, that is, who weren't at the Battle of Baghdad, and don't know the whole story).

See, the Pentagon guys wanted the public to think of the 900 happy folks instead of the 800 unhappy folks. It's a little public affairs trick you should remember in the future. Later the Pentagon announced a plan to rotate the whole 3rd Division out by September, but now realizes it can't fade the political heat of the president's

dastardly deed: George is holding the 3rd Infantry Division as POW's for spin control. It's as good a story as Benedict Arnold, if you asked me.

Do you really want all this stuff on your conscience? Tell your editors – especially that new editor in chief who wants to clean your shit up – something from Captain May: Stop fucking around and tell the truth. That is your job, and you do want to keep it, don't you?

Thom, get the CNN tape for April 4 (U.S. date) from 2100 to 2300, (Eastern) watch the whole thing as it started, then infer your own conclusions. Just stop thinking USA and start thinking CCCP, and you will be on track.

And hey, tell that new editor that Captain May sez to count my dead comrades fairly. The dead deserve remembrance, if nothing else – didn't you read your *Iliad*? No? It shows.

The way all you keep juggling the Pentagon death figures at Pentagon direction is *way* too coordinated – a sure sign of inferior propaganda. Call me for friendly pointers if you need to lie to someone else's country, but count on me to catch you if you try to do it to mine. To make a long story short, you are scared to print the real number of (acknowledged) dead, so you have whittled it down for your bosses in the Pentagon, who embedded your asses in the first place. Watch me prove it:

Before Mayday we endured over 100 (acknowledged) dead, then you started counting all over again. In other words don't count the bodies of the prior *no-bodies*. As the post-Mayday number started going to climb towards 100, the Pentagon told you to start suppressing two-thirds of the (acknowledged) post-Mayday dead by saying they died in accidents and not action, thus declaring them *no-bodies*.

You write stuff like “30 US service members have been killed in hostile action since President Bush declared an end to formal hostilities May 1.” It's decent propaganda, worthy of a Pulitzer these days, I suppose, but Captain May sez you are really saying “the president told the Pentagon to tell CentCom to tell us to tell you that there are only 30 dead folks in Iraq, so we did.” Give the Pentagon and the Times another month of good Quicksand War fighting and *all* the dead will be *no-bodies*. $2+2=5$, Thom. It's just that simple, isn't it? I always thought of journalists as captious, tribal and smug, but I was wrong: Y'all are scholars, seeing as how you've been studying up on your Orwell.

The people who run you are far worse than Jayson Blair.

Below is the piece on the 3/7 Cavalry, which I hand-delivered across the South because I knew you Yankees would never tell the truth without some goading. Below that is the book I'm writing while you guys are busy doing valuable

journalism. Now you, the Times and Jayson Blair are all in one chapter together – this chapter in “April Fools, Captain May,” my pending classic. If you have bothered to finish this letter then you will know, but if you haven’t, then it will serve you right to find out later...

Come one, come all, Captain May sez it’s a new Watergate and a new Vietnam all at the same time, but it’s going to unravel at digital speed. First come, first serve. You heard it here first, Thom, or did you?

Captain May

PS: My DLAB score was 156 out of 160. What’s yours? Or if you really want to show me up, look into the 3/7 Cavalry. I’ve offered bounties from \$100 to \$1,000 for the truth (depending on how important the person I was trying to get the truth from was), but in the case of the New York Times I know it will take a little something extra. How about this bounty, which I will email, mail and hand out across this broad land:

“\$1,000 to the reporter who breaks the story of the 3/7 Cavalry, and thirty pieces of silver for his or her parent organization from the megamedia.”

I’m betting on CNN to win the bet, but I’m rooting for you.

PPS: I already told your people about the 3/7 Cavalry cover-up back in April. Like the Washington Post and the Dallas Morning News, you hung up on me. I wonder if anyone else saved and stowed copies of all faxes, emails, phone logs and notes for such historic revelations as we are sure to see? I sure did. I *was* in military intelligence, after all. Ponimayesh? Do svidania.

Captain May