GOOD INTENTIONS

Norms and Practices of Imperial Humanitarianism

The New Imperialism, Volume 4

Edited by
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Front cover image: According to the official caption, this is US Navy Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Porfirio Nino, from Maritime Civil Affairs Team 104, who practices speaking Kinyarwanda, one of the official languages of Rwanda, during a civil observation mission in Bunyamanza, Rwanda, August 7, 2009. (DoD photo by Senior Chief Mass Communication Specialist Jon E. McMillan, US Navy. Public domain.) This particular photograph was also used as the lead image for a 2011 presentation by AFRICOM titled, "United States Africa Command: The First Three Years". On the image the following words were superimposed: "'Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngamantu' I am a person through other people. My humanity is tied to yours.~ Zulu proverb"

Back cover image: According to the official caption, these are US Airmen assigned to the 23rd Equipment Maintenance Squadron, 75th Aircraft Maintenance Unit "downloading" an A-10C Thunderbolt II aircraft during an operational readiness exercise at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, August 4, 2009. (DoD photo by Airman 1st Class Joshua Green, US Air Force. Public domain.)

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CHAPTER 9

A Flickr of Militarization: Photographic Regulation, Symbolic Consecration, and the Strategic Communication of "Good Intentions"

Maximilian C. Forte

> "Wars are won as much by creating alliances, leveraging nonmilitary advantages, reading intentions, building trust, converting opinions, and managing perceptions—all tasks that demand an exceptional ability to understand people, their culture, and their motivation". —Major General Robert H. Scales, Jr. (2004)

> "Every action that the United States Government takes sends a message". —The White House (2009, p. 3)

Picture-perfect good intentions: healing babies, helping mothers, playing ball with boys, laying bricks, parading, working out, loving dogs. If one were to take at face value the US Department of Defense's photographic self-representations (which is what the leaders of the institution explicitly prefer), then one could be forgiven for believing that US military training involves learning basic techniques for skipping rope, holding hands, delivering Christmas gifts, and of course polishing and maintaining daunting machinery. The US Department of Defense (DoD), has created a utopian virtual world through the use

of "social media" such as Flickr (an interactive image-hosting website owned by Yahoo), portraying the US military as, effectively, the world's biggest charitable association if not the world's happiest, but more than that: as a representative of the shared interests and common values that bind diverse peoples to the US. Under the presidency of Barack Obama, the *intended* effects of communication and "engagement" could be summarized as creating an impression of the US as a force for global good, in the minds of people around the world. These intended effects on foreign audiences involved having them recognize areas of "mutual interest" with the US; believing that the US "plays a constructive role in global affairs"; and, seeing the US as a "respectful partner" in efforts to "meet complex global challenges" (White House, 2009, p. 6). This is one way to keep memories of anti-colonialism at bay (Mooers, 2006, p. 2).

This chapter is based on a study of the complete collection of photographs uploaded to Flickr by the DoD, totaling 9,963 images spanning the years from 2009 to 2014.[1] One should note that the DoD as such is just one institutional front in the US military's overall social media presence. Each of the US armed services—the Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Army—has its own individual Flickr account (in addition to many other social media accounts). The DoD was chosen as the focus here as its image database is meant to be comprehensive of all of the armed services, with some degree of overlap (the same image uploaded to different armed services' accounts) and yet somewhat more manageable in size than some of the others (and smaller than all of the others combined). The analysis presented herein is not a quantitative one, nor does it offer any assumptions about the nature of the "audience(s)" for these images. Instead, by keeping in mind that photographs are the "products of specific intentionality" (Banks, 2001, p. 7), what is offered is a reading of intent and thematic structure, both from the concatenation of images produced to uphold certain humanitarian and globalist narratives, and from a reading of a plethora of

documents outlining the social media and general communication strategies of the foreign policy apparatus of the US government and the US military in particular. Over 40 such documents were studied, and two dozen of those are cited here. A sample of 57 photographs is also presented.

Keeping in mind the damaging media exposure of the Vietnam war years, military control over the images of war distributed to the public has gone a distant step beyond the practice of "embedding" journalists (as during the second Iraq war), to directly producing its own media materials. However, that control can never be total. As in the case of the Abu Ghraib torture photographs, or the "Collateral Murder" video published by WikiLeaks in 2010 (both of which have been featured and discussed in previous volumes in this series), reality as constructed through pictorial representation always necessitates a *strategy* on the part of the military. If the realities of US military power asserted around the globe had been as simple and uncontroversial as the DoD Flickr account would like to suggest, then there would be no need for a strategy, and indeed no need for this social media practice. It would all be a matter of unquestionable fact that requires no defence. If anything it seems that the US military's media strategists are still painfully aware of the impact of Abu Ghraib, to the point of producing the *exact opposite*. However, in producing the exact opposite in order to shore up the credibility of the institution's image, it thus strains it, thus inviting further critical scrutiny. Before one might interject that this argument renders Pentagon media practice as flawed regardless of what it does, that would be a mistaken interpretation. This chapter is not so much about what the US military achieves with photography, as much as it is about *how* it does it, *why*, what this reveals about the cultural practice of US military media, and what the US military clearly chooses *not* to do and how that reflects on the actuality of its role in a post-liberal political formation that nonetheless still proclaims its democratic credentials.

Photographs, *contra* US military strategizing, do not speak for themselves. The patterns to be found among these thousands of images are in fact quite regular (because they were meant to be), and make a series of clear points. These photographs tend to represent the US military as a humanitarian, charitable organization, working among many communities around the world that are populated, for example, by children who are only too happy to be vaccinated and to skip rope with US soldiers. Female US soldiers have smiling close encounters with little girls, or cradle babies. When not displaying the pure, motive-less good intentions of the US military as big brother/baby-sitter for the world, the photographs produce a celebration of the awesome power and sophistication of US military technology: jets flying in formation, shiny drones illuminated at night like alien UFOs, or lines of massive ships at sea like armoured knights heading out on a crusade. Deterrence and "counter-terrorism" are thus built-in, sometimes with a smile.

Yet, there are virtually no images of actual combat, that is, the intended purpose of US military personnel and weaponry. Indeed, the US military ordinarily uses cameras in combat situations producing the kind of "COMCAM" imagery that is useful for determining targets and doing battle damage assessments—but this is not the kind of imagery present in the Pentagon's Flickr portfolio. The photographs here instead collectively portray a world rendered frictionless by the speed and ubiquity of American power and technology—without showing the battle effects of that power. In addition, by being tenuously emptied of political overtones, the photographs produce a political effect, for political purposes—they do not tell the horror stories of war, of blood shed and lives lost, of destruction and grief, but rather portray something like a birthday party. Indeed, gift giving is a central feature of most of the photographs featuring US military personnel and citizens of other nations.

Rather than being accountable to the public which funds it, the US military instead refuses to tell the truth of war, and the truth of its actions, and this in itself is a lesson about an institution that is presumably under civilian control in a democracy. The military's devotion to its own "mission" is singular and exclusive. It also reveals a military institution that possesses its own sense of its *raison d'être*, one bent on determining what will be its public answerability (if any).

The argument presented here is *not* that the photographs are "fake," "staged," or altogether "unreal". The staging is quite real, but real in many subtle and somewhat abstract ways than are normally considered, and not always staged in a straightforward sense. They are selective, partial, and framed. The dominant cultural prejudice arising from positivist methodology, which treats photographs as objective and neutral documentary records, is thus not being endorsed here. Instead, the understanding here is that as products of a particular culture, photographs are only perceived as real thanks to the cultural conventions in which we have been trained: "they only appear realistic because we have been taught to see them as such" (Wright, 1999, p. 6). The question then becomes one of interpreting the photograph as a structured record, neither an impartial one, nor merely a record of "the Other," and yet not one whose meanings can be restricted by the authorizations and regulations of the Pentagon. The photograph is instead treated here as, "a document which often reveals as much (if not more) about the individuals and society which produced the image than it does about its subject(s)" (Wright, 1999, p. 4).

The analytical methodology applied here follows the basic outlines found in Wright's (1999) *The Photography Handbook*, also in the works of visual anthropologists such as Banks (2001) and Pink (2001), and it borrows some of the conceptual analyses of Bourdieu (1991, 1999) and Ortner (1973). Following Wright's combination of realism, formalism, and expressionism, we examine the aesthetic intentions of the Pentagon's photographs by respectively

looking *through* photographs (the subjects that the photographer purports to record), looking *at* the photographs (the methods and forms of depicting the select contents), and looking *behind* the photographs to consider what motivated their taking and the viewpoints embedded in the photographic act (Wright, 1999, pp. 38–39). In particular, we consider both the "indexical" and "symbolic" facets of the photographic collection, that is to say, what is traced out by the photographs as documents of something, and what is the intended representation of what is selectively shown (Wright, 1999, pp. 71–72). We analyse both the internal and external narratives of the photographs, that is, both contents and contexts of production (Banks, 2001, pp. 11, 12). Slightly modifying Wombell (as quoted in Wright, 1999, p. 72), the methodology in this chapter holds that "each image is an interpretation of a situation," and is not *just* its "objective representation".

The National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication

> "The U.S. is engaged in an international struggle of ideas and ideologies, which requires a more extensive, sophisticated use of communications and public diplomacy programs to gain support for U.S. policies abroad. To effectively wage this struggle, public diplomacy must be treated—along with defense, homeland security and intelligence—as a national security priority in terms of resources".— US Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (US Department of State, 2007, p. 11)

Our first task is to understand how the Pentagon and other agencies of the US government think about information, communication, and the media. The presence of various branches of the US military in multiple in social network sites, such as Flickr, broadly falls under various established directives, which supply us with not just the proce-

dures and bureaucracy responsible for this communication, but also the logic and strategy.

The first and most comprehensive mandate, post-9/11, came from the State Department during the last presidential term of George W. Bush in the form of the "U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication" (US Department of State [DoS], 2007), and from the Department of Defense with its "Execution Roadmap for Strategic Communication" (DoD, 2006b).[2] The State Department's National Strategy began by framing itself in terms of the overall US National Security Strategy, comprising eight major goals:

> "➢ To champion human dignity;
> ➢ To strengthen alliances against terrorism;
> ➢ To defuse regional conflicts;
> ➢ To prevent threats from weapons of mass destruction;
> ➢ To encourage global economic growth;
> ➢ To expand the circle of development;
> ➢ To cooperate with other centers of global power; and
> ➢ To transform America's national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century". (DoS, 2007, p. 2)

Underneath these, "public diplomacy" and "strategic communication" (more on these in the next section) are mentioned as key programs, whose activities should,

> "➢ Underscore our commitment to freedom, human rights and the dignity and equality of every human being;
> ➢ Reach out to those who share our ideals;
> ➢ Support those who struggle for freedom and democracy; and
> ➢ Counter those who espouse ideologies of hate and oppression". (DoS, 2007, p. 2)

"We seek to be a partner for progress, prosperity and peace around the world," the document proudly declared, and presumably the strategy outlined therein was designed to showcase these self-proclaimed virtues (DoS,

2007, p. 3). Confusingly, the document then outlined three further strategic objectives—a profusion of lists, most of which tend to repeat key themes already presented but in different words. These strategic objectives can be summarized as: 1) projecting "American values" by offering a "positive vision of hope and opportunity"; 2) marginalizing "violent extremists" in order to defend the values cherished by the "civilized"; and, 3) working to "nurture common interests and values" between Americans and peoples around the globe (DoS, 2007, p. 3). Along with the three strategic objectives, three strategic audiences are specified in this strategic document: 1) "key influencers"—which simply means influential public figures who usually help to shape public opinion or some portion of it; 2) "vulnerable" groups, and here the document specifies youths, women and girls, and Indigenous Peoples or other ethnic minorities; and, 3) "mass audiences" (DoS, 2007, pp. 4–5). Even so, "counterterrorism communications" were still listed as the exclusive focus of a new "Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) on Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication" (DoS, 2007, p. 9).

The National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication also devotes considerable attention to the use of images. Here the State Department called on all government agencies to gather "compelling stories (including pictures and videotape if possible) of how American programs are impacting people's lives," which is in fact a key theme in the sets of photographs analysed for this project. Those persons abroad receiving health care from the US was a specified focus, among others. The State Department also emphasized the need for "a database of digital images and videos" as well as videos that "represent mainstream Muslim views and rejection of terrorists/extremism". To aid all agencies of the government involved in such work, "best practices" would need to be identified and shared (DoS, 2007, p. 10).

"Use good pictures and images"—here the National Strategy goes a step further in specifying the kinds of images to be recorded, and providing details on how the im-

ages are to be produced, framed, and selected. What are the "good pictures and images"? These are, as the document explained: "Well-choreographed pictures and images [that] convey emotion and/or action as well as a convincing story" (DoS, 2007, p. 26)—hence, staged yet real. Then specific guidelines are offered on how to produce such images—and we can see a lasting imprint of this National Strategy in many of the Pentagon's Flickr photographs taken overseas:

"
- Before any event, think through a desired picture that would best capture and tell the story of the event.
- Where should the photo be taken—what is the background? The background should help convey where you are—the country, the city, the building, the environment. Should there be a flag in the background? Is there a banner behind or in front of the podium? Is a recognizable part of the building visible? What part of the building is recognizable? E.g., capture I.M. Pei's Pyramid as your background for an event at the Louvre rather than an unrecognizable column inside.
- Who should be in the picture? The principal along with those who are the focus of the event should be in the picture to help convey the story. Musicians? Youth? Government officials? E.g., if the Ambassador and State Minister for Education are speaking at a Fulbright event, make sure to get shots not just of the officials speaking but with Fulbright grantees in the photo.
- What is the action or the emotion? Are they dancing? Talking? Listening? Learning? Enthusiastic? Include props if that helps convey the story. E.g., if the Ambassador is meeting with 4th graders to give out books, the photo should include students holding the books, youth reading, pointing to a picture in the book, etc.
- The photographer should think through the location for the photo with all of the technical considerations in mind—not shooting into the sun, not in front of reflective glass or a mirror, not in shade or shadows, etc. The key people who need to be included in the shot should be identified.

> ➢ Look for the action or emotion. For action shots, get a tight shot rather than wide. A tight shot will convey more emotion in addition to the story. E.g., for a U.S. military big band in town with swing dancers, rather than capturing the whole crowd, pick out one couple in full enthusiastic swing dancing in front of a large U.S. flag and banner of the event so the country and occasion are conveyed". (DoS, 2007, p. 26)

Already then, there can be no doubt that the photographs we will encounter are, by definition, staged: choreographed to produce a predetermined effect. To keep from reminding viewers that these photographs are an artistic production, the artist must be kept out of the scene—hence the injunction above against taking photographs in front of mirrors or reflective glass. This is not reflexive art; this is instead the eye of god.

The Internet is also featured in the National Strategy, especially as a way to reach "youth audiences" and in recognition of a "dramatically different media landscape" (DoS, 2007, p. 32). "Internet outreach," using all of the major available web-media, was to be embraced "to share U.S. foreign policy messages with audiences around the world" (DoS, 2007, p. 32). The Pentagon's Flickr use thus represents a convergence of various approaches outlined in this National Strategy, especially concerning photography and the Internet.

Similarly, with respect to the Pentagon's own plans for "strategic communication" (DoD, 2006b), the military reasoned that, "conflict takes place in a population's cognitive space, making sheer military might a lesser priority for victory in the Information Age" (Borg, 2008, p. vii). Communication thus became an explicit part of a global counter-insurgency strategy, as Borg further explains: "the public information environment is a key battleground" (2008, p. vii). This is how the military sees that battleground:

> "Some military leaders have labeled the current operating conditions as Fourth Generation Warfare—a

> term that refers to an enemy that operates in a virtual realm and uses mass media cleverly, effectively making the media the terrain. Personal electronic devices such as cell phones, digital cameras, video recorders, and various kinds of computers have created a new intersection between the individual and the mass media. The public can no longer be viewed as passive information consumers: the public now more than ever actively contributes to the information environment via World Wide Web sites, blogs, and text messaging, to name only a few". (Borg, 2008, p. vii)

An interesting set of contradictions, gaps, and silences are present in the text of this National Strategy, around the basic question of *why* public diplomacy is even needed. On the one hand, the National Strategy repeatedly asserted that "diverse populations" of the world share "our common interests and values" (DoS, 2007, p. 12 also p. 3)—which, if true, raises the question of what makes them "diverse," among other questions raised below. Yet, there is also uncertainty: the same document asked for audience analysis, "so we can better understand how citizens of other countries view us and what values and interests we have in common," which suggests that the assertion of commonality came before the evidentiary substance that was needed to support it (DoS, 2007, p. 10). On the other hand, the National Strategy emphasized that, "public diplomacy is, at its core, about making America's diplomacy public and communicating America's views, values and policies in effective ways to audiences across the world" (DoS, 2007, p. 12). If there are common values and shared interests to begin with, then why is there a need for public diplomacy? The document implicitly responds by saying that the policy is about "reminding" different populations of the values they share with the US, values that at the outset the document listed as a belief that,

> "all individuals, men and women, are equal and entitled to basic human rights, including freedom of speech, worship and political participation….all people deserve

> to live in just societies that protect individual and common rights, fight corruption and are governed by the rule of law". (DoS, 2007, pp. 2, 12)

Leaving aside the question about why these populations need "reminding" (no evidence of their memory lapses is provided), the next question is: if there is uncertainty, as the document itself suggests, that these values are indeed shared and held in common, then how would public diplomacy *change* that difference? Also, if the "violent extremists" are an *extreme*, and marginal, then why does the US seem to feel such a need to prove its own value?

Pentagon Media Activity: Public Affairs and Strategic Communication

> "The battle of the narrative is a full-blown battle in the cognitive dimension of the information environment, just as traditional warfare is fought in the physical domains (air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace)….a key component of the 'Battle of the Narrative' is to succeed in establishing the reasons for and potential outcomes of the conflict, on terms favorable to your efforts. Upon our winning the battle of the narrative, the enemy narrative doesn't just diminish in appeal or followership, it becomes irrelevant. The entire struggle is completely redefined in a different setting and purpose".—US Joint Forces Command (2010, pp. xiii–xiv)

A key part of the broader bureaucratic organization behind the communications strategies under consideration involves the role of Public Affairs (PA) Operations, responsible for "communicating information about military activities to domestic, international, and internal audiences," which the Pentagon also refers to as "community engagement activities" (DoD, 2008, pp. 1, 9). PA Operations also indicates that its efforts are designed,

> "to assure the trust and confidence of [the] U.S. population, friends and allies, deter and dissuade

> adversaries, and counter misinformation and disinformation ensuring effective, culturally appropriate information delivery in regional languages". (DoD, 2008, p. 2)

PA Operations also work to support "civil-military operations" and what the Pentagon calls "public diplomacy" (which, confusingly, the Pentagon has subsumed under the definition of "public affairs" above). "Civil-military operations" are defined by the Pentagon as activities that "establish, maintain, influence, or exploit relations between military forces, indigenous populations, and institutions, by directly supporting the attainment of objectives relating to the reestablishment or maintenance of stability within a region or host nation" (DoD, 2010a, p. 37). "Public diplomacy" is officially defined as, first,

> "those overt international public information activities of the United States Government designed to promote United States foreign policy objectives by seeking to understand, inform, and influence foreign audiences and opinion makers, and by broadening the dialogue between American citizens and institutions and their counterparts abroad,"

and second,

> "civilian agency efforts to promote an understanding of the reconstruction efforts, rule of law, and civic responsibility through public affairs and international public diplomacy operations". (DoD, 2010a, pp. 214–215; DoD, 2012, p. xvi)

The US military also plays a supporting role to the State Department which leads the US government's "strategic communication" effort, and it does so through information operations (IO),[3] public affairs, and public diplomacy (US Joint Forces Command [JFC], 2010, p. xii):

> "Strategic communication (SC) refers to focused USG efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of USG interests, policies, and

> objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with and leveraging the actions of all instruments of national power. SC combines actions, words, and images to influence key audiences". (DoD, 2011, p. II-9).

"Synchronized" is a key term here, as it informs us that communication was to be conceived as an instrument of state power, alongside political, economic, and military power. The Pentagon came to see "strategic communication" as a process: "Strategic communication essentially means sharing meaning (i.e., communicating) in support of national objectives (i.e., strategically)" (DoD, 2009, p. 2). The overall purposes of "strategic communication" are listed as:

> "• Improve U.S. credibility and legitimacy;
> • Weaken an adversary's credibility and legitimacy;
> • Convince selected audiences to take specific actions that support U.S. or international objectives;
> • Cause a competitor or adversary to take (or refrain from taking) specific actions". (DoD, 2009, p. 2)

For its part, the White House under Barack Obama described "strategic communication" as "the synchronization of our words and deeds as well as deliberate efforts to communicate and engage with intended audiences" (White House, 2009, p. 1), thus some notion of "engagement" came to be built into the process.[4]

Anthropology and Sociology have also been identified as key areas of expertise needed for "mapping the cognitive dimension," in terms that echo the justifications for launching the U.S. Army's Human Terrain System. The Joint Forces Command articulated this "need" as follows: because "cognitive factors can vary significantly between locality, cultures, [and] operational circumstances," the military may need to "leverage outside experts" who possess "unique skill sets not normally found in a military organization". The military would then have these experts "support joint intelligence preparation of the operational

environment, planning, and assessment, either by deploying them forward or through 'reachback'" (JFC, 2010, pp. xv–xvi).

In terms of the military bureaucracy charged with provision and supervision of images, in 2007 the Defense Media Activity (DMA) was created, working under the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ASD[PA]) (DoD, 2007a). The DMA was charged with developing, acquiring, managing, providing, and archiving,

> "a wide variety of information products to the entire DoD family (Active, Guard, and Reserve Military Service members, dependents, retirees, DoD civilians, and contract employees) and external audiences through all available media, including: motion and still imagery; print; radio; television; Web and related emerging Internet, mobile, and other communication technologies". (DoD, 2007a, pp. 2, 3)

The DMA was thus also responsible for providing the US public with, "high quality visual information products, including Combat Camera imagery depicting U.S. military activities and operations" (DoD, 2007a, p. 2). The DMA would provide education for both civilian and military personnel engaged in public affairs, broadcasting, and "visual information career fields" (DoD, 2007a, pp. 2, 3), in part through the Defense Information School—thus ensuring that the standards established by the military could have a long-term impact, extending beyond the military once its trained personnel joined the civilian workforce (see also DoD, 2004). Significantly, where the Internet is concerned, the DMA was placed in charge of coordinating and integrating,

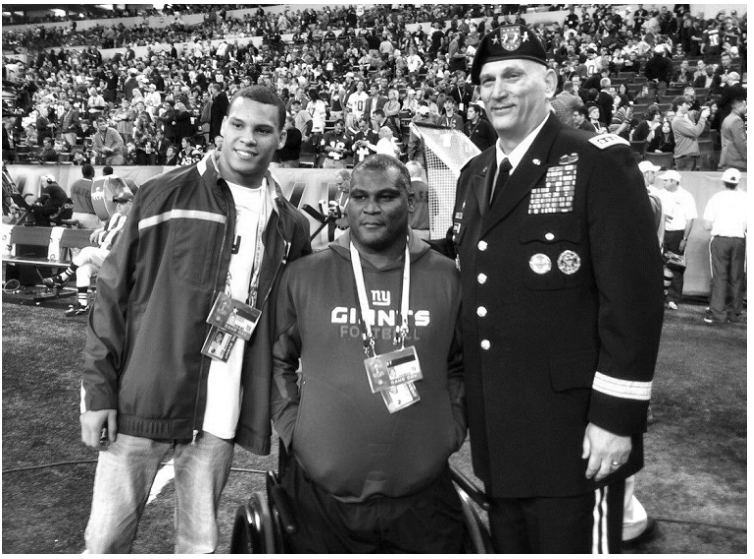
> "the utilization of motion and still imagery, print, radio, television, Web and new technology products in a manner that most effectively relates and distributes DoD and Military Service themes and messages to their target audiences through conventional and new technology multi-platform distribution vehicles". (DoD, 2007a, p. 3)

With specific reference to the Internet, in 2007 the Deputy Secretary of Defense issued a policy on "Interactive Internet Activities," that described the purpose of such activities: "Interactive Internet activities are an essential part of DoD's responsibilities to provide information to the public, shape the security environment, and support military operations" (DoD, 2007b, p. 1). Public affairs activities and products, as described by the policy, are intended to, "shape emotions, motives, reasoning, and behaviors of selected foreign entities" (DoD, 2007b, p. 1)—which is almost identical to the military's definition of "psychological operations" (DoD, 2006a, p. 10).

A more recent document concerning online media communication was a memorandum issued in 2010 by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, titled, "Responsible and Effective Use of Internet-based Capabilities," that spoke specifically of "social networking services" as "integral to operations across the Department of Defense" (DoD, 2010b, p. 1). The official presence of the Pentagon as a whole, and its various armed services, were the focus of the directive. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs was charged with providing the policy for, "news, information, photographs, editorial, community relations activities, and other materials distributed via external official presences" (DoD, 2010b, p. 8). This directive itself followed from twelve previous directives on public communications, issued over a period of twenty-eight years, each of which refers to other sets of directives, memoranda, and handbooks. These directives, Internet-specific as they are, have to be understood within a broader framework of what the US government terms strategic communication, public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations, all of which are ultimately designed to target foreign audiences in order to change their perceptions of the US and the presence of US agencies in their countries. To some extent, domestic audiences are also targeted. Again, the authority in providing guidance fell to Public Affairs.

Exemplifying some of the structure, planning, codification and regulation of the military's activity in social media is a document titled, "U.S. Army Social Media Strategy, February 4–10, 2012". It does not spell out broad strategy (which would be redundant) as much as it is a schedule of online activities to be undertaken in a given period across various Army websites (US Army, 2012), in line with what the Army calls "best practices" (US Army, 2009b). Each day has a designated theme: "Soldiers, Super Bowl 2012, Military Working Dogs, Military Occupational Speciality Feature, Equipment, Army Investment, Fill in the Blank Friday," and each theme involves a schedule of online actions to be performed at different hours throughout the day. There is little room here for individual improvisation. The "top-line army message," regardless of the day's theme, was constant for that period: "The strength of our Army is our Soldiers. The strength of our Soldiers is our families. This is what makes us Army Strong". What is also important to note is that it seems a large part of the intended audience for this particular schedule consisted of soldiers and their families on base. Nonetheless, some of this is also directed to a broader, unspecified public, with "engagement questions" such as: "What's the first thing that comes to mind when you see 'big guns'?" This is followed by a series of predetermined messages to be posted to Twitter, and the uploading of a photograph to Flickr. There are also particular stories to spotlight, and these are the same for each day of this period: "African-Americans in the Army, Stories of Valor, Warrior Care News, Year in Photos (2011)". Thus, for the online US Army activity scheduled for Sunday, February 5, 2012 (Super Bowl Sunday), and combining three spotlight messages (African-Americans, stories of valor, warrior care), we have the following photograph (Figure 9.1) in the US Army's Flickr account:

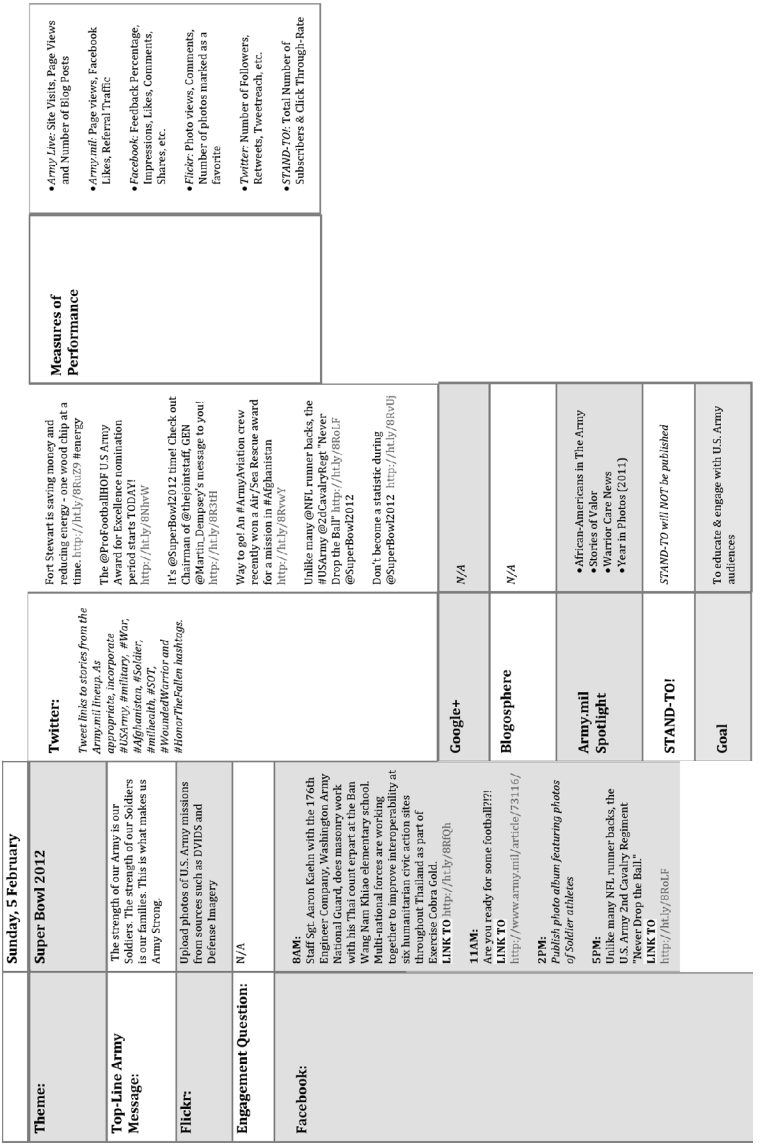
Figure 9.1: Super Bowl Meeting



Official caption: "Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno [right] meets with Col. Greg Gadson [centre] at the Super Bowl in Indianapolis, Feb. 5, 2012". (Photograph: US Army).

Thus the Army produced a feature photo to capitalize on a major sporting event, into which it inserted a General, while also spotlighting Colonel Gregory D. Gadson who was himself a football player, a decorated veteran, and a garrison commander, and who was also injured by a bomb in Iraq, thus losing both of his legs. He is also African-American. The photograph could not have been better planned and choreographed to meet all of the day's scheduled objectives (see Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2: US Army Online Message Schedule



	Sunday, 5 February			
Theme:	**Super Bowl 2012**	**Twitter:** *Tweet links to stories from the Army.mil lineup. As appropriate, incorporate #USArmy, #military, #War, #Afghanistan, #Soldier, #milhealth, #SOT, #WoundedWarrior and #HonorTheFallen hashtags.*	Fort Stewart is saving money and reducing energy - one wood chip at a time. http://bit.ly/8RuJZ9 #energy The @ProFootballHOF U.S Army Award for Excellence nomination period starts TODAY! http://bit.ly/8NhvW It's @SuperBowl2012 time! Check out Chairman of @thejointstaff, GEN @Martin_Dempsey's message to you! http://bit.ly/8K3tH Way to go! An #ArmyAviation crew recently won a #AirSea Rescue award for a mission in #Afghanistan http://bit.ly/8RwvY Unlike many @NFL runner backs, the #USArmy @2dCavalryRegt "Never Drop the Ball" http://bit.ly/8RoLF @SuperBowl2012 Don't become a statistic during @SuperBowl2012 http://bit.ly/8RvOJ	**Measures of Performance** • *Army Live:* Site Visits, Page Views and Number of Blog Posts • *Army.mil:* Page views, Facebook Likes, Referral Traffic • *Facebook:* Feedback Percentage, Impressions, Likes, Comments, Shares, etc. • *Flickr:* Photo views, Comments, Number of photos marked as a Favorite • *Twitter:* Number of Followers, Retweets, Tweetreach, etc. • *STAND-TO!:* Total Number of Subscribers & Click Through-Rate
Top-Line Army Message:	The strength of our Army is our Soldiers. The strength of our Soldiers is our Families. This is what makes us Army Strong.			
Flickr:	Upload photos of U.S. Army missions from sources such as DVIDS and Defense Imagery			
Engagement Question:	N/A			
Facebook:	**8AM:** Staff Sgt. Aaron Koehn with the 176th Engineer Company, Washington Army National Guard, does masonry work with his Thai count epart at the Ban Wang Nam Khiao elementary school. Multi-national forces are working together to improve interoperability at six humanitarian civic action sites throughout Thailand as part of Exercise Cobra Gold. **LINK TO** http://bit.ly/8RtQh **11AM:** Are you ready for some football?!?! **LINK TO** http://www.army.mil/article/73116/ **2PM:** *Publish photo album featuring photos of Soldier athletes* **5PM:** Unlike many NFL runner backs, the U.S. Army 2nd Cavalry Regiment "Never Drop the Ball." **LINK TO** http://bit.ly/8RoLF	**Google+**	*N/A*	
		Blogosphere	*N/A*	
		Army.mil Spotlight	• African-Americans in The Army • Stories of Valor • Warrior Care News • Year in Photos (2011)	
		STAND-TO!	*STAND-TO will NOT be published*	
		Goal	To educate & engage with U.S. Army audiences	

The grid of scheduled US Army messages to go online for Super Bowl Sunday, February 5, 2012.

This particular document flows from how the US Army, in particular, thinks through and strategizes about communication involving photographs, in broad terms, which in turn flows from the other documents already discussed.

What it also reveals is the level of precise planning, linearity in structure, and programmed messaging. This could all be fed just as easily to a computer. Subjectivity simply does not exist here, except as a quality of the expected manipulability of audiences' emotional state of being. Otherwise, between the military's positivist approach to photography, and its expectation that audiences take images at face-value, subjectivity is clearly the Achilles Heel of military doctrine and practice.

Finally, most of the military documents consulted for this project tended to emphasize standardization and unity of effort, "interagency" collaboration, with "joint approaches," and so forth—the desire for a functioning monolith of total integration exists, however, because a deeper reality denies it. As Borg (2008, p. ix) observed:

> "At face value, the services' interdependence of roles and missions makes it easy for the individual military services to support the DoD's strategic mission goals: victory is a shared claim. However, at a deeper level, the services are in constant competition with each other for limited budgetary authority, recruits and development of roles, missions, and their associated weapons systems. To this end, the services must out-communicate one another—successfully telling their stories to Congress, the American people, and their own forces."

Words, Deeds, and Perceptions: The Pitfalls of Strategic Communication

> "Don't leave false illusions behind
> Don't cry cause I ain't changing my mind
> So find another fool like before
> Cause I ain't gonna live anymore believing
> Some of the lies while all of the signs are deceiving".—Alan Parsons Project, "Eye in the Sky"

While the US Army may think that a picture is worth a thousand words (US Army, 2010b, p. 21), the reality of

"strategic communication" is its quiet struggle with the fact that *anything* can produce a message, that any military action can be worth "a thousand" more words than any photograph chosen for display by the US Army. In a report produced by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO), there was recognition of this from the Pentagon itself:

> "The Department of Defense (DOD) recognizes that everything it does communicates a message, from having soldiers distribute soccer balls in conflict zones to scheduling joint exercises off the coasts of foreign nations. However, DOD officials stated that the department has struggled for several years to strategically align its actions with the messages it intends to communicate to foreign audiences—an effort that is also referred to as strategic communication". (GAO, 2012, p. 1)

In recognition of the limits of understanding "the message" purely in terms of an objectified piece of information, the Pentagon began to shift its emphasis, with a decreasing focus on "strictly 'informational' activities," while viewing strategic communication more as an, "adaptive, decentralized process of trying to understand selected audiences thoroughly, hypothesizing physical or informational signals that will have the desired cognitive effect on those audiences" (DoD, 2009, p. 3). Indeed, it recognized that, "all DoD activities have a communication and informational impact" (DoD, 2009, p. 3).

The White House in 2009 dictated that "active consideration of how our actions and policies will be interpreted by public audiences," should form "an organic part of decision-making" (White House, 2009, p. 2). Does the Pentagon leadership realistically think that the objectives of strategic communication are being achieved, especially in terms of integrating likely "perception effects" into planning? The answer is: "The strategic communication process is always a work in progress, one that is inherently aspirational in its goals" (DoD, 2009, p. 9). There could be a

more blunt answer. From a certain standpoint, the entire strategic communication effort is inherently and ultimately doomed: it will likely only win the approval of those who already support US foreign policy and its military interventions. The Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, wished to ensure that, "potential communication impacts of both kinetic and non-kinetic actions—their likely 'perception effects'—are assessed and planned for *before* the actions are taken," and to make sure that, "our words and our actions are consistent and mutually reinforcing (closing the 'say-do' gap)," while examining "soft power" as an equal priority in consideration with "hard power alternatives" (DoD, 2009, p. 3). Regarding the "synchronization of words and deeds," the Pentagon sets this as a goal: "to integrate foreign audience perceptions into policy making, planning, and operations at every level" (GAO, 2012, pp. 2, 9; also, DoD, 2010d; White House, 2009). However, if it sincerely and seriously wished to pursue this, what would happen if likely "foreign audience reactions" to the US attacking another nation turned out to be overwhelmingly negative? Would the US cease and desist, afraid that its actions could contradict its stated intentions? Instead, what the Pentagon immediately does is decontextualize and narrow "audience reactions," reducing the discussion to the audience reacting to a specific, intentional communication act from the US military—such as a photograph, thus reversing its own policy above. The Pentagon thus offers these steps (GAO, 2012, p. 2):

> "1. Identify likely audiences and desired audience perceptions for DoD communication.
> 2. Identify the audiences' probable reactions to that DoD communication.
> 3. Identify and make plans to address the gap between what DoD wants to communicate and what the key audience is likely to perceive.
> 4. Implement, monitor, and assess; makes changes to the plan if needed".

However, even at the level of defining what strategic communication actually means, there is marked variation and disagreement among US military and diplomatic officials, often speaking past each other because they implicitly refer to different things (GAO, 2012, p. 12).

Realism or Iconography? The Pentagon's Implicit Theory of Visual Representation

US military documents make it quite clear that, for the military, a photograph is a straightforward, truthful, and impartial record of reality as it appeared in front of the camera. However, at the same time these documents suggest that some images might be used as "enemy propaganda" whereas other images are safe in that they "support the mission" of the US military. Here I wish to outline what the US military has made available for the public record about its social media strategies, and in particular about its "Flickr strategy".

Supporting the military's mission and telling a story are the dual themes of the Pentagon's visual media strategy. To begin, the Pentagon has a definition for "visual information," which consists of:

> "one or more of the various visual media, with or without sound, to include still photography, motion picture photography, video or audio recording, graphic arts, visual aids, models, display, visual presentation services, and the support processes". (DoD, 2008, p. 9)

Specific reference to a strategy pertaining to photography and the use of Flickr, comes from the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs Online and Social Media Division (US Army, 2010a). The audience is defined as a global one, in addition to soldiers and their families, and veterans (US Army 2010a, p. 1). While the proclaimed aim of the Flickr account is to provide "a visual story of the U.S. army," the more specific points in the document suggest a narrower objective. In particular the Chief of Public Affairs states:

"the Social Media Team will only post content that supports the Army mission and the Army themes" (US Army, 2010a, p. 2). The Army will *not* post photographs that, "do not support the mission of the U.S. Army," or those that, "violate U.S. Army Operational Security (OPSEC) guidelines," or, "images that could be used as propaganda by enemies of the United States," or, "images that contain any content that could be construed as racist, derogatory, or otherwise offensive," or, "images that show military personnel or government/contracted employees acting in an unprofessional manner or engaging in any act that would damage the image or reputation of the Army" (US Army, 2010a, p. 3). The Chief of Public Affairs also states that the way of "measuring success" of these photographs is to count the number of "views" that they receive (US Army, 2010a, p. 3).

The combined effect of these restrictions is therefore not one designed to simply tell a "visual story" of the US Army, but to tell only some stories that have a prescribed political motivation (along with an unspoken faith in the capacity of images to tell such stories). If Army Public Affairs positions itself against "enemy use" of its photos for "propaganda," it then implies what its objectives are, which also constitute propaganda. Indeed, the notion that it would be "propaganda" to use US Army photographs in a critique of the US Army's "mission," is such a broad view of "propaganda" that its aim is to remove any question about the military's role just as it labours to pry its self-representation away from the realm of propaganda. The US Army thus seems to declare: it's propaganda when they criticize us, but it's not propaganda when we tell them our glory stories. The thinking is thus structured in terms of simple political absolutes, and the state of political exception is the rule of representation.

The additional restriction under the umbrella of Operational Security is, as we have seen in the massive overclassification of information that was leaked by Bradley Manning, a particularly oppressive one. The caution about racist images or displays of unprofessional behaviour is

only necessary if the US Army is aware of the existence of these facets of US Army life. The final point is about "reputation," and here we can recall the impact of Abu Ghraib.

What is also remarkable about the "Flickr strategy" above is the implicit understanding that images contain a single, direct message, and that what is photographed, and how it is photographed, will determine whether an image is "successful" in supporting the US Army "mission". In other words, photographs can only be understood in one manner: the intended manner. Once one counts up the "views," then one can know how many people have had their perceptions successfully shaped by the US Army. It is a bet, even if not understood as such by the US Army: that members of the viewing public have the same prerequisite cultural training and ideological orientation that allows them to see an image as it was intended to be seen. It is a bet that, as another Army social media guidebook states, "a picture really is worth a thousand words" (US Army, 2010b, p. 21) and that the US Army can predetermine those words. It is necessarily a bet that pictures speak for themselves. It is a bet that images lack plenitude of information that can be read in many different ways. Indeed, it is even a bet that a piece such as this will not be written.

In general, the Pentagon's approach to photography fits well in descriptions of "scientific-realist" approaches that seek to "regulate the context" in which photographs are produced in order to produce "reliable" visual "evidence" (Pink, 2001, p. 97). The assumption made in this approach is that the photograph itself, the content of the photograph, would be the focus of the viewer's analysis. However, as the numerous directives and manuals attest, along with their detailed instructions on how to make useful and good pictures, the Pentagon actively regulates context, and that can be made visible in a critical analysis of the photographs.

So assured are they by the power of photography, Pentagon strategists never raise the following questions in any of their manuals and handbooks: if the US military can tell

a "visual story," what is there to stop viewers from recognizing that it is, indeed, *just a story*, a narrative play, where one can play with any other stories one likes? Moreover, how do they know that the story will be read and understood as intended? The belief that photographs will speak for themselves is never unpacked by the military strategists. On the one hand, what a viewer actually sees and comprehends, even if not consciously, is largely a matter of *training*: having learned the cultural patterns and conventions for telling/reading visual stories (see Banks, 2001, p. 10). Thus any photograph may have, "no fixed meaning at all and, although physically static, its message becomes subject to the fluctuations of shifting social patterns" (Wright, 1999, p. 6). This suggests a limitation, for photographs do not speak across cultures as easily as the Pentagon's strategists think. Indeed, even within similar cultural formations disagreements over what is shown and how it is seen run rife. One may be reminded here of the argument between the French literary critic and semiologist, Roland Barthes, and the American-born French photographer, William Klein. Barthes fixated on one child's "bad teeth" in one of Klein's photos of children in Little Italy, New York. Klein was indignant and responded:

> "He's more interested in what he sees than in what the photographer sees. I saw other things when I took the picture…but Barthes isn't all that interested in what I see or what I've done. He's not listening to me—only to himself". (Wright, 1999, p. 8)

The Pentagon is waiting to discover that it is William Klein.

Contrary to the kind of early positivist appreciations of photographic "records" that also appealed to the new discipline of Anthropology,[5] there is nothing objective, realistic, or neutral about photographs. As Marcus Banks explained, if photographs seem to bear a semblance of life and agency within them, it is at least in part because "humans frequently displace…conversations onto inanimate objects" (2001, p. 10). In line with numerous critiques of

the supposed impartial realism of photography, Pierre Bourdieu explained:

> "photography captures an aspect of reality which is only ever the result of an arbitrary selection, and, consequently, of a transcription; among all the qualities of the object, the only ones retained are the visual qualities which appear for a moment and from one sole viewpoint". (1999, p. 162)

Extending this argument, Bourdieu adds, "that which is visible is only ever that which is legible" (1999, p. 163). If military photographers think their products tell a true visual story, it's because what they wanted to see, and how they choose to see, is what shaped their photographic practice to begin with. Their photographs, therefore, are neither "realistic" nor "staged," but both: they are stagings of realities as understood by military photographers, according to the instructions they have received. As Bourdieu put it more broadly: "it is natural that the imitation of art should appear to be the most natural imitation of nature" (1999, p. 164):

> "at a deeper level, only in the name of a naive realism can one see as realistic a representation of the real which owes its objective appearance not to its agreement with the very reality of things (since this is only ever conveyed through socially conditioned forms of perception) but rather to conformity with rules which define its syntax within its social use, to the social definition of the objective vision of the world; in conferring upon photography a guarantee of realism, society is merely confirming itself in the tautological certainty that an image of the real which is true to its representation of objectivity is really objective". (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 164)

Again, this requires that photographers and viewers implicitly share the same understandings of "the reality of things," the same or similar "socially conditioned forms of perception" and hold in common an understanding of the social rules that structure representations. Photographs

then are not so much "objective" as they are an *objectification* of already inculcated values. Military images are thus, as Bourdieu might say, *regulated images* that impose the military's "rules of perception" (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 168). Thus when we read the directives, policies, and manuals referred to in this chapter, what we are reading are the rules for the proper production of what might be called images made according to military regulations. That is *their* truth, rather than *the* truth. The resulting photographs, produced by a system of rules within an institution charged with communication, distribution, and legitimation, thus attain the status of *consecrated works* (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 177).

On the other hand, while situated within a surrounding discourse (one understood by both photographer and viewer) photographs may convey the meanings that are intended, however, a difficulty that presents itself has to do with the nature of the photograph: "its apparent plenitude, which flooded the observer with concreteness and detail, yet revealed little in the absence of a surrounding discourse" (MacDougall, 1997, p. 289). As explained by visual anthropologist David MacDougall (1997, p. 289): "an uncaptioned photograph is full of undirected potential". Here we might expand the meaning of the "caption" beyond the immediate text presented next to or underneath a photograph, to include the set of established and regular meanings understood by photographer and viewer alike. In the absence of these surrounding discourses, however, a photograph may say nothing at all just as it may say *too much* more than the thousand words the Pentagon wants it to say. The consequences for the Pentagon, which it cannot measure because it does not ask these questions, is that its photographs may register strongly with the learned emotions of a domestic, militarized audience, but have little or nothing to say with any positive resonance to other and more distant audiences. The Pentagon's own photograph captions seem to take much for granted, relying on a presentation of the seemingly mini-

malist details of when the photograph was taken, where, and who is pictured—as if it is all a simple matter of *fact*.

The only reason that the Pentagon persists is due to the belief in the objective, mechanical/digital veracity of the photograph and the belief that a photograph tells the truth, which is possibly a belief that is reinforced by the Pentagon's reliance on COMCAM battle imagery, further strengthened by its current drone surveillance cameras. Yet this truth can sometimes be the same as illusion—the intention of the military's Flickr images is to, "produce a *trompe l'œil*, fooling the viewer into believing that they have access to unmediated perception of the scene" (Wright, 1999, p. 40). The Pentagon's approach is an objectifying one, that holds that it is possible to record "reality," and that whatever is (made) visible must therefore be true (see Pink, 2001, p. 23).

Aside from the discussion above, it should also be noted parenthetically that the Department of Defense not only requires that photographs follow authorized guidelines for how to depict its forces, but also on how to depict "others" (see DoD, 2010c). Under the heading of "tips on the photographing of people," the DoD states: "be aware of taking pictures of children," and, "ask permission of people you have photos of to take the photo, use the photo and identify them in the photo". In addition it cautions, "please be sensitive to local cultural issues surrounding the photographing of people and various locations" (DoD, 2010c, p. 41). The *public* emphasis here is on cultural sensitivity and erring on the side of not photographing children. On the other hand, the DoD's own Flickr account is filled with photographs of unaccompanied children in different countries in the context of various US military missions. In war zones, little sensitivity is shown when depicting villagers being interviewed by members of the US Army's Human Terrain System, even as the Pentagon fulminated against WikiLeaks' Afghan War Diary for revealing the identities of informants by name. Here the Pentagon has gone a big step beyond that: giving a face that can match the name. Also of interest is that while the US

military claims to show sensitivity in how it pictures others, the question of how it pictures itself to cultural others is largely beyond its grasp—how, for example, scenes of massive, gleaming killing machines carefully attended to by support staff might not be impressive, or a deterrent, but rather a hideous sign of everything gone wrong with a violent culture that worships itself.

"Now Picture This": The Pentagon's Pictorial Propaganda and Symbolic Power

> "The sun in your eyes
> Made some of the lies
> Worth believing".—Alan Parsons Project, "Eye in the Sky"

In "reading" the Pentagon's Flickr collection, some principles from the subfield of visual anthropology can be useful. For example, we clearly know something now about the "author" of the pictures, which is more than just a single individual in any given case: the author is an institution, a strategy, a directive, a set of instructions, even a schedule. We also have the pictures themselves, and precise ideas of what the Pentagon wants them to say. In fact, the Pentagon can be even more precise (below). We also know nothing about the viewers of these photographs, so we cannot offer any concrete details here. We do know something about the photographic conventions being used (thanks to the State Department's instructions on "use good pictures and images"), and we know something of the social contexts (military exercises, disaster relief, occupation), and the encompassing power relations behind the production of these photographs. The mistake we are thus avoiding is thinking of photographs "as objects whose meaning is intrinsic to them," when meanings are instead *assigned* to them (Ruby, 1995, p. 5). What are intrinsic to the photographs produced by the Pentagon are the political motivations, subjectivity, and ethos of the institution (see Pink, 2001, p. 55). This does not at all mean that the con-

tents of the pictures do not matter—they do. What matters more is figuring out which contents we are meant to notice and how we are to put those contents together in a meaningful fashion—which means going outside of the pictures for clues, as done in this chapter by examining US diplomatic and military strategy documents.

In 2009 the Department of the Army produced a field manual titled, "Visual Information Operations" (US Army, 2009a). One of the significant features of this manual is that it provides a clear set of categories of photographs to be produced that are intended to positively showcase US military operations. *All* of these categories are vividly displayed in practice, with numerous examples of each to be found in the Pentagon's own Flickr account. (Here the reader should also quickly review "use good pictures and images" in the National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication discussed above.) We thus find examples of:

a) "Readiness Posture Imagery" that simply "display a unit's readiness";
b) "Significant Operations Imagery" that "documents situations and supports public or community affairs programs," such as a soldier interacting with children receiving medical aid from US forces;
c) "Significant Programs and Projects Imagery," which can feature the celebration of achieving a milestone of some sort for a specific unit or program, with the typical photo being of a ribbon-cutting ceremony;
d) "Civil Military Involvement Imagery" is a broad category similar to (b), one that purportedly chronicles "participation in disaster relief, civil disturbances, and environmental protection," and involves imagery that can be used as part of a public affairs or public diplomacy program—the Army claims that such "imagery transcends the language barrier and allows better cooperation between the representatives of the military and local citizens, both American and foreign";

e) "Construction Imagery," which appears frequently, showing US forces constructing, repairing, or maintaining buildings and other public facilities;
f) "Significant Military Events Imagery," which is a very broad category but in practice most resembles (c) above as it can involve depicting the granting of medals, or it can feature the deployment of troops, thus resembling (a) above; and,
g) "Military Life Imagery" which is a selective portrait of "military life," narrowed down to examples "such as Soldiers at work, physical training, new equipment usage, and enjoyment of life as a military family" (US Army, 2009a, pp. 2-5—2-8).

This is by no means a complete list, since the categorization is itself an unstable product of intention and perception, official motivation and viewers' interpretation. There are also examples of numerous photographs, discussed below, that do not readily fit into any of the categorical areas above. However, what the list above does do is to provide a starting point, and some limited insight as to what a photographic collection is meant to accomplish, from the military's perspective. If we were to sum up all of the above into one single message, it might be this: *happy, healthy, helpful, strong, successful, and ready to go*. It is not such a far-fetched summation, in light of the above, and is one that corresponds well with recruitment advertising. It is also the intentional opposite of other realities of war and US military actions: *angry, menacing, abusive, destructive, traumatized, flawed, retreating*.

Many of the photographs in the Pentagon's Flickr stream *suggest* collaboration between "locals" and US forces. The photographs themselves, however, are not collaborative productions. There is never an indication that the "locals" in any way initiated, conceived, sought, or desired to be photographed. Some certainly "agreed" or acquiesced) to be photographed, and that is about as charitable as we can afford to be.

The choices manifested in the Pentagon's Flickr photographs represent what Bourdieu called "a choice that

praises," one that reflects an ethos stemming from internalized objective and common regularities and collective rules, such that a photograph expresses, "the system of schemes of perception, thought and appreciation common to a whole group" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 131). The "whole group" in question here is of course the US military. What is perhaps most different from the range of cases studied by Bourdieu, is that we are not really dealing here mostly with behaviour that is more inspired than controlled, more unselfconscious than intentional, without a call to order or formal education (see Bourdieu et al., 1990, p. 43). The point of these directives, manuals and handbooks is precisely to institute a regular, formal, conscious and intentional selection of subjects according to fairly strict instructions. (Of course it may well be that the photographers, once educated according to the military's regulations and well practiced, develop a habitual and seemingly intuitive mode of choosing and framing particular images.)

Another way to understand the character of the photographic communication categories listed above and their intended meanings is by way of Sherry Ortner's (1973) outline of a methodology for understanding symbolism and symbolic power. First, it seems fair to say that what we are dealing with in these pictures are forms of what Ortner calls "elaborating symbols": they provide means for "sorting out complex and undifferentiated feelings and ideas, making them comprehensible to oneself, communicable to others, and translatable into orderly action" (Ortner, 1973, p. 1340). Second, they express power as elaborating symbols, in two distinct ways: a) they have "conceptual elaborating power" in that they provide or convey, "categories for conceptualizing the order of the world" (the proper place of military power in assuring US global dominance); and, b) "action elaborating power," in that they imply mechanisms for successful action (Ortner, 1973, p. 1340). Third, a particular type of elaborating symbol, one that closely aligns with (b) above, is what Ortner calls the "key scenario": this implies "clear-cut modes of action" that in this case are appropriate to representing US military suc-

cess and military indispensability, and the key scenario also postulates a "basic means-ends relationships in actable forms" and provides "strategies for organizing action experience" (Ortner, 1973, pp. 1341, 1342). It is important to understand that Ortner in no way intends to separate thought from action, in any of her conceptualizations of symbolism.

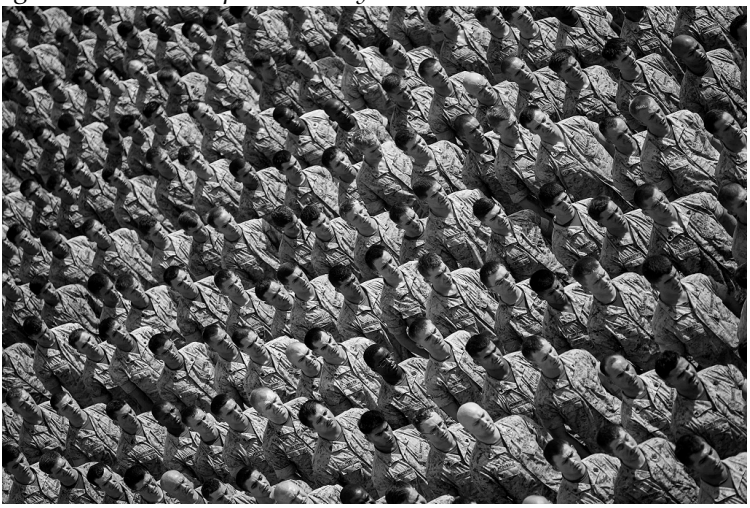
In the various scenarios depicted in the categorical areas outlined above and demonstrated below, the US military virtually represents itself as the world's new Great Chief—protector, guide, gift-giver, and war-maker—who overrules if not outlaws all other (lesser) chiefs. If the US military repairs your home, and makes your children smile, then what does that say about *you*, after all, as a father or as a chief of your tribe? The arid, pretend-neutrality of the US military's rhetoric employed to categorize the diverse imagery listed above, is meant to render scientific what is in fact overwhelming ambition and national narcissism.

Help, Health, Happiness, and Hellfire

Let us turn finally to a selection of what may well be photographs that are emblematic of the categories above, and some that exceed the boundaries of those categories. These images include the official captions, which then form part of the commentary in my critical reinterpretation of the photographs, based on their contents and contexts. The same is largely true of the titles for the figures, which I supply.

Readiness Posture Imagery

Figure 9.3: Lined Up and Ready to Go



This photograph, taken on May 13, 2014, was officially captioned as follows: "US Marines and Sailors with the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) stand at attention during a formation aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5) in the Gulf of Aden May 13, 2014. The 22nd MEU was deployed with the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group as a theater reserve and crisis response force throughout the US Central Command and U.S. 5th Fleet areas of responsibility". (DoD photograph by Sgt. Austin Hazard, US Marine Corps)

As mentioned in the previous section, photographs in this category are meant to display a unit's readiness. Figure 9.3 displays a recurring aesthetic principle that one finds in the Pentagon's Flickr collection on this theme, which is that of quantity and symmetry. The official caption omits key details of the context of this photograph: the USS Bataan was here en route to the coast of Libya as a new round of civil war erupted the day before, led by a general who lived in exile in the US and worked with the CIA. The photograph thus displays readiness but does not indicate purpose, which as a result does little to inform US viewers. It does, however, suggest a way of being *globally positioned* regardless of particular, local destinations.

Figure 9.4: Ready to Drop

Taken on February 9, 2011, this was officially captioned as follows: "US Army paratroopers with the 82nd Airborne Division sit in an Air Force C-17A Globemaster III before an airdrop during a joint operational access exercise (JOAX) at Pope Air Force Base, NC, Feb. 9, 2011. JOAX is a joint Army and Air Force training exercise held to practice large-scale personnel and equipment airdrop missions". (DoD photograph by Staff Sgt. Greg C. Biondo, US Air Force)

As with the one before, Figure 9.4 again shows symmetry, quantity, and one might say poise. Readiness is conveyed by the rows of waiting paratroopers. Note again the choice of angle: high above the men, emphasizing the number and geometry of the formation in a manner that North American media consumers would likely find to be visually pleasing. Indeed, many DoD photos seem to have been produced with significant artistry, and sometimes apparently produced to feature the artistry itself, such as images of smoke in all colours (green, pink, yellow, purple) engulfing dramatically posed soldiers.

Significant Operations Imagery

Figure 9.5: Skipping Rope with Cambodian Children

The official caption for this photograph, taken on June 16, 2010, was: "School in Sihanoukville, Cambodia, June 17, 2010. Mercy is deployed as part of Pacific Partnership 2010, the fifth in a series of annual US Pacific Fleet humanitarian and civic assistance endeavors to strengthen regional partnerships". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jon Husman, US Navy)

The definition of "significant operations imagery" in the previous section was rather ambiguous, apart from an example being a soldier interacting with children receiving medical aid from US forces. In that vein, here we have an example of a recurring theme in the DoD's Flickr account in this category, featuring US troops playing with children as they skip rope. As in most of these photographs, produced in very vivid colour, the bare feet of the locals feature prominently, in contrast with the heavily booted feet of US troops. It is rare to see the parents, or other local adults, in such photographs, which can give the impression that the children's only guardians on hand are the US forces themselves. There is no explanation as to how this activity fits in with the stated US military expedition to the area. The next photographs present more examples of this theme.

Figure 9.6: Skipping Rope in the Aftermath of the Earthquake in Haiti

Taken on January 26, 2010, and officially captioned as follows: "Department of Defense and the US Agency for International Development are in the area conducting Operation Unified Response to provide aid and relief to Haitian citizens affected by the 7.0-magnitude earthquake that struck the region Jan. 12, 2010". (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Prentice Colter)

Figure 9.6 is an unusual photograph in that no US forces are shown within it. There is an unidentified adult at left, not in any US military attire, though it's conceivable that she might be an employee of USAID or of an affiliated local NGO. Still, we have no idea whether the Air Force photographer simply stumbled on this scene of apparent joy in the midst of extreme ruin and despair following Haiti's devastating earthquake, or produced it as a sign of cheer following the arrival of US forces.

Figure 9.7: Teaching a Haitian Orphan How to Jump

From March 7, 2010, the official caption for this photograph was: "US Army Sgt. 1st Class Arier Santiago teaches a Haitian child how to jump rope at the Solidante Fraternite orphanage in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, March 7, 2010. Santiago is in Haiti as part of Operation Unified Response". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class David A. French, U.S. Navy)

Again, the rope jumping motif appears, this time with a US soldier taking time out to show a Haitian child how it is done. Once again, we see a stark contrast between the well clothed, adult US soldier, and a local child, barefoot. In the background we can discern the presence of a white civilian, in high heels, whose presence is not commented upon in the caption. In this scene, as presented, no local guardians are shown at this orphanage site.

Apart from jumping rope, there are a great many more photographs of US forces interacting with children, with one of the more striking features of these kinds of photographs being the almost sudden appearance, and predominance, of female US forces ("sudden" if one views most of the DoD's collection of photographs in a continual stream). One example follows.

Figure 9.8: Encounter with a Little Girl in Afghanistan

Though incorrectly dated as being taken on February 29, 2000, more than a year before the US invasion, the official caption for this photograph was: "U.S. Navy Lt. j.g. Meghan Burns, with Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Farah, hands a stuffed animal to an Afghan orphan during a key leader engagement at the Farah Orphanage in Farah Province, Afghanistan, Aug. 4, 2013. PRT Farah's mission is to train, advise and assist Afghan government leaders at the municipal,

district and provincial levels in Farah province, Afghanistan". (DoD photo illustration by Lt. Chad A. Dulac, U.S. Navy)

It's not clear how distributing toys to children either assists key Afghan leaders (not shown *contra* the caption), or is a part of "key leader engagement". Once again, however, *the orphanage* emerges as the preferred ground for such photographs—this is risky, especially as some well-informed and conscientious viewers might consider how US bombardments created a large number of Afghan orphans.

Figure 9.9 combines at least four common motifs: the American female presence, the child belonging to a different ethnicity and nationality, medical care, and play. The caption tells the familiar story of "humanitarian assistance," without any details as to who requested such assistance and why, why the US was willing to provide it, or how the child came to be in the photograph. Indeed, there even seems to be very little of what is needed for a routine medical exam, apart from a stethoscope. What is interesting about the caption, however, is the note about the US Navy having specialists in "mass communication". In addition, in the midst of all of this apparent gift-giving, the question must be asked: what is expected in return?

Figure 9.9: Care and Play

This photograph, taken on July 28, 2012, was captioned as follows: "Jacquelyn Bilbro, a registered nurse, entertains a child during a medical civic action project at Hun Sen Cheungkor Primary Elementary School, in Sihanoukville, Cambodia, July 29, 2012, during Pacific Partnership 2012. Pacific Partnership is an annual deployment of forces designed to strengthen maritime and humanitarian partnerships during disaster relief operations, while providing humanitarian, medical, dental and engineering assistance to nations of the Pacific". (DoD photograph by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Roadell Hickman, US Navy)

Figure 9.10: Singing to Children

Taken on June 21, 2012: "US Navy Musician 2nd Class Kori Gillis, assigned to the US Naval Forces Europe Band ensemble Flagship, sings and dances with children at the Integracao Infantil Cristo Vida school in Nacala, Mozambique, June 21, 2012. Sailors and Marines embarked aboard high speed vessel Swift (HSV-2) visited the school during a community service project as part of Africa Partnership Station (APS) 2012. APS is an international security cooperation initiative facilitated by Commander, US Naval Forces Europe-Africa aimed at strengthening global maritime partnerships through training and collaborative activities in order to improve maritime safety and security in Africa". (DoD photo by Ensign Joe Keiley, U.S. Navy/Released)

In Figure 9.10, we learn about the US Navy also deploying its own musicians, seen here singing to children at a school, but as part of an unrelated effort concerning "maritime security". There is not even so much as a bottle of water in the photograph, let alone a significant body of water. The photograph, therefore, is not emblematic of the stated purpose of the military venture, but of something that covers over it: a professed liking for children around the globe, best shown by forces in uniform.

Figure 9.11: Piggybacking on US Troops

From April 12, 2013, this photograph had the following caption: "US Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Ruben Ramirez, left, a warehouseman, and Cpl. David Long, a packing specialist, both with Combat Logistics Regiment 35, 3rd Marine Logistics Group, III Marine Expeditionary Force, carry students at Maruglo Elementary School in Capas, Tarlac province, Philippines, April 12, 2013, during a community relations event as part of Balikatan 2013. Balikatan is an annual bilateral training exercise designed to increase interoperability between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the US military when responding to future natural disasters". (DoD photo by Tech. Sgt. Jerome S. Tayborn, US Air Force)

Figure 9.11 again presents playing with little girls as if it were a requirement of military "interoperability". It is an interesting image for being so out of the ordinary: one would not expect to see (male) military personnel in our schoolyards in North America, playing with our little girls. Somehow, when displaced to the Philippines, this is made to stand as an altogether pleasant and normal way to pass time while adjusting to another society, as the US began its so-called military "pivot" to southeast Asia. It is as if the "strangeness" of the Asian context entitles US troops to behave in strange manners, but accepted as a normal display of good intentions. The photograph—whether or not the product of conscious intent is immaterial—is also important in projecting two contradictory positionings. On

the one hand, there is the anti-anti-colonialist reversal, where now it is the native riding on the white man's back. This can also symbolize, however, a literal white man's burden, of "our" shouldering the responsibilities for "their" society's future. On the other hand, presenting others in the form of children, thus infantilizing the status of other societies subject to US action, is instead a rather undiluted message of classic colonial discourse. In line with the Pentagon's own cautions about photographing children (as we read in a previous section), it might have been strategically wiser not to take any such photographs, especially in a southeast Asian context where there have been numerous local complaints about US forces leaving their bases and sexually assaulting young women.

Figure 9.12: Military Madonna in Afghanistan

From August 3, 2010, this was captioned as follows: "US Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Claire Ballante holds an Afghan child during a patrol with Marines from 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment in Musa Qa'leh, Afghanistan, Aug. 3, 2010. Ballante is part of a female engagement team that is patrolling local compounds to assess possible home damage caused by aircraft landing at Forward Operating Base Musa Qala". (DoD photo by Cpl. Lindsay L. Sayres, US Marine Corps)

Though strictly limited in visual contents, Figure 9.12 still provides ample room for interpretation, especially in light

of the of the official caption. This is literally about putting a smile on a bad situation, as the caption suggests there are local complaints about damage caused by a nearby US landing strip. Here once again a female soldier is presented in a mothering role, as a proxy for the child's natural parent. The "naturalness" of the cradling is belied however by the woman looking up and away from the child, as if she had scooped up and held the child as a mere prop. The Naval petty officer is also heavily attired in combat gear, in stark contrast with the children. The other child in the bottom left, though almost cropped out of the photography entirely by the military, was clearly doing something of which we see little or nothing in these photographs: *returning the gaze*. Figure 9.13 is offered as a companion image, which repeats some of the key messages: female US troops playing mother to little Afghan girls. The title for this image is a line from the 1765 *Mother Goose's Melody*, "Pat a Cake".

Figure 9.13: So I Do, Master, As Fast As I Can

From October 31, 2011, the official caption for this photograph was: "US Army Sgt. Stephanie Tremmel, right, with the 86th Special Troops Battalion, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, interacts with an Afghan child while visiting Durani, Afghanistan, Nov. 1, 2010. Soldiers visited the village to dismantle an old Russian tank, which the villagers will sell for scrap metal to buy food to get through the winter". (DoD photo by Spc. Kristina L. Gupton, US Army)

Figure 9.14: Reading to Students

Taken on October 2, 2013, the original caption for this photograph read: "US Navy Lt. Shayna Rivard, left foreground, a battalion surgeon attached to Combat Logistics Battalion 13, 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, reads to students of the Bal Bhavan School in Panaji, Goa, India, Oct. 1, 2013, during a volunteer outreach as part of exercise Shatrujeet 2013. Shatrujeet is an annual training exercise conducted by US and Indian service members to share knowledge and build interoperability skills. (DoD photo by Sgt. Christopher O'Quin, US Marine Corps)

Figure 9.14 differs in some respects, though repeating the theme of female US forces coupled with children, in exercises that seem to bear little relevance to the stated military mission. Here a military surgeon is neither in uniform, nor offering medical care, but seemingly reading to students from one of their own books. The action seems to be staged for the camera, even more than in other cases. This also appears to be conducted not in a regular classroom; given the presence of the pupils' sandwiches, this possibly happened during a lunch break which, if correct, would suggest a short photo-op type of event. The children's teachers do not appear in the photograph, apparently so that the place of the adult can be monopolized by US military personnel.

In the case of Figure 9.15, which again features the recurring theme of native children interacting with US soldiers, one more feature is made apparent. While all of

these photographs invite us to share the US military's gaze, in this instance we see that gaze in direct operation as one of the soldiers (at right) is himself taking a photo within this photograph. The event thus appears like a form of military tourism, held under the auspices of humanitarianism. Interestingly, the caption omits any mention of whether these soldiers were responsible for building the new school.

Figure 9.15: Sharing the Gaze

This photograph, taken on May 8, 2014, was captioned as follows: "US Soldiers assigned to the 1430th Engineer Company, Michigan Army National Guard shake hands with Guatemalan school children after touring their new school in Chiquimula, Guatemala, May 8, 2014, during Beyond the Horizon (BTH) 2014. BTH is a recurring chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff-directed, US Southern Command-sponsored joint and combined humanitarian exercise in which troops provide services to communities in need while receiving deployment training and building important relationships with partner nations". (DoD photo by Sgt. Austin Berner, US Army)

In addition to photographs featuring native children in various interactions with a variety of US military forces, there is another major theme under the heading of "significant operations imagery" that involves the provision of medical treatment. One such example, that clearly maximizes the leitmotif of bare feet, is shown in Figure 9.16.

Figure 9.16: The Foot Doctor

From September 17, 2010, the caption read as follows: "US Navy Cmdr. Tim Burgis, embarked aboard the multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS Iwo Jima (LHD 7), looks at a patient's foot at a medical site in Bluefields, Nicaragua, Sept. 17, 2010. Iwo Jima is anchored off the coast of Nicaragua in support of the Continuing Promise 2010 humanitarian civic assistance mission. (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Eric J. Rowley, US Navy)

Figures 9.17 and 9.18 below, in addition to Figure 9.10 above, were chosen to magnify the spread of US military operations across Africa. The active engagement in combat in Africa, from Libya to Somalia, are not featured in the collection—instead we have a large array of "humanitarian" events presented. This is part of the US military's massively increased presence across the broad centre of the African continent, spearheaded by its new combatant command, AFRICOM. Also, we may note the tendency in the photographs to have African-American troops at the forefront of these photographed interactions with African civilians, just as women troops are at the forefront of interactions with children. It is presented enough times that it cannot be mere "tokenism," but it may nonetheless be an effort to camouflage the strange foreignness of the US military presence.

Figure 9.17: A MEDCAP in Djibouti

This photograph, taken on May 4, 2011, was captioned as follows: "US Army Capt. Vincent Fry performs a check on a child from Obock, Djibouti, during a recent medical capacity program (MEDCAP) mission May 5, 2011. Fry and other medical experts from Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa treated more than 1,800 patients for a variety of ailments during the two-day MEDCAP". (DoD photo by Lt. Col. Leslie Pratt, U.S. Air Force)

Figure 9.18: AFRICOM Brings You This New School

From August 20, 2013, the official caption for this photograph was: "US Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus talks with villagers in Grumesa, Ghana, before a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new school Aug. 20, 2013. Construction of the school was a US Africa Command-sponsored project that resulted from a trip Mabus took to the region two years earlier, when he was briefed about a lack of schools in the area. Ghana was one of several countries Mabus visited in Africa to meet with US Sailors and Marines, discuss security issues with military and civilian officials and reinforce partnerships with African nations". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Arif Patani, US Navy photo)

There are numerous DoD photographs with a sports theme, showing US forces playing with locals, whether children or adults. Examples are shown in Figures 9.19 and 9.20. The core message seems to be joy, good health, and

camaraderie. It also appears as if "interoperability" was not just about developing further ties to local military and security apparatuses, but also penetrating the wider society. Next to medical care (offered for free, without any of the debates about free healthcare that rage on in the US itself), giving toys, skipping rope, cradling, and reading stories, this completes the overall picture presented herein of a US military that persistently thrives to project an image of itself as a leading humanitarian organization. The balancing act is more than a little unsteady, as it involves momentary demilitarization (through a suspension of disbelief) of the image of the military, while clearly portraying the militarization of civilian action such as humanitarian aid.

Figure 9.19: Volleyball in Cambodia

From December 24, 2009, the caption was: "A US Sailor with the mine countermeasures ship USS Avenger (MCM 1) jumps to block a shot during a volleyball game with members of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces in Sihanoukville, Cambodia, June 15, 2011. The Avenger was in Cambodia as part of a Western Pacific deployment". (DoD photo by US Navy)

Figure 9.20: Militarizing Community Relations in the Philippines

Taken on May 9, 2014, the original caption was: "US Marine Corps Lance Cpl. David B. Doran, left, an administrator with the 9th Engineer Support Battalion, plays basketball with Filipino residents during a community relations project as part of Balikatan 2014 at Air Force City High School in Mabalacat, Philippines, May 9, 2014. Balikatan is an annual bilateral training exercise designed to increase interoperability between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the US military when responding to natural disasters". (DoD photo by Lance Cpl. Allison DeVries, US Marine Corps)

Finally for this subsection, there is Figure 9.21, still on a sports theme, but a bit of an outlier compared to other photographs in the collection, and one with an ambiguous visual message that it could destabilize the political purposes of such media efforts. Not only is this an unusual image for having been recorded in a domestic context, in New York City, but it might disquiet some viewers to see troops arrayed in front of the New York Stock Exchange, as if underscoring what some astute observers have historically seen as the role of the US military in protecting Wall Street and US-led transnational capitalism. The reviewers who processed and posted this photograph were either unaware of the potentially contradictory messages this image could open up, or they were (hence a question as the title of the image). The photograph thus carries undertones of Smedley Butler (see Appendix B in Volume 2 of this series). On the other hand, and this accounts for some of the ambiguity, it could have been approved because it features military participation in a major annual event in New York, as well as a landmark building in the city, and of course the gigantic US flag, which serves as the essential "summarizing symbol," condensing powerful

sentiments of what the system means to an ideal-typical, patriotic American citizen (Ortner, 1973, pp. 1339–1340).

Figure 9.21: A Radical in Our Midst?

This photograph, taken on May 21, 2011, was officially captioned as follows: "US Marines with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit lead a run to ground zero in New York City May 31, 2011, as part of Fleet Week New York 2011. More than 3,000 Marines, Sailors and Coast Guardsmen participated in community outreach events and equipment demonstrations in the New York City area for Fleet Week. The week's activities marked the 27th year that the city has hosted the sea services for the celebration". (DoD photo by Sgt. Randall A. Clinton, US Marine Corps)

Significant Programs and Projects Imagery

This category of photographs is described by the US Army as involving events such as the celebration of achieving a milestone of some sort for a specific unit or program, with a typical photo being of a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Figure 9.22 clearly involves the celebration of achieving a milestone, one in particular that often eludes most media and public commentaries on the identity of "our troops," who in the US case consist of a great many non-nationals. This is a group of transnational or migrant soldiers, as they achieve recognition as US citizens. Figure 9.23 continues the theme of the US military spread under the pretext of

fighting "terrorism," but without the humanitarian gloss we saw in the previous subsection. It also serves to highlight a military-to-military relationship, conveyed in person. Figure 9.24 is certainly representative of a significant milestone: a rare image of the last unit to leave Iraq. Interesting, apart from the artistry of the photographer, is the otherwise sombre and subdued atmosphere, as if the troops were leaving as quietly as possible, without any fanfare. In colour, with its heavy sand and clay tones blanketing the image, one might think of China's "Terracotta Army": funerary figures buried with the first emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang, in his necropolis.

Figure 9.22: Migrant Soldiers

From February 10, 2012, the official caption for this photograph was as follows: "US Soldiers, Marines and Airmen raise their right hands and swear the oath of citizenship during a naturalization ceremony at Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan Feb. 10, 2012. The Service members were granted citizenship after receiving their certificates and viewing a congratulatory video message from President Barack Obama". (DoD photo by Sgt. Amanda Hils, US Army)

Figure 9.23: Greeting the "War on Terror" in Tonga

The official caption for this November 9, 2010, photograph was: "Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Adm. Mike Mullen greets Tonga Defense Service honor guardsmen in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, Nov. 9, 2010. Mullen visited Tonga on the second stop of a Pacific tour to thank the Tongan people for their support of the war on terrorism". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Chad J. McNeeley, U.S. Navy)

Figure 9.24: The Last Unit to Leave Iraq

This photograph was taken on September 28, 2008, was officially captioned as follows: "US Soldiers with Fox Company, 52nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Battalion, 12th Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team (SBCT), 2nd Infantry Division, United States Division-Center, listen to a convoy brief Aug. 16, 2010, at Contingency Operating

Base Adder, Iraq, during their final convoy out of theater. The 4th SBCT is the last combat brigade to leave Iraq". (DoD photo by Sgt. Kimberly Johnson, U.S. Army/Released)

Civil Military Involvement Imagery

As we know from the category descriptions provided by the US Army, photographs in this range will tend to feature "participation in disaster relief, civil disturbances, and environmental protection". Given the degree of US intervention in Haiti immediately following its earthquake in 2010, numerous photographs express this theme, of which a very small sampling is provided here. In Figure 9.25, we can spot a couple of powerful summarizing symbols, defined by Ortner as symbols "which are seen as summing up, expressing, representing for the participants in an emotionally powerful and relatively undifferentiated way, what the system means to them" (1973, p. 1339). A symbol, such as the US flag, is the centrepiece of Ortner's explanation of what summarizing symbols do. As she elaborated, summarizing symbols constitute a "category of sacred symbols in the broadest sense, and includes all those items which are objects of reverence and/or catalysts of emotion," such as the US flag (prominent in Figure 9.25), or the cross (also in Figure 9.24) (Ortner, 1973, p. 1340). In particular,

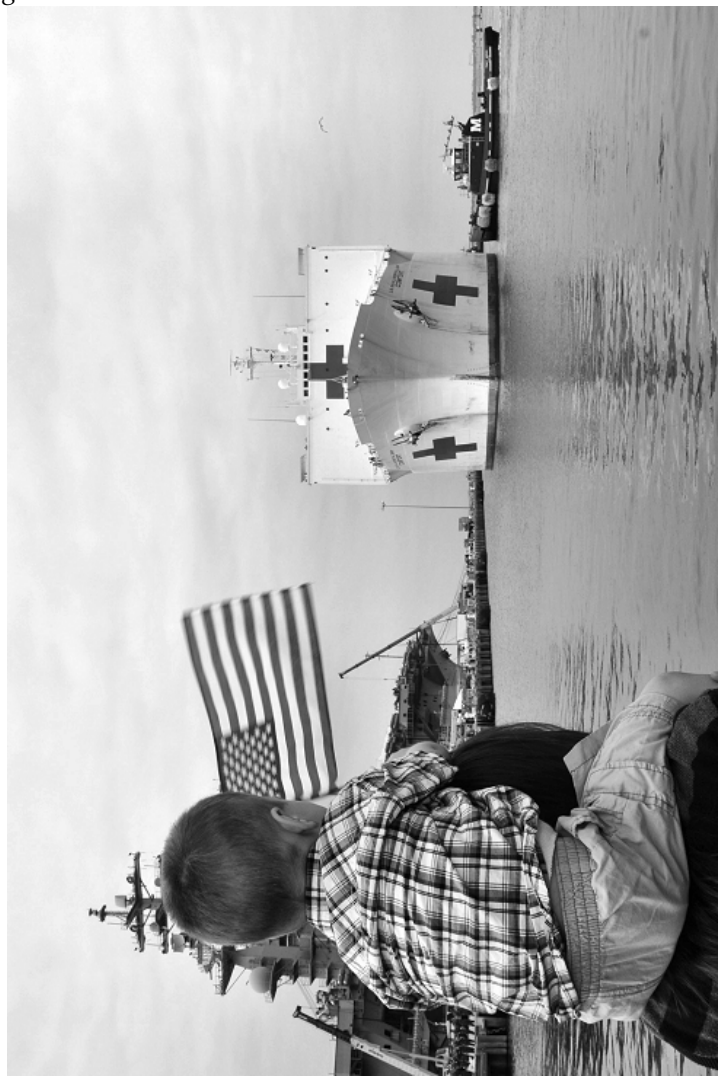
> "the American flag…for certain Americans, stands for something called 'the American way,' a conglomerate of ideas and feelings including (theoretically) democracy, free enterprise, hard work, competition, progress, national superiority, freedom, etc. And it stands for them all at once. It does not encourage reflection on the logical relations among these ideas, nor on the logical consequences of them as they are played out in social actuality, over time and history. On the contrary, the flag encourages a sort of all-or-nothing allegiance to the whole package, best summed up on a billboard I saw recently: 'Our flag, love it or leave.' And this is the point about summarizing symbols in general—they operate to compound and synthesize a complex system of ideas, to

> 'summarize' them under a unitary form which, in an old-fashioned way, 'stands for' the system as a whole". (Ortner, 1973, p. 1340)

Aside from the flag, the cross is the *red cross*, which has become the internationally recognizable symbol of neutral and impartial emergency medical care—except that in this case, it is on a US military vessel. Moreover, the dominant position of ships in Figures 9.25 and 9.26 may evoke a myriad of deep historical associations involving deliverance, rescue, migration, importation, invasion and, in sum, the international reach of power. The ship is the first mass medium of border crossing, and a symbol of globalization that emerged centuries before the first satellite transmission.

The US government is impressed enough with the visual power of these images that Figure 9.26 now appears as the headlining image on the US Agency for International Development's (USAID) site for the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).[6] Figure 9.26 also mentions the presence of a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART)—not to be confused with Canadian teams, which perform the same functions and have the same name—and one can see the acronym on the back of the man's baseball cap, which itself is a recognizable symbol of American identity.

Figure 9.25: From Over the Horizon



The official caption for this September 2, 2011, photograph was: "Family and friends watch as hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) docks at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., Sept. 2, 2011, after returning from a five-month deployment in support of Continuing Promise 2011. Continuing Promise is a regularly scheduled mission to countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean, where the US Navy and its partnering nations work with host nations and a variety of governmental and nongovernmental agencies to train in civil-military operations". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Rafael Martie, US Navy)

Figure 9.26: An AID DART into Haiti

From January 26, 2010, the official caption was: "A member of the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Disaster Assistance Response Team looks on as humanitarian relief supplies from Puerto Rico arrive in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Jan. 26, 2010, as part of Operation Unified Response". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Chris Lussie, US Navy)

The dramatic shift over the past decade that witnessed the militarization of US foreign aid, is represented in Figures 9.27 and 9.28. The photographs show far more artistry, or artifice, than a mere ethnographic documentary record—emphasizing angle of vision especially. In Figure 9.27, the US military officer is strategically placed beneath "Hope for Haiti"—he is the prime actor here, leaning forward with determination, and the Haitian man is the recipient. In Figure 9.28, more of a portrait than an objective recording, there is a play with light and shadow: a large mass of bags of aid delivered, and outside the door in the light, the military instrument that delivered the bounty. These are efforts to incessantly remind Americans and the rest of the world: *we* help *them*, *they* depend on *us*. Even just visually/symbolically (let alone practically), the US is thus still the primary beneficiary of its aid program.

Figure 9.27: Hope for Haiti

This was photograph was taken on November 8, 2010. Its official caption was as follows: "US Navy Cmdr. Mark Becker, left, the mission commander of Southern Partnership Station (SPS), greets Robenson Lucceus, a public relations coordinator for International Child Care, prior to turning over a mobile medical clinic to the organization in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Nov. 8, 2010. The clinic, donated as part of Project Handclasp, was delivered by high speed vessel Swift (HSV-2) as part of the SPS mission. Project Handclasp transports educational, humanitarian and goodwill materials on a space-available basis aboard US Navy ships. SPS is a deployment of various specialty platforms to the US Southern Command area of responsibility". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ricardo J. Reyes, US Army)

Figure 9.28: This Food Aid was Brought to You by…

From August 7, 2010, this photograph's official caption read as follows: "A CH-47 Chinook helicopter carrying disaster relief supplies is shown prior to a humanitarian mission in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, Aug. 7, 2010. Humanitarian relief and evacuation missions are being conducted as part of the disaster relief efforts to assist Pakistanis in flood-stricken regions of the nation". (DoD photo by Staff Sgt. Horace Murray, US Army)

Construction Imagery

Given that the stated aim of this category of photographs is to represent US forces constructing, repairing, or maintaining buildings and other public facilities, this would seem to be motivated to produce images that are the opposite of the US' once noteworthy COMCAM recordings of buildings being bombed or struck by missiles. Rather than destruction then, the US military here reaches for the opposite: construction. In fact, there is no single image in the DoD Flickr account of any target destroyed in combat. It is this direct and obvious avoidance of the very realities created by the US military itself, which recommends use of the term "propaganda" for these images, in the popularly understood sense of the term propaganda. While Figure 9.15 might have also come under the heading of construction imagery, a more common example would be what we

see in Figure 9.29. (On a technical note, there is an unusual line around each person shown in Figure 9.29, either a black line around the entire contour of the body, or a white line. This is present in the original, and is not a product of editing for reproduction here.)

Figure 9.29: Painting Walls in Vietnam

From June 9, 2010, the caption for this photograph was: "US Sailors embarked aboard the Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) paint the living facilities at the Binh Dinh Leprosy Hospital in Quy Nhon, Vietnam, June 10, 2010, during Pacific Partnership 2010. Mercy is in Vietnam conducting the fifth in a series of annual US Pacific Fleet humanitarian and civic assistance endeavors to strengthen regional partnerships". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Matthew Jackson, US Navy)

Significant Military Events Imagery

This category is somewhat mixed in terms of how its contents are described by the US Army, which can range from the granting of medals to the deployment of troops. Given the degree to which the "support the troops" mantra has been institutionalized in US popular consciousness, it is interesting to note the *relative* scarcity of images such as Figure 9.30 in the DoD's collection, which involve granting

medals for heroic action. I can offer no explanation for this, apart from the speculation that other objectives (such as those above) are more urgent representational priorities, especially for an international audience.

Figure 9.30: President Obama Presents a Medal of Honour

Taken on May 13, 2014, this photograph's official caption was: "President Barack Obama presents the Medal of Honor to former US Army Sgt. Kyle J. White during a ceremony May 13, 2014, at the White House in Washington, DC. White was recognized for exposing himself to enemy fire to save the lives of coalition troops during an attack in Aranas, Afghanistan, Nov. 9, 2007. White had been assigned to Chosen Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team at the time of the battle". (DoD photo by Sgt. Mikki L. Sprenkle, US Army)

Military Life Imagery

The final category of photographs, following the US Army's guide in the last section, is a general one, not very well marked off from the others, but that includes within it examples such as soldiers at work, physical training (or exercise), the use of new equipment, and enjoyment of "life as a military family". Arguably, the images presented below would sit well within this category. It is a reasonable assumption that the purpose of this category is to spotlight persuasive images that will boost recruitment

and retention. Whereas families grieve, this particular "family" (as photographed) has known very few instances of witnessing the return of caskets with troops killed in action, few funerals, and only occasional graveside visits. Indeed, such images are very late additions to this collection. Instead, families tend to be shown as always in the process of being reunited, forever coming home, yet somehow never leaving.

Figure 9.31 is the paradigmatic, traditional American representation of this reuniting, worthy of comparison with *Life* magazine's now iconic photo from New York's Times Square on V-J Day (August 27, 1945), of a sailor kissing a nurse. It is by no means far-fetched to expect today's military photographers to be steeped in the dominant visual and symbolic norms of their culture and to be trained in a practice that builds on "what works"—and again, whether they do so consciously or not does not matter. The blue sky (in the original), added to the bright white dress and the wife's red shoes, is a composition that only accentuates the colours of the small American flag she is waving with her right hand, as if to double the flag.

Figure 9.31: Reunited

This photograph, from July 29, 2009, was captioned as follows: "US Navy Lt. j.g. Peter Goodman greets his wife during a homecoming

ceremony for the guided-missile frigate USS Klakring (FFG 42) in Mayport, Fla., July 29, 2009. Klakring is returning from a deployment conducting theater security cooperation engagements with regional nations in the US 6th Fleet area of responsibility". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Gary B. Granger Jr., US Navy)

Of course, families must also eat together. There are a few such photographs of meals shared collectively, in the DoD's collection. Figure 9.32, when viewed together with its original caption, conveys a number of strong, controversial messages. One is the traditional image of the African-American man serving meals—possibly not *intentional*, but likely to conjure up such associations among at least some viewers nevertheless. The other is that it is Thanksgiving Day, and traditional US fare is being served to US troops *and* their Honduran counterparts. This form of culinary colonization is, at least in the Central American context, a known method for resocializing local troops to eat like Americans and less like the peasant families they came from, in order to break cultural bonds of familial identification. A classic telling of this comes from the Salvadoran writer, Manlio Argueta, in his 1980 novel, *One Day of Life*. In that novel, a newly recruited member of El Salvador's US-trained Special Forces describes the meals served by their *gringo* trainers:

> "Imagine, take mashed potatoes, for example, which I didn't know shit about. I'll explain it to you: it's something like mashed corn but it's potatoes, all beaten up or ground up, you wouldn't believe it….I don't even know why they call it purée. Look, I'll tell you something to be frank, and pardon my language, purée looks like shit except it smells like semen. Can you imagine being forced to eat it?...Mornings, we have orange juice and a kind of milk called yogurt. Well, the little juice is all right, but the yogurt, what the fuck is that? Pardon my expression; well, so you'll know, if the purée smells like semen, yogurt is almost semen itself". (Argueta, 1991 [1980], pp. 91–92)

Figure 9.32: American Thanksgiving in Honduras

Taken on November 27, 2013: "US Army Command Sgt. Maj. Norriel Fahie, assigned to the Army Support Activity, serves Thanksgiving dinner to a member of Joint Task Force-Bravo in the dining facility at Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras, Nov. 28, 2013. Members of Joint Task Force-Bravo and their Honduran counterparts were treated to a Thanksgiving Day meal with all the trimmings in celebration of the holiday. Joint Task Force-Bravo leadership, as well as leaders from the Army Support Activity, Army Forces Battalion, Joint Security Forces, 612th Air Base Squadron, 1-228th Aviation Regiment, and Medical Element wore their dress uniforms and served the members of the task force". (DoD photo by Capt. Zach Anderson US Air Force)

Military personnel "at work" are also a key element of this category, and here we may find an almost countless number of images depending on how one defines "at work". For the sake of simplification and efficiency, I have narrowed this down to a particular subset of images involving routine, everyday maintenance work and other basic chores that stand apart from everything shown thus far. For example, as in Figure 9.33, there are many photographs of US military personnel in very tight places: inside engines and inside tubes, intakes, and shafts of various sorts, performing maintenance tasks. These contrast strikingly with the everyday maintenance tasks that many Americans would be familiar with, such as changing their engine oil or installing a new blade on the lawnmower.

These images instead boast of complex and possibly risky technical challenges in maintaining complex military machines of daunting size. The images are thus a celebration of both modernization and American "can do". Other images, such as Figures 9.34 and 9.35, represent a common visual motif of the collection, showing military personnel as tiny beings visible through small openings in colossal, titanic walls of steel or aluminum. The contrast appears to be a boast of technological monumentality, of imposing weight, of the gargantuan constructions of the US military, one whose very blueprints seem to mandate global rule.

Figure 9.33: Tube City

April 12, 2013: "US Air Force Senior Airman Logan Sponsel, a crew chief assigned to the 169th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, South Carolina Air National Guard, inspects the intake of an F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft during a phase II readiness exercise April 12, 2013, at McEntire Joint National Guard Base, SC. The exercise was intended to evaluate the 169th Fighter Wing's ability to operate in a chemical warfare environment". (DoD photo by Staff Sgt. Jorge Intriago, US Air National Guard)

Figure 9.34: Mooring a Giant

April 15, 2014: "US Sailors observe the mooring process aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4) after the ship arrived April 15, 2014, at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. The Boxer conducted a deployment in the US 5th Fleet and 7th Fleet areas of responsibility and participated in Ssang Yong 14 during Marine Expeditionary Force Exercise (MEFEX) 2014. MEFEX 2014 was a US Marine Corps Forces Pacific-sponsored series of exercises between the US Navy and Marine Corps and South Korean forces. Among the exercises were the Korean Marine Exchange Program, Freedom Banner 14, Ssang Yong 14, Key Resolve 14 and the Combined Marine Component Command 14 command post exercise. (DoD by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Diana Quinlan, US Navy photo)

Figure 9.35: A Wall of Metal

April 21, 2013: "A US Sailor aboard the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) issues directions to line handlers pierside upon arrival to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, April 21, 2013. The John C. Stennis Carrier Strike Group was returning from an eight-month deployment to the US 5th Fleet and US 7th Fleet areas of responsibility". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Diana Quinlan, US Navy)

Physical training and trying equipment are also entered as elements of this category. Not infrequently, these images take on a bit of a "sci-fi" lustre that would appeal to the mainstream of western popular culture. Here one can see everything from men launching mysterious hand-held drones (Figure 9.36), to joggers with gas masks (Figure 9.37), to a rare admission of a "posed" photograph in the case of a radar screen's projection on a man's face (Figure 9.38), with electrical blue, green and yellow colours in the original. Elements of power that are highlighted here range from the muscular to the robotic to the cybernetic.

Figure 9.36: Hand Launching a Mini Drone in Iraq

October 9, 2009: "US Army 1st Lt. Steven Rose launches an RQ-11 Raven unmanned aerial vehicle near a new highway bridge project along the Euphrates River north of Al Taqqadum, Iraq, Oct. 9, 2009. Rose is assigned to Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, which is assisting Iraqi police in providing security for the work site". (DoD photo by Spc. Michael J. MacLeod, US Army)

Figure 9.37: Jogging through Chemical Warfare

February 21, 2010: "Embarked Marines assigned to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) run, wearing gas masks on the flight deck for an early morning physical exercise aboard amphibious dock landing

ship the USS Harpers Ferry (LSD 49). Harpers Ferry is a part of the forward-deployed Essex Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and is conducting Spring Patrol to the Western Pacific Ocean". (US Navy photo by Gas Turbine System Technician Mechanical Chief Joel Monsalud)

Figure 9.38: I, Robot

May 19, 2013: "A US Sailor portrays combat readiness in a posed photo aboard the amphibious transport dock ship USS San Antonio (LPD 17) during International Mine Countermeasures Exercise (IMCMEX) 13 in Bahrain May 19, 2013. IMCMEX is an international symposium and exercise designed to enhance cooperation, mutual maritime capabilities and long-term regional stability between the US and its international partners". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Lacordrick Wilson, US Navy)

Finally, another aspect of collective "military life" that features enjoyment and entertainment are the not uncommon performances by major pop music acts that star in concerts for the troops in locations distant from the US. It is perhaps thanks to the scenes of surreal vulgarity and out-of-place rock concerts in the film *Apocalypse Now*, that we do not see more images such as Figure 9.39 in the DoD collection. The collection in fact barely contains even a minimal sampling of the wide range of star performances by major names in the US music industry that have taken place far and wide across US military deployments overseas.

Figure 9.39: Ashanti for War

July 4, 2013: "The singer Ashanti performs during a concert for Service members at the Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan, July 4, 2013". (DoD photo by Staff Sgt. Krystie Martinez, US Air Force)

Beyond Realism, Beneath Good Intentions

The final set of images in the DoD collection exceed the boundaries of the stated categories and their typical examples. Here we see the US military as an almost independent actor on an equal footing with the civilian political administration of the US, one well known to be capable of outshining and outmanoeuvring civilian agencies of government in terms of funding, political clout, and public visibility. Though comparatively minimal in number, in light of the many other photographs in its collection, the DoD itself produces images attesting to the fruition of the military-industrial complex in the arenas of mainstream mass media and in the conduct of foreign policy. For example, in Figures 9.40, 9.41, 9.42, 9.43, and 9.44, Admiral Mike Mullen's appearances on *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart are featured, along with an intimate scene of backstage banter; a meeting with a bejewelled Katie Couric at a gala event; and, appearances that show an altogether cozy relationship between the media and the military. (It also appears that Mullen had a photographer dedicated to him,

as all of the photographs in which he appears were taken by the same individual, over a period of two years at least.) We see media celebrities, euphemistically referred to as journalists, present at elite events where they are united with the military and corporate executives for shared causes that revolve around military needs. The images show the range of stances of media personalities: deference, proud association, and familial amicability. It would be a reasonable reaction to see this as more fashionable-looking form of Soviet media; these few images bear traces of relationships that have reduced journalists to private information contractors of the state or, in other words, regime media.

Figure 9.40: Military-Media Friendship

June 16, 2011: "Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, left, speaks with TV host Jon Stewart June 16, 2011, at the Stand Up for Heroes dinner in Washington, DC. The event, sponsored by the Bob Woodruff Foundation, gathered more than 800 people including military officials, corporate executives, media members and congressional leaders to increase awareness and raise funds to assist injured Service members, veterans and their families". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Chad J. McNeeley)

Figure 9.41: Admiral Mullen on The Daily Show

January 6, 2010: "Jon Stewart interviews Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen, US Navy, during an airing of the Daily Show with Jon Stewart in New York City on Jan. 6, 2010". (DoD photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Chad J. McNeeley, US Navy)

Figure 9.42: Admiral Mullen on CBS' Face the Nation

July 5, 2009: "Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Adm. Mike Mullen gives an interview to John Dickerson during the CBS news program Face the Nation in Washington, DC, July 5, 2009. During the interview, Mullen discussed the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, North Korea's recent missile tests and his recent visit to Russia. (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Chad J. McNeeley, US Navy)

Figure 9.43: Katie Couric and Admiral Mullen

October 15, 2009: "CBS Evening News anchor Katie Couric greets Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Adm. Mike Mullen and his wife Deborah during the Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation Dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, NY, Oct. 15, 2009". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Chad J. McNeeley, US Navy)

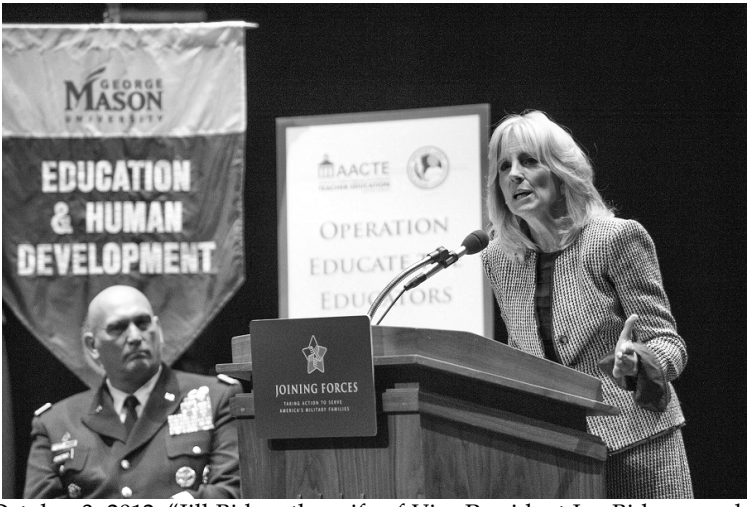
Figure 9.44: The Military-Media-Academia Complex

October 5, 2009: "From left, Chairman of the George Washington University (GWU) Board of Trustees Russell Ramsey, CNN Chief International Correspondent Christiane Amanpour, Secretary of State Hillary

Rodham Clinton, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Director of GWU School of Media and Public Affairs Frank Sesno and President of GWU Steven Knapp pose for a photograph before the start of an interview at the university in Washington, DC, Oct. 5, 2009. (DoD photo by Master Sgt. Jerry Morrison, US Air Force)

Continuing from Figure 9.44, we rarely get glimpses in the DoD collection of the renewed ties between the military and academia and the US and the increased militarization of US university campuses since September 11, 2001. Figure 9.45 provides some small visual testament to that fact, in an otherwise unremarkable photograph that is easy to miss. The caption is of greater interest, as it points to the creation of special programs that raise students with military ties to a privileged place of greater attention and care on campus.

Figure 9.45: The Militarized Campus



October 3, 2012: "Jill Biden, the wife of Vice President Joe Biden, speaks about being a military mother as US Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, the chief of staff of the Army, looks on during an event for Operation Educate the Educators, a Joining Forces initiative, Oct. 3, 2012, at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. During the event, it was announced that more than 100 colleges and universities had signed the Joining Forces commitment to help prepare educators to lead classrooms that are more responsive to the social, emotional and academic needs of military children". (US Army photo by Staff Sgt. Teddy Wade)

There are also a few photographs, such as 9.46 and 9.47, showing the military branch of government directly engaged in the conduct of foreign policy. These can include images of military officers, who though they may not be of the highest rank are nonetheless meeting with heads of state or government. There are also images of the civilian Defense Secretary meeting with counterparts abroad. It is interesting to note the absence of US civilian diplomatic staff from these photographs, which privilege the US military relationship with foreign leaders. In a limited manner then, we are presented with traces of some of the major changes in the international profile of the US since its self-declared "war on terror" began, that boosts the military face of the US abroad. It is limited in extent in the DoD collection, primarily because the collection does not exist to serve the purposes of deeper discussion and debate, but to recruit, win hearts and minds, boast, and bolster ideological agendas such as "humanitarian intervention" and the "war on terror".

Figure 9.46: US Navy Office Meets Liberia's President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf

September 15, 2009: "Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf greets US Navy Chief Boatswain's Mate Timothy Kelker in Monrovia, Liberia, Sept. 15, 2009, during the closing reception for a two-week medical civil action project (MEDCAP) in support of Africa Partnership Station (APS). During the MEDCAP, medical teams attached to HSV-2 Swift provided medicine, examinations and treatment to more than 2000 residents. APS is an international initiative under US Naval Forces Europe/Africa that brings together US, European and African partners to enhance maritime safety and security on the African continent. (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Dan Meaney, US Navy)

Figure 9.47: Meeting with Saudi Arabia's Defence Minister

December 9, 2013: "US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, right, greets Saudi Arabian Minister of Defense Crown Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Dec. 9, 2013. Hagel met with various leaders to discuss issues of mutual importance". (DoD photo by Erin A. Kirk-Cuomo)

Other photographs whose contents either exceed the boundaries of the categories we have covered, or that justifiably belong in categories of their own, concern the technological instruments of war themselves. Various weapons systems are imbued with a kind of agency in a variety of artistically conceived images; gone is any pretence of scientific-realism and objective recording. Instead, what appears to take over is *love*. These are adoring views of hardware and its prowess. For example, in the stylistically identical cases of Figures 9.48 and 9.49, that share the same colouration in the originals as well, we are presented with what look like gleaming alien vessels, the first is a Global Hawk drone, and the second a Globemaster air freighter—attending the Globemaster is a "loadmaster," and those supervising paratroopers who will jump from the plane are "jumpmasters". The prevalence of the words *globe*, *global*, and *master* is noteworthy, as these are the new symbols of US supremacy posed as globalization.

In Figures 9.50 and 9.51 we instead go back in time, in symbolic terms, to the cowboy romance of the dusty plains in the Old West. This is quite an established genre of photography, and even now the Internet contains mountains of photographs of cowboys and horses at sunset. It would be impossible for the military photographers to have remained immune to these cultural codes. Rather than the lone cowboy or gun-slinging hero riding off into the sunset, however, we encounter very many images of a helicopter or a transport plane set against a giant sun in a marvellous sunset. Surely such images cannot be reduced or framed as mere "documentary records": the artifice is too imposing, too structured and respectful of American lore and cultural convention, that they are meant to produce and reinforce a message and not simply "record" one impartially. The captioning, in these cases, is meant as a superficial formality, a control mechanism that suggests that there really was no emotional or artistic point to these images, which stand as stunning advertising for the private corporations which produced these machines under contract with the Pentagon. Note also that these images are not isolated incidents: this style has been produced, from what I have seen, over a period of at least four years in the DoD collection, by different photographers. This suggests schooling and a set of guidelines unlike the ones shared with the public.

Figure 9.48: Global Hawk

November 25, 2010: "US Air Force maintenance technicians conduct preflight checks on an RQ-4 Global Hawk unmanned aerial vehicle assigned to the 380th Expeditionary Operations Group at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia Nov. 23, 2010". (DoD photo by Staff Sgt. Andy M. Kin, US Air Force)

Figure 9.49: Globemaster

December 11, 2010: "US Air Force Senior Airman Raheem Crockett, a loadmaster with the 17th Airlift Squadron, inspects the engines of a C-17A Globemaster III as the aircrew conducts pre-flight checks before a mission in support of Operation Toy Drop at Joint Base Charleston, SC, Dec. 11, 2010. Operation Toy Drop is an annual combined service philanthropic project where, in exchange for a donated toy, thousands of

paratroopers receive a lottery ticket for the chance to jump with international jumpmasters and earn foreign jump wings". (DoD photo by Tech Sgt. Manuel J. Martinez, US Air Force)

Figure 9.50: Hercules Rides Off into the Sunset

May 2, 2014: "A US Air Force C-130E Hercules aircraft takes off during Emerald Warrior 14 at the Stennis International Airport in Kiln, Miss., May 2, 2014. Emerald Warrior is a US Special Operations Command-sponsored two-week joint/combined tactical exercise designed to provide realistic military training in an urban setting". (DoD photo by Senior Airman Colville McFee, US Air Force)

Figure 9.51: Seahawks Flying into the Setting Sun

October 9, 2013: "A US Navy MH-60S Seahawk helicopter, bottom, assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 7 and an MH-60R Seahawk helicopter assigned to Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 74 patrol near the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) in the Gulf of Oman Oct. 3, 2013. The Harry S. Truman, the flagship for the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group, was deployed to the US 5th Fleet area of responsibility conducting maritime security operations and theater security cooperation efforts in support of Operation Enduring Freedom". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Karl Anderson, US Navy)

Figure 9.52: Seahawk Sunset in the Persian Gulf

March 26, 2011: "A US Navy HH-60H Seahawk helicopter assigned to Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (HS) 15 conducts plane guard duties for the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) at sunset March 26, 2011, in the Persian Gulf. The Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group is deployed supporting maritime security operations and theater security cooperation efforts in the US 5th Fleet area of responsibility". (DoD photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Timothy A. Hazel, US Navy)

In a further twist on the humanitarian gloss, there is a strikingly significant number of photographs in the DoD collection that feature troops dressed as Santa Claus, even in warzones. The more common application is to feature Santa Claus or Santa's Little Helper figures handing out gifts—these may be gifts to troops, or gifts to local villagers in an effort to win hearts and minds. Again, these are not isolated occurrences: they are an established visual theme across all of the armed services' Flickr accounts, stretching back at least five years. Seemingly everything in the US has gone to war, resulting in the production of a counterinsurgent Santa Claus—see Figures 9.53, 9.54, and 9.55.

Figure 9.53: Santa Claus and a Little Helper Perform a Cargo Airdrop

December 24, 2013: "US Soldiers assigned to Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan look out over the Afghan countryside from the rear of an aircraft Dec. 24, 2013, after dropping bundles containing care packages, Christmas stockings and mail to Soldiers stationed at a remote base in eastern Afghanistan". (DoD photo by Capt. Thomas Cieslak, US Army)

Figure 9.54: Santa Claus in Helmand province, Afghanistan

December 24, 2012: "US Marine Corps Gen. James F. Amos, left, the commandant of the Marine Corps, speaks to Service members during a Christmas Eve show at Camp Leatherneck, Helmand province, Afghanistan, Dec. 24, 2012." (DoD photo by Staff Sgt. Ezekiel R. Kitandwe, US Marine Corps)

Figure 9.55: Santa Claus and Operation Goodwill

December 16, 2009: "U.S. Marine Corps Master Gunnery Sgt. Joseph Haggins, dressed as Santa Claus, presents a gift to a Filipino child during Operation Goodwill at the Manila Day Care Center in Manila, Philippines, Dec. 16, 2009. The operation gives US Marines and their families stationed in Okinawa, Japan, an opportunity to spread good-

will in the region during the holiday season". (DoD photo by Sgt. Leon M. Branchaud, US Marine Corps)

Finally: women and girls (Figures 9.56 and 9.57). In a regime of global military dominance that proclaims the salvation of oppressed women in target nations, it is not surprising to find the occasional iconic photographic of the veiled woman or little girl in the DoD's Flickr collection. Thus in Figure 9.56 we have a Salvadoran girl, positioned next to a map of Central America, as if she were the part that represents the whole. Figure 9.57 presents a veiled woman—*any will do*, the only significant detail that this photograph seeks to draw attention to is her dress. However the captions, as is often the case, fail to explain or candidly admit why these photographs were taken. These images stand out from others in that women and girls are alone in these photographs, without US forces present within the image frame. They thus take on the status of a target, the object that awaits liberation by the US, the purported raison d'être for its "humanitarian" missions and its strident defence of "human rights," abroad. In many ways, as described by Pas (2013), gender has become an instrument of US imperialism, ever in search of a damsel in distress to liberate from a male adversary.

Figure 9.56: Central America as a Little Girl

May 29, 2013: "A girl watches as US Soldiers assigned to Joint Task Force Jaguar work on a new school in support of Beyond the Horizon (BTH) 2013 in Sonsonate, El Salvador, May 29, 2013. BTH is a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff-directed, US Southern Command-sponsored joint and combined field training humanitarian exercise in which troops specializing in engineering, construction and health care provide much-needed services to communities in need while receiving valuable deployment training and building important relationships with partner nations". (DoD photo by Spc. Aaron Smith, US Army)

Figure 9.57: The Veiled Woman

January 6, 2013: "A woman walks down a sidewalk in Farah City, Afghanistan, Jan. 6, 2012". (DoD photo by Lt. j.g. Matthew Stroup, US Navy)

What is Missing?

What is not shown in the DoD collection, that instead are established facts of US military intervention abroad (such as torture, bombardment of civilians, drone strikes, etc.) could occupy volumes. However, what is important to note here is what could have been shown that would *not* have greatly disturbed the propaganda intent of the DoD's collection, and could even have served it, but was left out nonetheless out of an apparent fear of any chance of political contamination. For example, of the 9,963 photos examined for this project, only 73 showed Barack Obama, the official Commander-in-Chief, and the only such Commander since the Flickr account was instituted. Michelle Obama herself is shown nearly half as many times. Accounting for this minimization is difficult; one might speculate that it is part of an attempt to create a neutral, de-politicized veneer for the collection. This would complement the de-militarized glaze, that is, where there are no photographs of actual warfare, and no scene where

anyone is bleeding. In Flickr, the Pentagon has achieved zero-casualty warfare, which is why I argued at the outset that what is presented is a utopian, virtual world. Israel, a major partner of the US in the Middle East is not ignored, but in light of the collection as a whole it would be easy to forget seeing any photographs involving Israeli figures, having been kept at a minimum.

Aside from this, among the gaps in our knowledge that the Pentagon documents do not address, is how these photographs are accessed by "the public". Are the "views" entirely the product of the US military pushing links to those photographs in social media? Are the photographs reproduced by mainstream media? Do "viewers" find the photographs accidentally, through more or less related Internet searches? Do viewers who go to the Pentagon's Flickr site view discrete images, one by one, or do they use the "play" function and view them all as part of a continuous sequence? If the photographs are meant to tell a "visual story" about the US military, are they each meant to tell this story individually, or are they meant to do so collectively? I have addressed these questions to the Department of Defense and at the time of writing, months later, still did not receive a reply.

Conclusion: The Visual Imperium

> "I am the eye in the sky
> Looking at you
> I can read your mind.
> I am the maker of rules
> Dealing with fools
> I can cheat you blind.
> And I don't need to see any more
> To know that
> I can read your mind."—Alan Parsons Project, "Eye in the Sky"

One of the possibly more fruitful areas of inquiry to come out of studies of contemporary imperialism could be one

that looks at imperialism's multi-sensory lines of attack, especially when it hooks into domains of consumption and entertainment. This is clearly what the US military is doing by entering Flickr—it does not need Flickr to host its photographs, after all, just like most western defence ministries do not use Flickr and instead rely on their own government's websites to host images. Social media, however, is where the "mass audiences" allegedly are, and that is where the Pentagon thus wants to be too. This project thus had to do with the seeding of social media by the US military, a topic which has interested me for several years now. But what is the importance of the photograph?

In answering this last question, I will reprise some of what we know about the status of the photograph in western societies such as the US. Photographic images have enjoyed virtually unlimited authority in modern society, furnishing a sense of knowledge gained yet dissociated from personal experience. In this sense, the image-world has increasingly come to substitute for the concrete world of actuality. People in our society have been trained to experience reality as a set of images, as a reflection of appearances. Popular commentary on momentous events, such as 9/11, will frequently resort to this sort of reflection: "it happened like in a movie". The modern, western image consumer may thus feel that reality can be possessed through images of reality, especially when images are believed to be realistic records. Some have argued that images have become the dominant language of the modern world. As Susan Sontag argued,

> "a society becomes 'modern' when one of its chief activities is producing and consuming images, when images that have extraordinary powers to determine our demands upon reality and are themselves coveted substitutes for firsthand experience become indispensable to the health of the economy, the stability of the polity, and the pursuit of private happiness". (Sontag, 2005 [1973], p. 119)

Images also enlarge realities, by eliminating the physical distance that separates the viewer from the viewed. Photography has thus played a fundamental role in the westernized globalization of the world, as a technology of *capture*, at the heart of what I referred to as *abduction* in the introductory chapter to this volume. It is thus an excellent complement to globalized military capture. It is a useful technology too, coming as it does with a boast of realism that is preserved even now, though not without challenge. In light of the geopolitical facts of US dominance, the Pentagon turns to photography understanding "the power of photographs to legitimize" those facts (Banks, 2001, p. 47). What the Pentagon thus also achieves is a continued Euro-American positioning of sight as primary among the human senses, thus fortifying the imperium of vision—now all the Pentagon has to do is establish the primacy of *its* vision.

The Pentagon's photographs appropriate other people's realities and reframe them to suit the US' strategic objectives, thus photography acts as a device that controls and instructs. The photographs are part of a pictorial propaganda system—propaganda not because they are "false" in any simple and naïve sense, but because they are primarily conceived as part of a global public relations campaign to sway minds.

But do they sway minds? These photographic media campaigns, such as the Pentagon's, represent a virtual conquest, but there is little actual danger of these images acting on anyone, and no evidence that anything in the "real world" has been altered by this campaign. At worst, they legitimize and reinforce what has long been established by colonialism, in broad terms, since the US' own westward expansion, its wars against Indians, and its annexationist ventures in the Caribbean and Pacific. Flickr then simply becomes the newest means of encoding what has long been coded: the civilization-barbarism dichotomy, the focus on women in other societies, the public health campaigns, schooling, contrasts in clothing, gazing at cultural others, the bare feet, the Old West, Thanksgiving,

Santa Claus, technological supremacy, and US empire as a gift to humanity. If there is one achievement that US military photographers can properly boast about, it is that they have gained expertise in the visual conventions that have become hegemonic in their culture and national ideology.

However, those photographers and the ones who direct them can also claim to have added or fortified some newer conventions, associated with the more recent ideology of globalization as progressive Americanization. The photographs can thus be "read" as depicting a world rendered frictionless by US movement. Speed is implied by the kinds of vehicles that are featured, while ubiquity is read in the numerous geographic locations of the various exercises and campaigns shown. *Technology is the ultimate solution*—that is what these images collectively promote. Yet, there is another reality to this US-dominated, globalist imagery—the lack of depth. There is a socio-cultural *thinness* about these photographs: multiple, discrete pictures, offered in rapid succession and abundant amounts, extricated from local contexts, which can produce an effect of *range without depth*. Range without depth is akin to the experience of *flight*. It's not surprising that a military that relies so heavily on aerial dominance (because life on the ground gets too messy for US forces), should have a supersonic, aerial-experiential view of the world.

Added to the above, there is the paradoxical move of demilitarizing the military's "militaryness" even as the military militarizes areas that were previously the preserve of civilian agencies (such as foreign aid and diplomacy). The additional paradox is that of the Pentagon pretending to produce depoliticized records of what is a political process of intervention and global dominance, while failing to serve the public by being fully accountable to it and showing the full range of truths of US military action abroad.

Yet, there may be a disquieting reality that is faithfully represented by at least some of these photographs. Even if we were to be uncharitable, and assert that only one per-

cent of what is shown about peoples around the world collaborating with US forces, and enjoying if not welcoming their presence, is true, then that should give us some pause. If many individuals and sectors of diverse societies around the world are only glad to receive, participate and interact with US military forces, then it should also redefine what is understood by anti-imperialist praxis—that it too, like imperialism, starts at home, and it starts with us.

Notes

1 The US Department of Defense's Flickr "photostream" is accessible at https://www.flickr.com/photos/39955793@N07/. The review of photographs on which this chapter is based was concluded on February 18, 2014. Periodic subsequent visits were designed to take further samples of images on themes already covered in this chapter.

2 The State Department distinguishes between "public affairs" and "public diplomacy". "Public affairs" refers to communication with a domestic, US audience. "Public diplomacy" involves communicating to foreign audiences (White House, 2009, p. 7).

3 Information Operations have more to do with communication during combat, and can involve military deception, electronic warfare, and psychological operations. They are very much related to "strategic communication," but this chapter's focus is on the more ostensibly "benign" modes of military media activity that are practiced on an everyday basis and involve mostly civilian audiences worldwide.

4 Between the State Department, Pentagon, and intelligence apparatus, there has been a growing proliferation of programs, concepts and terms relating to spreading information designed to (win) support for US foreign policy, that even attempts at charts tend to look like spaghetti, an almost incomprehensible nesting of loops and circles (see for example JFC, 2010, pp. II-4, II-7).

5 Photography was invented at roughly the same time as Euro-American Anthropology began to take a more formal shape, and at the same time as a new phase of western colonial expansion was underway. It is interesting to see a simi-

lar set of convergences at work in the Pentagon's attraction to visual media today, reproducing many of the same flawed and now outmoded assumptions.

6 The website for USAID's Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance can be accessed at http://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/bureaus/bureau-democracy-conflict-and-humanitarian-assistance/office-us. A DART is simply a rapid deployment team available for disaster recovery.

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