

PRIME MINISTER

cc. Private Office

ms

THE BBC

I attach a copy of the BBC's reply to the Chairman (together with the Chairman's original submission to the BBC).

I have marked:-

in **BLUE** where **the BBC case is stronger**, and
in **PINK** where **the BBC case is weaker**.

The weakest point of the BBC's defence is on page one of their reply which I have marked in yellow - and it would be quotable but for the fact that they say, and later substantiate, that many newspapers and an ITN reporter made the same wrong connection in linking the El Al bomb to the Libyan bombing.

You should also be aware of the reference in the covering letter from Mr. Hussey about the BBC Charter requiring them to ^o resist undue influence from any political party. However inappropriate, this quote might be used against you.

Stephen

STEPHEN SHERBOURNE

5th November 1986

BBC Broadcasting House London W1A 1AA

Telephone 01-580 4468 Telex: 265781 Telegrams and Cables: Broadcasts London Telex

5th November 1986

Dear Sir

We enclose a detailed response to the assessment by Conservative Central Office of the way BBC Television handled the main news stories on 15th and 17th April this year.

The reply offers a factual response to each of the Central Office allegations. No journalist would pretend that immediate coverage of such major stories could not, with hindsight, be improved. But we note that what you found biased was not so judged by an ex-editor of The Times, who was until recently a sometimes critical Governor of the BBC. The question is whether the audience for the 45 hours a week of news on BBC television and radio is being fully and fairly informed on major issues. We believe that it is. Of course, all viewers bring their own prejudices to specific topics. I am sure you would accept, for example, that a bulletin reflecting your own views would not be found neutral by others in the audience.

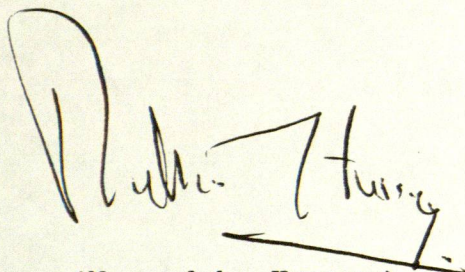
We are grateful for the trouble you have taken to bring to our notice what you regard as inadequacies in our service. That we are unable to agree with your findings in no way diminishes your right to make them. Under the terms of the BBC's Charter and Licence it is the Board of Governors who are charged with keeping the

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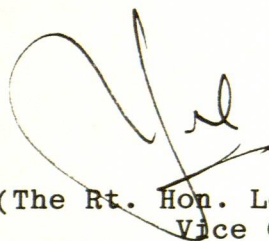
work of the Corporation under effective review. The Board is committed to impartiality and the maintenance of high standards. You may rest assured that we intend to discharge these responsibilities as we think proper, in accordance not only with the letter, but with the spirit of our Charter, which, you will appreciate, requires us to resist undue influence from any political party, and in no way to be swayed from those standards by the imminence or otherwise of a general election.

We believe this to be in the best interests both of our professional staff and of the general public.

Yours sincerely,



(Marmaduke Hussey)
Chairman Designate



(The Rt. Hon. Lord Barnett, P.C.)
Vice Chairman

The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, M.P.,
Chairman of the Party,
Conservative Central Office,
32 Smith Square,
London, SW1P 3HH

C.C.O. MEDIA MONITORING - THE BBC RESPONSE

Television News has examined Mr. Tebbit's report line by line and there now follows our considered response.

Much of the original document relies on two techniques - selectively comparing us with ITN and lifting words and phrases out of their original context. We have endeavoured to match each allegation with a straight and factual response; together with a justification of the statements we made on those nights.

Inevitably because of the C.C.O. techniques of comparison with ITN, we have had to use the same method to rebutt some points. At no stage is it our intention to be in any way critical of ITN. Where we have erred we have said so.

Overall, we believe that a thorough analysis of the BBC and ITN bulletins in question reveals a fair accurate, and thoroughly professional approach both by the BBC and ITN. However, in the light of subsequent events, it was clearly wrong for the BBC to assume that the failed attempt to plant a bomb on an El Al jumbo jet was a response to the bombing of Libya - although many newspapers and an ITN reporter made the same wrong connection.

We vigorously reject the suggestion that either consciously or by accident the BBC correspondents, editors and scriptwriters failed to meet the high standards of impartiality which we guard so jealously. We believe that a proper detailed analysis of the bulletins confirm the BBC's continuing commitment to impartial journalism.

RON NEIL
EDITOR, TELEVISION NEWS

ROBIN WALSH
DEPUTY EDITOR, TELEVISION NEWS

CHRIS CRAMER
NEWS EDITOR (INTAKE)

JOHN SIMPSON
DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

LIBYA : THE BBC RESPONSE

TUESDAY, APRIL 15TH, 1986

THE HEADLINES : NINE O'CLOCK NEWS/ITN

BBC HEADLINES

- a) Worldwide condemnation of the American air strike on Libya.
- b) Children are casualties - three from Gadaffi's own family.
- c) Mrs. Thatcher under fire in the Commons defends her decision to allow the use of British bases.
- d) Tonight she shows her critics the proof of Libyan terrorism.

ITN HEADLINES

- a) Mr. Gorbachov tells Mr. Reagan 'Our Foreign Ministers can't meet now'.
- b) The bombs meant for terrorists kill Colonel Gadaffi's daughter.
- c) President Reagan says 'If necessary we will do it again'.
- d) Mrs. Thatcher - 'I agreed last week'.
- e) Mr. Kinnock - 'It will provoke'.
- f) The police are busy with demonstrators in Downing Street tonight.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The contrast is clear. The BBC gave particular emphasis to the Libyan case".

BBC RESPONSE

Not true. ITN carried six Headlines. Four of these were concerned with what Conservative Central Office call the "unfavourable" aspect of the bombing (a,b,e,f). One was "neutral" (d), and one, quoting Reagan, was "favourable" to the British and American case (c). The BBC carried four Headlines, two of which were concerned with the "unfavourable" side (a,b). One was divided between "unfavourable" and "neutral" (c), and one was the strongest line in favour of Mrs. Thatcher's position to appear in any of the Headlines, ITN's or the BBC's: "Tonight she shows her critics the proof of Libyan terrorism" (d). The BBC was therefore the only organisation to say at the outset that there was proof of such terrorism. This does not square with C.C.O.'s charge of giving particular emphasis to the Libyan case.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The BBC made the principle feature of its news the 'worldwide condemnation' of America - a subjective and emotive description which is repeated but never substantiated throughout the broadcast".

BBC RESPONSE

Not true. The phrase "worldwide condemnation" was thoroughly substantiated during the broadcast. Our diplomatic editor, John Simpson, reported that only Canada, Israel and Britain had supported the American action, and he continued: "All the others, loyal allies as well as fair weather ones, are uniformly hostile to it: France says it simply extended the chain of violence, West Germany which wasn't even given advanced warning says it was scarcely understandable, Spain spoke of its alarm and concern, Italy was angry that its special pleas for restraint were ignored." Simpson also made it clear that the U.N. Security Council debate on the subject that evening would bring more opposition. Immediately following his report, we described the condemnation from the Arab world and continued: "Even Libya's traditional opponents Egypt and Jordan had expressed outrage". (That evening, China, India, the O.A.U. and the entire non-aligned movement joined in the condemnation).

N.B. Although this section focuses on the two sets of Headlines, it is worth noting that later in the ITN broadcast they said "Mr. Reagan has so far shown little concern for the vocal opposition to his action from across the world" and later "the furore in much of the rest of the world over America's action against Libya is simply not understood here".

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The BBC then turned to the civilian casualties of the raid - thus giving emphasis to one of Libya's major propaganda points - before describing Mrs. Thatcher as being 'under fire in the Commons'. Only in the last breath did the BBC make any reference to 'Libyan terrorism', in a series of Headlines which otherwise tended to support the pro-Libyan argument".

BBC RESPONSE

Seriously misleading. The order and language of the two sets of headlines are in fact much the same. C.C.O. chooses not to draw attention to the fact that ITN, as well as the BBC, chose the civilian casualties as the subject for its second headline, and that the language of the one is no more emphatic than that of the other: "The bombs meant for terrorists kill Colonel Gaddafi's daughter" (ITN); "Children are casualties, three from Gaddafi's own family" (BBC). C.C.O. also chooses to ignore the fact that ITN, as well as the BBC, refers to the casualties before mentioning either British or American reaction. ITN: "President Reagan says 'If necessary we will do it again'. Mrs. Thatcher 'I agreed last week'. Mr. Kinnock 'It will provoke'." BBC: "Mrs. Thatcher, under fire in the Commons, defends her decision to allow the use of British bases." As for the final sentence of the BBC headlines, there could in this context be no such thing as a "last breath" headline. It is absurd to suggest that "Tonight she shows her critics the proof of Libyan terrorism" is anything other than a powerful and unqualified statement of fact.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"In our view ITN chose a very different approach, which emphasised hard fact. It chose to lead the story with a factual report of the diplomatic repercussions between the superpowers, rather than the vague phrases such as "worldwide condemnation" employed by the BBC. ITN did not attempt to hide the civilian casualties, but chose also to report that these were caused by 'bombs meant for terrorists'. And neither did it shirk reporting domestic criticism of Mrs. Thatcher's action, but reported the differing views in an entirely factual fashion. Whereas for the BBC Mrs. Thatcher was 'under fire', ITN left Mrs. Thatcher and other politicians to speak for themselves. There can be little doubt that ITN succeeded far better than the BBC in introducing the news in a balanced and impartial fashion. They were scrupulous in not attempting to lead the viewer either to a pro-American or pro-Libyan opinion."

BBC RESPONSE

There appear to be five criticisms in this passage, not all of them clearly expressed.

- a) that ITN chose a very different approach in their headlines, which emphasised hard fact, while the BBC's headlines did not.

Not true. Not one of the BBC's headlines was conjectural; each was fully substantiated in the reporting that followed.

- b) that the BBC's phrases ('worldwide condemnation' etc) were vague.

Not true. We have already demonstrated in some detail above how extensive the condemnation was.

- c) that the BBC chose not to accompany its references to civilian casualties with parallel references to the proof of Libyan terrorism.

Not true. The BBC headlines referred to proof of Libyan terrorism within seven seconds of its mention of casualties.

- d) that because the BBC referred to Mrs. Thatcher as being 'under fire', rather than leaving her and other politicians to speak for themselves, we were less 'factual' than ITN.

Not true. C.C.O. neglects to point out that ITN itself used precisely the same expression later in its report: "In the House of Commons this afternoon Mrs. Thatcher came under fire from all sides for her support of President Reagan's action".

- e) that the BBC was far less 'successful' than ITN in introducing the news in a balanced and impartial fashion, and was not scrupulous about not attempting to lead the viewer either to a pro-American or a pro-Libyan opinion.

We disagree. Our rebuttal of each of the above points shows why we believe our headlines were balanced, impartial and scrupulously fair.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"In the section following the headlines, the ITN report stuck firmly to journalistic facts: the cancelled meeting, the Libyan casualties, the Prime Minister's Commons Statement, the Opposition criticism. But the BBC went straight into alarmist hyperbole: 'The world is waiting to see what Colonel Gaddafi is going to do in response...'. It was a phrase which raised the general level of anxiety while doing nothing to inform the viewer of the facts, and which also established one of the main strands in the anti-American argument, that the attack would provoke more violence. It was a line which was to dominate and distort much of the final part of their broadcast".

BBC RESPONSE

Not true. the sentence quoted from the BBC was a statement of objective fact at 9 pm that day. Our diplomatic editor had spoken to senior officials from four different governments - those of Britain, the United States, France and West Germany - and he had found that Gaddafi's response had indeed become their main concern that afternoon. Foreign ministries, including the Foreign Office, were formulating advice to their citizens in sensitive areas. Interestingly, C.C.O. does not quote the final sentence of ITN's programme introduction: "In London, a Libyan diplomatic official said 'Anyone supporting the United States aggression will be a target for anything'".

N.B. By this stage in the C.C.O. document, the BBC's coverage has become 'the anti-American argument'. In our view, this is tendentious. No evidence is adduced at any point by the C.C.O. to demonstrate that the BBC's reporting constitutes a deliberate intention to manipulate the news and cause it to appear anti-American. It goes without saying that no such intention has ever existed.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The BBC then chose a particularly damaging phrase to describe America's response, 'In Washington the mood is one of jubilation', which, when sandwiched between phrases such as 'children are casualties' and 'causing deaths and injuries to men, women and children as they slept in their homes', suggested extreme callousness."

BBC RESPONSE

Not true. It is incontestable that the mood in Washington that day was one of jubilation. It is not the BBC's function to decide whether some facts are too 'damaging' or too 'callous' to be broadcast; and if we were to take that decision we would indeed be open to the accusation of manipulating the news for political purposes.

It is equally untrue, that the phrases complained of are 'sandwiched' together to create some particular effect. In fact they occurred at intervals during a lengthy passage of narrative, separated by, among others, the words. "A White House spokesman said 'We have struck a blow against terrorism, we've sent a message to Gadaffi.'" If ITN, rather than the BBC, were under attack for 'sandwiching' phrases in order to suggest extreme callousness, no doubt the ITN headlines "The bombs meant for terrorists kill Colonel Gadaffi's daughter/ President Reagan says 'If necessary we will do it again'" would have been used as evidence against them.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"It also devoted far more of the opening paragraph than ITN did to words and phrases designed to arouse anti-American emotion: 'across the world there is great concern', 'deaths and injuries to men, women and children as they slept in their homes', 'Colonel Gadaffi's own family was hit', 'in intensive care with serious injuries'.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The point is not whether these statements should be made but whether they should be given such prominence in the first, 'audience conditioning' part of the report. ITN apparently thought not. Their brief factual summary of Libyan casualties was prominent but half the length and much less emotive: 'reports from Western diplomats in Libya said that up to 100 had been killed in the American attacks. An adopted daughter of Colonel Gadaffi's was said to have been killed in the raid on Tripoli and two of his sons were injured.'".

BBC RESPONSE

The BBC rejects in the strongest terms that its words and phrases were "designed" to do anything other than state the objective facts of the situation.

BBC RESPONSE

The expression 'audience-conditioning' is a disturbing one, especially when it comes from a political party. It is not a concept with which we are familiar, and no objective journalist would care to think in such terms. The programme introduction is simply the place where we give our viewers an outline of the main story of the day. On this occasion, ITN's outline differed from ours in various respects. That is not surprising. No sinister political significance should be read into the fact that we and ITN did things differently. We usually do.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"Again ITN, but not the BBC, reported the Prime Minister's statement that she had received assurances that the attack would be only on terrorist targets. The BBC instead stated 'Mrs. Thatcher had been under pressure to explain'."

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The BBC's introduction to the rest of the bulletin was similarly more sympathetic to the Libyan position than to that of the American and British governments. They might quite fairly have said 'we'll be looking at the events that prompted America's retaliation and its chances of success.' In fact they said 'we'll be assessing the world reaction to what the American's have done, and the political repercussions for Mrs. Thatcher'. 'Assessing the world reaction', 'what the Americans have done' and 'political repercussions' have entirely negative connotations in this context, and are the aspects of the story that the Libyans would have chosen, given that the BBC had already advised the viewer that the 'world reaction' had been one of 'worldwide condemnation'."

BBC RESPONSE

The implication is that the BBC failed to report this. Not true. The BBC fully reported that Mrs. Thatcher had insisted (not merely 'received assurances') that any American action should be against terrorist targets: "she stressed that she had told President Reagan that America action had to abide by international law and that any attack had to be aimed at specific terrorist targets".

BBC RESPONSE

Not true. The BBC's statement of programme intent, as quoted above, is neutral in tone and devoid of any sympathies one way or the other.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"They did not use ITN's quotation from George Shultz : 'intelligence implicated Colonel Gadaffi in the West Berlin bombing and plans to attack 30 American installations around the world'. The BBC's reference to the American justification to the raid - surely a vital part of any balanced coverage - was buried late in the newscast."

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"ITN also included in their introductory section, the American statement that they had acted legitimately under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter (as well as suggesting that it was an unusual action under that Article). The only American quotation in the BBC's introductory section was the 'jubilation' one 'we have struck a blow against terrorism. We have sent a message to Gadaffi'.

BBC RESPONSE

The implication is that we did not report the American justification. Not true. Thirteen seconds from the start of the programme introduction, we were quoting the White House as saying 'we have struck a blow against terrorism, we have sent a message to Gadaffi'. And the second report in our programme dealt with President Reagan's justification in full. C.C.O. describes this as "buried late in the newscast". Not true. The passage appears on page four of C.C.O.'s own transcript of that night's Nine O'Clock News - a transcript which runs to twenty pages in all: "Mr. Reagan has spoken of irrefutable evidence of Colonel Gadaffi's involvement in terrorist attacks on American targets, including the bombing of the West German discotheque where a U.S. serviceman died. A short time ago, the American delegate to the United Nations told the U.N. Security Council that he had evidence that Libya plans terrorist attacks on Americans in four continents over the next few weeks."

BBC RESPONSE

We dealt in full with this aspect of the American justification later in the programme.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The BBC chose throughout the broadcast to emphasise the aspect of 'worldwide condemnation'. It amplified the thought throughout the broadcast in phrases such as 'across the world there is great concern', 'worldwide criticism', 'the United States finds itself more isolated than at any single moment since 1945', 'popular only among Americans' and America 'almost completely isolated from world opinion'."

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The only countries it actually quotes in the bulletin are the Soviet Union, Syria, Egypt and Jordan, in other words Arab or communist states with strong vested interests whose criticism was totally predictable."

BBC RESPONSE

Not true. We gave it due prominence, for the reasons stated above. But this aspect appeared only in the two sections devoted to foreign reaction.

BBC RESPONSE

Not true. We have already listed the European countries, which, by 9 pm that night, had shown they did not support the American action - France, Spain (which both refused to allow the American aircraft to overfly their territory), Italy and West Germany. Others were to follow. Altogether about 100 countries throughout the world were to associate themselves with condemnation of the raid. The C.C.O. report states that the criticism of countries such as Egypt and Jordan was predictable. Not true. For two strongly pro-western governments to criticise an attack on their enemy, Libya, came as an unwelcome surprise to the United States.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"Critical statements as sweeping as that require specific support, but the BBC were either unable or unwilling to provide any real evidence for this fundamental audience-conditioning allegation. The BBC suggested that 'only Canada and Britain support the American action. All the others ... are uniformly hostile to it' but failed to show any evidence for such a sweeping statement. Indeed, within a few hours several other nations were to express their formal support, sympathy or understanding, but by then the BBC had already delivered its verdict."

BBC RESPONSE

Not true. This is the third appearance of a demonstrably false assertion.

THE REPORTS FROM LIBYA BY KATE ADIE

We find it puzzling that the C.C.O. document makes no reference to our correspondent in Libya, Kate Adie, by name. She is one of the BBC's most experienced journalists, especially when it comes to reporting in Libya.

This was her eighth assignment there. For the first time in her three years' experience in the country she found that a revolutionary committee had been installed at the television station, with powers to view each of the edited reports produced by the foreign television teams working there. In order to avoid being forced by this committee to alter her reports, Ms. Adie decided never to go to the television station herself. She left the task instead to a BBC engineer, who was able to tell the censoring committee that he was not empowered to make any changes himself. The engineer was frequently threatened, but insisted that no single word of Ms. Adie's reports could be changed. With the exception of the Americans every other foreign television correspondent went to the television station with his or her edited report - and ran the risk of being censored, as many were. On the one occasion when the BBC engineer was unable to prevent some of Kate Adie's pictures from being censored, we reported the fact before her story was broadcast.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"In both the BBC and the ITN bulletins the first full film story was a report from Tripoli. Both had much the same story (not surprisingly, - since they could only film what the Libyans allowed them to): the raid at night, the damage to residential property, civilians including children killed and injured, outrage among ordinary Libyans. The contrast in the treatment, however, is significant. The ITN report is briefer and more factual."

BBC RESPONSE

Not true. - The ITN film report was actually longer than the BBC film report.

The ITN film report was 3 minutes 55 seconds.

The BBC film report was 3 minutes 51 seconds.

C.C.O. obviously added in a telephone report from Kate Adie, illustrated by a still photograph of her, on the latest situation, regarding Colonel Gaddafi's family.

There is no evidence anywhere in the C.C.O. report to substantiate the claim that one report was more factual than the other.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The ITN report is briefer and more factual, ending with a summary that expressed the situation very fairly: 'The Libyans are now trying to use the American raid as a propaganda weapon for themselves by concentrating news coverage on the civilian and not the military side of the attack. But these scenes of residential carnage can hardly do President Reagan's case any good'. No similar single qualification concerning Libyan control of news coverage was forthcoming from the BBC."

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The success of the Libyan propaganda effort can be clearly seen in the BBC news bulletin. It devotes considerably longer to this Libyan-controlled footage than the ITN bulletin, and the relative amount of time and emphasis given in the whole report to civilian death and injury is significant. For, as the ITN reporter stated, such footage was the heart of the Libyan propaganda case. A simple count show that ITN gave 45 seconds to the discussion or depiction of civilian casualties. The BBC returned to the civilian casualties on three separate occasions throughout the broadcast for a total of 130 seconds."

BBC RESPONSE

Kate Adie stated: "... foreign journalists were confined to the hotel. Then as dawn broke, we were taken by officials to a residential district." In our view, at this time this clearly indicated that the movement of journalists was restricted and news coverage was controlled. Throughout her assignment in Libya, Kate Adie made more than seventy references to reporting restrictions.

BBC RESPONSE

The inference here is that the BBC dwelt much longer on the images of civilian casualties and damage to buildings. In fact, the BBC showed 41 seconds of pictures of casualties; ITN showed not 45 seconds as C.C.O. maintains, but 51. BBC showed 52 seconds of damaged buildings; ITN showed 73 seconds. This is how the Tripoli film coverage compared:

	<u>BBC</u>	<u>ITN</u>
Coverage of raid	25 secs	54 secs.
Damage to buildings	52 secs.	1 min. 13 secs.
Casualties	41 secs	51 secs.
Interviews with civilians	35 secs.	32 secs.
Interview with doctor	20 secs.	0
Demonstrations	22 secs.	9 secs.
Pieces to camera	36 secs.	16 secs.
Final update telephone call	54 secs.	0

A total of 3 mins. 51 secs. on film from BBC (4 mins. 45 secs. if the telephone report is included) and 3 mins. 55 secs. from ITN. We do not consider that within total coverage of the whole story lasting almost 41 minutes, these figures suggest an over-emphasis on developments in Libya.

The BBC is confused by the C.C.O. reference to returning to the civilian casualties "on three separate occasions throughout the broadcast ..."

This could mean that, apart from our main coverage of the casualties issue, C.C.O. has added in the references to casualties in our headlines at the beginning and end of the programme. If this is the case we feel no further comment on this claim is required other than pointing out that the ITN headline reference has not been included by C.C.O.

On the other hand it may be a reference to the occasions Kate Adie referred to civilian casualties in her report. If this is the case, this would have included the up to date telephone report with the latest news of casualties within Colonel Gaddafi's family. This report included the information that one of Colonel Gaddafi's children had already been buried. This, we find, to be totally justified editorially.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"...in contrast to the ITN balanced summary, the last words from the BBC reporter were emotive and sympathetic to the Libyan position: 'we've had no word from him (Colonel Gaddafi) about the death of his daughter - she's already been buried.'"

BBC RESPONSE

Not true. These words were neither emotive nor sympathetic. They were simple, unvarnished facts of news significance. And they were the last words because that was the latest news from Kate Adie on the telephone in Libya.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"This section shows up very clearly one of the major problems of reporting, especially film reporting, in countries which exercise tight control over the activities of journalists. The media have ample opportunity to film what is favourable to the regime and are barred from the rest - in this case the damage to military and terrorist installations or the voices of Libyans opposed to Gaddafi's policy of state terrorism. An objective news organisation will try to balance this with restrained reporting of what the regime wants shown and reminders of what the home audience is not allowed to see. In this case, ITN showed reasonable restraint but the BBC did not."

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"It is relevant to compare the BBC's activity in the Libyan instance with their news coverage of South Africa on 16th June, 1986 (the 'Soweto anniversary') immediately following the imposition of tighter reporting restrictions. In its first broadcast under these new controls, it mentioned the restrictions placed by the government on its news coverage no less than ten times. Two months earlier it did not mention Libyan reporting restrictions once."

BBC RESPONSE

The implication is that Kate Adie was not restrained in her reporting of the things the Libyan regime wanted shown. Not true. She and her camera team had filmed scenes which would have suited Gaddafi's propaganda purpose extremely well: mutilated corpses lying in the streets, lines of bodies in the morgue, hysterical relatives screaming and weeping. She was scrupulous in her refusal to use any of these pictures on the grounds that they would have over-emphasised the emotional impact of her report and were, quite simply, too horrific. If it had been her intention, or that of the BBC, to sway public opinion in Gaddafi's favour, she would not have displayed such sensitivity.

During the course of her assignment, Kate Adie successfully filmed military installations which had been American targets. And on two of these occasions, she did it secretly without the authorities' permission. The pictures were shown by BBC News.

BBC RESPONSE

During her eleven days in Libya, Kate Adie was able to film all aspects of the story - albeit, clandestinely on two occasions. And there was no restriction on her words.

Under the South African regulations, there are legal constraints on where journalists can go, what they can film and, importantly, what they can say. Hence when reporting South Africa, there is a need to make more frequent references to restriction.

REPORTS BY OTHER BBC TV NEWS CORRESPONDENTS

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"Much of the other reporting from Tim Sebastian, Christopher Wain, Michael Sullivan, John Simpson, John Cole, Christopher Morris and Brian Barron was more fair and balanced, although not without fault".

"Sebastian made an unnecessarily emotive reference - 'in the general mood of self-congratulation (in America) there was barely a mention of Libyan casualties'."

"Equally emotive was Barron's claim that 'Britain is in the firing line'."

"Wain quoted unnamed defence experts to suggest that the use of British bases was not for military reasons but 'was political'."

"Sullivan stated that the attack on Libya was 'popular only among Americans'."

"We believe Keith Graves' report is more questionable. He stated that 'for once the Arab world is united' in condemning the raid, but supported this claim with only two weak items - an unattributed quotation saying that it had 'boosted Gadaffi's image', and an Arab League statement 'speaking for all Arab states' that the raid was 'unprecedented'. These were insufficient to justify the statement that the raid was 'driving moderate Arab states into the radical camp'. Events since then would suggest that this comment was inaccurate."

BBC RESPONSE

All seven correspondents appear to be accused of "faults" but no evidence is presented against Simpson, Cole and Morris. The "faults" alleged against the others are swiftly dealt with.

This is a plain statement of fact, as the coverage of the American television networks and newspapers showed. Administration officials resolutely refused to discuss civilian casualties at the press conferences given in Washington after the raid.

These words are taken completely out of context. Barron had just quoted the Department of Transport as putting major British airports on extra alert.

The unnamed defence experts quoted by Wain were senior Whitehall officials, speaking on a "deep background" basis.

As C.C.O. states, a minor point.

Graves' quotation is attributed to "a senior official of a moderate Arab state". In the Middle East, officials and politicians are rarely quoted by name for security reasons. The Arab League represents 24 out of 25 Arab states and is not a "weak" source.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The concentration of his report on the likelihood of 'revenge attacks' and other reprisals, quoting only unidentified individuals and organisations as sources, was again unsupported by hard fact. 'News' seemed to have given way to 'views' and provocative conjecture on future events, with unqualified statements such as 'likely call for Arab sanctions against America and Britain', 'will kidnap and kill any Britons or Americans it finds', 'will result in a fresh outbreak of attacks, only now the targets will be not only American but British as well', 'has forecast a sharp increase in attacks on American and British targets. They will choose their time and place ... they will strike back'. Such conjecture inevitably has a dramatic negative conditioning effect on the conclusion drawn by the viewer and contributed to the imbalanced emphasis of the broadcast."

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"Altogether the BBC placed much more emphasis on and gave much greater coverage than ITN to potential reprisals and danger to British interests and lives, with a discussion of 'fears there could be reprisals', 'a tense vigil for any signs of a Libyan retaliation', 'targets in this country', 'danger area', 'most vulnerable Britons', 'the new dangers that opened up today to crews and passengers' and comments that individual Britons 'are at greater risk than they were 24 hours ago', and that Britain was 'on the brink of summer anxiety that could frighten off foreign tourists'."

BBC RESPONSE

There is an important difference between "views" and the authoritative assessment of an experienced correspondent. Graves' first three points - "likely call for Arab sanctions against America and Britain", "will kidnap and kill any Britons or Americans it finds", and "will result in a fresh outbreak of attacks, only now the targets will be not only American but British as well" - were proven correct during the next few days. His last point - "has forecast a sharp increase in attacks on American and British targets. They will choose their time and place ... they will strike back" - far from being unqualified, was clearly stated as being from an Israeli security source. ITN, too, carried its forecasts, among them this one from Ken Rees on President Reagan's action: "If what he has done does help to curb terrorism against Americans then there is no doubt it will win widespread popular support. But that is a big IF and even supporters of Mr. Reagan's tough line are well aware that this is only the start of the story."

BBC RESPONSE

In view of the potency of the terrorist threat from the Middle East, an examination of the possible consequences of the Libyan bombing was a proper area for our investigation. Of the eight assessments quoted alongside, four were made by a senior figure from the Institute of Strategic Studies. As it happens, his suggestion ("targets in this country") turned out to be inaccurate. C.C.O. does not distinguish between quotations attributable to BBC correspondents and those attributable to the experts we interviewed. The forecasts of our own men were uniformly accurate, and most notably the suggestion that Britain was about to face a summer when foreign tourists would be frightened off.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The BBC view of 'the story' appeared to be that the Americans had committed an act of unjustifiable aggression which had resulted in the deaths of many innocent civilians, which had attracted worldwide condemnation and which had greatly increased international sympathy and support for Libya, and that by supporting the Americans the British Government had put British lives at risk."

BBC RESPONSE

Nowhere were the words "unjustifiable" or "aggression" used by us, except in quotation by others. It is a fact that the raids caused the deaths of many civilians, attracted worldwide condemnation, increased political support, if only temporarily for Gaddafi, and that British lives - those, that is, of some individuals - were placed at risk. But at no stage did we "sandwich" to use an earlier C.C.O. expression, these unquestionable facts together.

THURSDAY, APRIL 17TH, 1986

The C.C.O. document states on page 18 "there was indeed considerable speculation at the time concerning a connection between the raid and the (El Al) bomb, but subsequent information showed that there had never been any". It was this suggestion of a link between the two events, widely held and reported by most of the media at the time and finally disproved only at the recent Hindawi trial, which featured in the Nine O'Clock News and was alluded to several times. At least five National newspapers made precisely the same assumption in their editions the following day. So too did ITN, although C.C.O. appears to have overlooked this fact.

ITN: "When the Americans bombed Libya, Hindawi was ordered to activate the girl".

Daily Mail: "Scotland Yard had little doubt that the bombing attack was a direct reprisal for Britain's involvement in the American raid on Libya".

The Sun: "The bomb was almost certainly meant for an Arab revenge attack following the blitzing of Libya".

Daily Express: "The plot is seen as the start of reprisals for Britain's part in the U.S. bombing of Libya".

The Scotsman: "A horrific attempt to blow up an Israeli airliner over central London and the murder of three British hostages in Beirut yesterday signalled the start of a concerted terrorist backlash against Britain's part in the U.S. air raids on Libya".

Today: "Libya has launched its first wave of revenge attacks and at Heathrow Airport, an attempt to blow up an El Al Jumbo jet was foiled".

So, in common with very many others - including ITN - the BBC linked the two events. This assumption was incorrect and with hindsight should not have been made.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"A comparison of the introductions to the BBC and ITN bulletins for Thursday shows yet again a dramatic contrast between the more objective reporting style of ITN and the more contentious editorial line of the BBC."

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"ITN describes the revenge killing of these Britons, (it was later revealed that only two were British) in the straight convention of news reportage. 'Good evening. Three British men held hostage in Lebanon were murdered today, taken into the hills and shot in the back of the head. A revolutionary Muslim group said they were executed to avenge the American air attacks on Libya early on Tuesday'. The BBC, however, continued to use language which in our view was likely to alarm the audience, and to suggest that the government had put the nation in danger. The opening headlines emphasised retribution - the attempt to blow up an airliner, the deaths of three British hostages, and the Labour accusation that Mrs. Thatcher was 'provoking terrorism'. ' "

BBC RESPONSE

The introductions from the BBC and ITN are written in a different order but convey the same facts: that three men had been murdered in Beirut as a direct result of the American bombing of Libya and Britain's involvement. However, there are two sentences which with hindsight, drew the wrong inference and were ill-advised. They were "in Beirut and in London the terrorists and bombers have struck against the British people" and "and the long arm of Arab revenge reaches Heathrow Airport".

BBC RESPONSE

Not true. The opening headlines were a statement of fact and dealt with the stories of the day in a different order of priority than ITN. Our final headline went on to report U.S. intelligence reports that the American bombing was on target. An important additional fact.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"They then offered a prejudicial and emotive piece of opinion. The opening words of the broadcast stated: 'Good evening. Britain is paying the price for supporting America's attack on Libya'. This was an inexcusable departure from straightforward news coverage. It was not an attempt to provide news but to prey on people's emotions and fears in a fashion which should find no home in any respectable broadcasting operation."

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"In their next paragraph following the headlines, ITN picked out two quotations from the Commons: 'Labour's foreign affairs spokesman, Mr. Donald Anderson called them the first tragic victims of Mrs. Thatcher's total and isolated support for President Reagan. The Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe said the government wouldn't be diverted'. The BBC, however, painted a picture of the government under siege: 'In the Commons this afternoon, Mrs. Thatcher, under fierce attack accused of endangering British lives. Her retort 'If you let the threat of further terrorism stop you then the terrorist has won'."

BBC RESPONSE

We reject this. The note pinned to the three dead bodies in Lebanon, as we reported, indicated that it was a direct result of the American bombing raid. In a separate incident, the British Ambassador's residence was attacked. In a third incident, the British journalist John McCarthy was abducted. That night, Britain, was certainly "paying the price".

BBC RESPONSE

We reported fact; that Mrs. Thatcher was indeed under fierce attack and had been accused of endangering British lives. However, unlike ITN we gave the Prime Minister's strong response to this. A much more powerful statement.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"Strangely, whereas ITN said the hostages were 'murdered', the BBC merely said they were 'shot through the head' and 'killed', neutral terms which decriminalise the act, although at the very end of their broadcast the BBC did acknowledge that the hostages 'have been murdered'."

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"A far more serious matter, however, was the major error into which the BBC's editorialising stance led them. To show how the government's support for the American raid had endangered British lives, they prominently suggested that the Heathrow bomb attempt was an act of retribution for it. The opening remarks of the broadcast describe it in highly emotive terms as bombers having 'struck against the British people', without explaining why the terrorists should choose an El Al plane to strike against the British. The introduction continued in the same vein: 'and the long arm of Arab revenge reached Heathrow Airport. 400 people, many of them British, escaped certain death when police intercepted a time bomb in luggage being taken aboard an Israeli jumbo'."

BBC RESPONSE

"Shot through the head" is not a "neutral" term. It is a horrific and graphic phrase describing to the audience the chilling nature of the murders. There is nothing "strange" about the different choice of words. The document accepts that the phrase "murdered" was used in the BBC closing headlines. Oddly, C.C.O. fails to mention that ITN's closing headlines use the word "shot".

BBC RESPONSE

As we have indicated, the linking of the Hindawi bomb plot and the American raid was the one factual error in our coverage at the time.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"There was indeed considerable speculation at the time concerning a connection between the raid and the bomb, but subsequent information showed that there had never been any. Subsequent information, however, came too late to change the attitude of an audience that had been emotionally conditioned by those speculative phrases purporting to be hard fact in the key opening seconds of the news bulletins:

'Britain is paying the price ...terrorists and bombers have struck against the British people ... punishment for the Libyan attacklong arm of Arab revenge ...400 people, many of them British, escaped certain death ...gangs of armed men were by now roaming the streets of West Beirut looking for British people ...Mrs. Thatcher under fierce attack accused of endangering British lives.' All this in the first 200-odd words of the bulletin."

BBC RESPONSE

Only two of these seven phrases could be described as "speculative" i.e. "terrorists and bombers have struck against British people" and "long arm of Arab revenge". Every other phrase is factual.

"Britain is paying the price"

It was. Three people, two of them Britons, had been murdered as a direct result of the U.S. raid.

"punishment for the Libyan attack".

Statement pinned to the dead bodies.

"400 people, many of them British, escaped certain death".

Fact, as later given in evidence at the Hindawi trial.

"gangs of armed men were by now roaming the streets of West Beirut looking for British people" .

Fact. And as a result, the British Ambassador had warned British people in West Beirut not to go into the streets for a day or so or not to cross the Green Line. Journalist John McCarthy had been abducted by armed men.

"Mrs. Thatcher under fierce attack accused of endangering British lives".

Fact. The Prime Minister had been subjected to angry questioning in exactly these terms.

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"The BBC did not stop there. The unbalanced editorial flavour continued right through the broadcast. Once again, emphasising retribution and revenge, they stated: 'there is no doubt that the three Britons found dead today, were killed in retaliation for Britain's part in the operation against the Libyans. And all the indications are that this is just the start of a campaign aimed at Britain and British targets.'"

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"Even the good news was heavily qualified: 'there's satisfaction tonight that about 400 lives have been saved, but nobody believes that this will be the last terrorist threat'."

C.C.O. COMPLAINT

"For their final example of lack of balance, the BBC signed off their broadcast with the following emotion-laden and highly provocative line: 'Neil Kinnock said tonight 'Mrs. Thatcher had abandoned them to their fate'."

BBC RESPONSE

There was no doubt that the three Britons had been murdered because of the U.S. raid. The note pinned to their bodies was evidence of this. There were also many signs on April 17th to bear out the second sentence. The British Ambassador in Beirut certainly thought so in his warning to Britons in Beirut. And airports and other installations in Britain had already been placed on full alert.

BBC RESPONSE

This phrase was included in a report from Heathrow Airport. It was firmly based on fears of reprisals expressed by the authorities at Heathrow, and other civilian airports and military bases around the country.

BBC RESPONSE

It is often programme style to finish with a quotation. Mr. Kinnock's assertion that "Mrs. Thatcher had abandoned them to their fate" was a very controversial statement. But the words which C.C.O. describe as "emotion-laden and highly provocative" were from the Leader of the Opposition: they were his words, not ours. They were clearly newsworthy.