

Mission Ready

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What Can I Do To Help My Country?

Many of the readers of Mission Ready may find themselves in the position of the authors—businesspeople, long out of uniform, who sometimes feel powerless to help the nation, in a meaningful way, during this crucial war on terrorism. The frustration is accentuated when many in the media, and in the Congress, purport to represent the collective, American viewpoint, on the fantastic medium of television. While polls indicate the majority of Americans supported the war in Iraq, the majority of the media personalities—and the public figures they “interview”—condemn the war, and blur the distinctions between the values of our country and those of our enemies. It may be that many of our readers do not agree with the broadcasted voices; conversely, you may not agree with the silence of these voices on incidents that make your blood boil.

Today, as we write this newsletter, twenty six year old American businessman, Nick Berg, was forced to the ground by his captors and publicly beheaded, as he screamed in terror. The last words he heard were Allah Akbar, “God is great.” His head was then held by the executioner who had just meted out divine punishment, before the camera. The same media that obsesses over its “obligation” to show every single photograph of the misdeeds of a few American prisoner guards—and the same media who rebuffed the pleas of our military command to delay the release of those aberrant and non-representational photos, for the safety of Americans abroad—will likely censor this barbaric execution, and give it as little play as it did the burning and mutilation of four American contractors in Fallujah, the beheading of Daniel Pearl, and the leaping of innocent Americans from the windows of the World Trade Center. The same anchormen who refused to wear American flag lapel pins in the aftermath of the worst attack on this country’s soil—for fear of damaging their reputations for “objectivity”—provide the child killers of Hamas with an international podium to “give their side of the story,” and broadcast the demands of every terrorist who has the gall to call a “news conference.”

So, what can you and we do, to counter the all pow-

erful news media? Believe it or not, we can fight the media with a word of mouth campaign—by talking to as many people as we can about our values, and our pride in the servicemen and women who are putting themselves on the line in battlefields all over the world. Before you dismiss the power of a positive word of mouth campaign, consider the effects of a negative one. We all know, for example, of famous actors who, with very powerful public relations machines, cannot dispel a rumor that has circulated across the nation—from the lips of one movie fan into the ears of another. In politics, a “whisper campaign” has often unfairly defeated a candidate who had the vaunted media at his disposal. Conspiracies, scandalous liaisons, alien bodies kept at a Top Secret air force base, alligators in the sewers of New York—these and scores of other baseless rumors have become the sure and certain knowledge of armies of believers, who all heard it “through the grapevine.” And how do the Islamic-fascists recruit their legions of followers, if not by word of mouth? Clearly, word of mouth campaigns can be very effective, for better or for worse.

Now, let’s look at what a positive word of mouth campaign can accomplish. We have all waited in lines at restaurants that do not advertise, their reputations having been built by those “in the know.” Car manufacturers have been occasionally surprised by widespread demand for a model that has not been heavily advertised; and insurgent candidates, without the political “machinery” of the incumbent, have often been gratified by grass roots movements, spread solely by word of mouth. Even Presidents, like Reagan, who was slammed by the media at every opportunity, get re-elected by the power of a positive word of mouth campaign. So, as Americans, let’s “spread the word.” Don’t let media personalities, and those they hand the microphone, speak for you. This is a great country; we have very little to apologize for; we are on the side of Good, by any objective historical standard; and we are fully entitled to use whatever force necessary to protect our way of life.