



## *Mondo Washington*

By James Ridgeway, February 17, 2004, Tuesday

### **Here Comes Another Patriot Missile! Duck and Cover**

Members of Congress knew at the end of the first Gulf war that the U.S. Army's vaunted Patriot missiles had trouble discerning friend from foe and had been shooting down friendly aircraft. A decade later the upgraded PAC-2 and PAC-3 versions were having the same difficulties. It has been widely reported--and now even U.S. officials believe--that during Operation Iraqi Freedom two friendly aircraft, a British Tornado GR4 fighter-bomber on May 22 and a U.S. Navy F/A-18 Hornet on April 2, were shot down by U.S. Patriot missiles, killing three airmen. In another incident, a U.S. F-16 fighter pilot on May 24 fired on a Patriot missile battery after the aircraft's radar revealed the missile battery was "locked" on the aircraft.

Despite warnings from two respected watchdog groups--the Project on Government Oversight and Global Security--and firsthand observation by a Dallas--Fort Worth CBS team embedded in a Patriot missile unit, the Pentagon can't do anything until it completes another one of its lengthy secret investigations.

As if an internal probe would be effective: Even though the newest version of the Patriot, the PAC-3, ran into problems during testing, air force lieutenant general Ronald Kadish, director of the Missile Defense Agency, told reporters that problems with the PAC-3 missiles were "minor" and "annoying." During the first Gulf war, the military claimed an 80 percent effectiveness rate, although a report by the General Accounting Office found that the Patriot hit only 9 percent of the Iraqi Scud missiles that were launched.

Last November, John Pike, who runs the Global Security watchdog group, was surfing around on the army's Fort Bliss website when he stumbled on a confidential "Initial Lessons Learned" report about the Patriot's problems that had been posted by mistake. The army erased the report from its website, but not before Pike posted it on globalsecurity.org. The report tells about a Patriot missile battery in Jordan running into problems with false missile tracks, and adds, "This information was not shared with Patriot units supporting the Marine Expeditionary Force in Kuwait. Had the experience been shared throughout the [area of responsibility] then the problem could have been minimized."

Last February the CBS news team saw for itself the problems a Patriot missile battery was running into. Embedded at Camp Virginia in Kuwait and forbidden by ground rules from reporting about problems at the time, the CBS reporters were inside the tactical operations center when soldiers zeroed in on what looked like an incoming Iraqi missile. Suddenly, an employee of Raytheon, the Patriot's defense contractor, threw open the door to the center and yelled, "Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" The soldiers let out a sigh of relief and told the news crew, "We just came close to shooting down a Navy F-18."

The CBS crew later wrote: "We observed one battalion battle captain writing daily reports about the problem, which he said were being sent to higher command." After witnessing several incidents involving dangerously false reports about Patriot targets, the crew was also present when Battalion Commander Joe Fischetti confronted a Raytheon representative attached to the unit. Fischetti demanded answers. "You guys are supposed to be the geniuses," Fischetti said, according to the CBS crew. "Tell me what's wrong!"