

Harold Weisberg

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Meachum: Dishonest, deceitful,

Beginning with the heading, "Who killed William Higgins?" staff columnist Roy Meachum's August 2 column is dishonest, deceitful, misinformative, and part of his long-lasting anti-Israel hate/propaganda.

There is and can be no question about who killed the named American Marine. It is those who captured him, that Shiite faction of Muslims of which Shiek Abdul Karim Obeid is a leader.

Israel is not alone in characterizing Obeid as the leader of the Arab extremists who captured this American officer when he was assigned to the UN. He is the man Israel captured and questioned. He is also the man so incidental to this newest of your endless incitations to hatred your columnist doesn't even give his name. Instead he refers to him — and this is all he says about him — "the Shiite cleric."

In your columnist's gleaming of the metropolitan papers he avoids all else that has been attributed to this terrorist leader, including the kidnaping of other Americans and even the bombing of the

Marine barracks in Lebanon in which 241 innocent Americans were slaughtered.

Instead he wants your readers to believe that Israel is responsible for the Arab murder of Col. Higgins and this column is angled that way. Consistent with this he says over and over again that Col. Higgins was not killed by the terrorists until after their leader was captured by the Israelis. (Part of his omission is the confession Israel said it got from him under questioning, his assumption of responsibility for these terrorist acts.)

In his persisting calumny your columnist, in his selectivity, quotes an unidentified "Pentagon" source as saying that the colonel was still alive when the "cleric" was captured and he begins this by representing that the murder just happened. "But when his murder came, sources in the Pentagon said they believed the Marine had been still alive last week."

Your columnist says only part of what was well-publicized in the papers he reads in saying that after the colonel was cap-

tured, "(t)he 'trial' was supposedly held in December." What also was widely reported "in December" and later is that Higgins was killed then. Not now — last December. And if that is true, the entire column being based on the fact that he wasn't, where it has any basis at all, is obviously a rotten piece of inflammatory propaganda.

There is no indication that he learned anything in his journalistic experience of which he boasts so often in his failure to have anything to say at all about the photographs alleging depicting Higgins' hanging the end of July. A cub reporter should not have missed the fact that there is no means of identifying when Higgins was hanged — even if he was alive when he was videotaped hanging. In the past those terrorists have been careful to include such time identifiers as a newspaper, which dates the photograph and the death or life of the subject photographed. This time the terrorists were careful to make it close to impossible to place the time the photograph of a hang-

'misinformative'

ing man was taken. It was not even possible, as Pentagon sources your boy managed not to quote said, to identify the victim.

Experts, in fact, agreed that there is a question about how much can be learned from the videotape the Arab terrorists released because it is "grainy" and otherwise of poor quality. In itself this should raise questions because there was no need for poor photographic clarity. Addressing this a Sony expert said "you could not tell how old it was," referring to the disclosed videotape.

On when Col. Higgins was killed, the *Washington Post* reported that "senior security officials in Beirut agreed with suggestions that Higgins may have been killed some time ago, and said other hostages, who may have died in captivity, will be accused as spies and threatened with 'execution,' with the captors capitalizing on the crisis over Obeid's disappearance." Or, dug up and photographed.

Also from the same paper, which your columnist reads, "reports that Higgins

died before the Israeli's capture of Obeid could not be confirmed. But two sources here said there were indications that Higgins perished in December 1988. . . . Israeli officials discussed this report with their U.S. contacts in February of this year, the sources said, and discovered that the U.S. intelligence community had received similar accounts."

If your columnist had reported what had been reported elsewhere, instead of indulging in a lengthy diatribe against Israel, he could not have had his false case against Israel and he could not have attributed any of the blame for this despicable murder to Israel, could he?

And if he had had anything else in mind, how could he have eliminated in their entirety all of the reports that indicate the Higgins murder was not recent? Cub reporters get fired for less, yet how often has he exploited his gray hairs and boasted of his journalistic credentials?

Harold Weisberg, who lives in Frederick, has written frequently for this page.