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Guantánamo does not exist: Simulation and the production of 'the real' Global War on Terror

ABSTRACT

Joint Task Force (JTF) Guantánamo, the high-profile US military detention and inter-rogation operation, was established in January 2002 to house the 'worst of the worst' of al-Qaeda and the Taliban. It nevertheless became a public spectacle that was essential for constituting the reality of a Global War on Terror. Through evolving media and VIP tours of the facilities coupled with the Bush administration's military analyst programme (a system of reverse embeds used to promote Pentagon messages within the U.S. media), Guantánamo became a simulation essential for producing the reality of the war. It became a key way to convince the public that the war was real and necessary, but also that its conduct was just and humane, and therefore, by extension, that the United States can be understood as 'good'. Through a triple screen of the tours, the visitors and their mediation, the telegenic spectacle of Guantánamo was transmuted into a reality of Guantánamo as 'safe, humane, legal and transparent'. The importance of this for producing understandings of the Global War on Terrorism (GWoT) bears closer examination. Without this triple screen, Guantánamo does not exist.

KEYWORDS

Guantánamo
Baudrillard
simulation
War on Terrorism
mediation
spectacle

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2005, at the height of controversies surrounding the Global War on Terrorism (GWoT) relating to the US military's rendition, detention

and interrogation practices, the Bush administration and US military decided to launch a new public relations offensive in order to 'set the record straight' and address criticisms levelled at the US military (Sidoti 2005). Rather than relying on traditional press briefings and journalist reports, the Bush administration mobilized its military analyst programme and expanded tours of the facilities at Joint Task Force (JTF) Guantánamo. The programme, developed in 2002 to gain 'information dominance' over the way that the Iraq War and the wider GWoT were depicted, involved deploying retired senior military officers as talking heads on network television to provide favourable coverage of the war (Barstow 2008). The retired officers, who marketed themselves as independent commentators, toured Guantánamo in 2005 and then appeared on US television networks and across a range of media to describe their visit. Based on the credibility generated by their years of military experience, and appearing impartial, they acted as 'message force multipliers' while delivering the administration's themes and messages to millions of Americans. In a position somewhat analogous to that of journalists 'embedded' with US military units, military analysts, such as retired General Don Sheppherd, acted as *reverse embeds* and appeared to provide a window into the 'reality' of operations at Guantánamo and by extension provided assurances as to the effectiveness and appropriateness of US military actions.

Due in large part to these tours and the reverse embeds that promoted them, the surreal goings on at Guantánamo – such as the detainee claims of innocence and torture taken as evidence of their guilt; the military commissions in which detainees were told what to say; the visits of celebrities such as Miss Universe to the site; or even the pride with which tour guides describe Pepsi as detainees' favourite drink or pronounced pecan flavour Ensure as the favourite of those being force-fed – remained underreported in the mainstream US media. The Guantánamo that detainees and critics of the site described as beyond belief, dreamlike and disconnected from reality in its illegality and abusiveness, was supplanted by a reality in which Guantánamo was consistent with the 'spirit of the Geneva Conventions', 'state of the art', was 'safe, humane, legal and transparent' (which became its official motto), a 'club med' for terrorists, and even 'better than they deserved' (Anon 2005). Despite sustained high-profile criticism, both nationally and internationally, including the continued circulation of the controversial photographs of the original days of detention at the site, a majority of Americans continued to support the existence of JTF-Guantánamo and the efforts of US forces there as a 'front line' in the GWoT.

At the heart of the creation and management of this reality of Guantánamo was therefore its media profile, its spectacle. In keeping with recent trends in the ways that wars are (re)presented, Guantánamo became part of an 'unreal' form of warfare (Keeble 1997: 8), in which the GWoT was essentially a 'media event' (Hammond 2011: 314). '[S]taging the spectacle of war has become a substitute for an inspiring cause to rally public support, and media presentation has consequently become even more central' (Hammond 2011: 314). Military policy in the GWoT, and in particular with regard to Guantánamo, was therefore developed with an awareness of how it might appear on CNN and be viewed by the public (Robinson 2002: 40). Guantánamo, established as a high-profile facility in order to demonstrate the existence of the 'worst of the worst' of al-Qaeda and the Taliban captured on the 'battlefield', was consequently a public spectacle that was essential for developing an understanding of what the GWoT *meant.* Guantánamo was not used as propaganda or as dissimulation,

but, as Philip Hammond suggests with regard to the GWoT more broadly, as a *simulation,* even a *simulacrum* (Baudrillard 1994a) of war. As a spectacle, it was used to convince the public first, that the war was 'real' (Hammond 2011: 315) and necessary, that its conduct was just, and therefore, by extension, that the United States can be understood as 'good'. As Jean Baudrillard suggested, 'what is at stake [...] is war itself: its status, its meaning, its future. It is beholden not to have an objective but to prove its very existence' (Baudrillard 1995: 32). The information management characteristic of the tours and the military analyst programme was intended to communicate, to simulate through the 'telegenic spectacle' (Pugliese 2008) a reality of the GWoT as meaningful and purposeful. Second, this version of the reality of Guantánamo and the GWoT relied not only on the constitution of indefinite detention as necessary but also on a sanitized version of it. Guantánamo, alongside the language of 'surgical strikes' and 'clean' warfare characteristic of modern warfare, was used to produce an understanding of war, and by extension the United States, as not only 'modern' and 'humane' but to construct what modern and humane meant and looked like. In so doing, Guantánamo was therefore part of the performance of a national identity that is always in need of securing (Campbell 1998; Dillon 1996; Weber 1998).

While the GWoT and the Iraq War in particular have been studied for insights into new approaches to media in the prosecution of the war (Croft 2006; Hammond 2007; Martin and Petro 2006), in particular the use of 'mil-blogs' (Wall 2005), embedded journalists (Cottle 2006; Hiebert 2003), the rise of virtual warfare and merging of entertainment with news (Debrix 2008; Der Derian 2003, 2009; Van Veeren 2009), the unique use of Guantánamo as a telegenic spectacle for constructing the reality of this war remains unexamined. Bringing a poststructuralist lens to Guantánamo, and in particular the works of Jean Baudrillard and James Der Derian, noted for their theorizing of modern warfare and the role of mediation and simulation, and applying a material-discursive analytic approach (Laclau and Mouffe 1987) to bear on the tourist practices associated with Guantánamo, this article argues that Guantánamo was a simulation used to produce a reality of war.

Through the 'triple screen' of Guantánamo as mediated through the constructed spectacle, the touring celebrities, and finally through the military analyst programme, each of which are discussed in turn, a simulation of Guantánamo was created, which played a key role in both producing the war and sanitizing the violence of it. Due to the media policies adopted by the US military and Bush administration, Guantánamo became a site in which the signs of the real bore limited relation to the operations of life 'inside the wire', nor needed to. The telegenic spectacle filtered through the 'triple screen' produced a reality of Guantánamo and the GWoT. Guantánamo can therefore best be understood as a creation of these mediations; the 'real' Guantánamo does not exist.

THE SPECTACLE

Within days of the opening of detention facilities at US Naval Base Guantánamo on 11 January 2002, the international public was made aware of the existence of the new facilities, most notably through the circulation of the now iconic photos of the arrival of detainees dressed in orange prison uniforms (Van Veeren 2010). As the photographs bear witness, from its inception Guantánamo involved the articulation of a series of elements used to

communicate the importance of these facilities in the GWoT. For those viewing from 'outside the wire', the spectacle of Guantánamo included elaborate costumes to identify friend from foe, performances of military might and expertise, the display of captured dangerous terrorists, and sets specially designed to communicate power and security. More than simply a detention facility to isolate 'the worst of the worst' or act as a source of 'enormously valuable intelligence' (Rose 2004) Guantánamo was a spectacle to behold, a 'telegenic spectacle to be witnessed and consumed' (Pugliese 2008: 210). In the same way as punishment historically operated as a spectacle to ensure that the public knows the law and recognizes the power of the state (Foucault [1977] 1991: 109–11) Guantánamo had a vital role to play as a spectacle as the first layer of the simulation that produced meaning in the GWoT. It represented the power of the military-industrial-media-entertainment network (MIME-NET) 'to merge the production, representation and execution of war' such that the capacity to distinguish between military and civilian, official and unofficial, real and simulation, original and new, produced and reproduced, is diminished (Der Derian 2000: 787). It therefore constituted a key element of the US military's 'infowar' war machine, in which part of the battle is fought over control of the production and circulation of information about the war, and therefore over its representation (Der Derian 2001). Within this infowar, the US state uses technology and its control over information in order to achieve 'information dominance' and therefore win 'the epistemic battle for reality' in the GWoT, in which the meaning of Guantánamo, and by extension the identity of the US, is itself at stake (Der Derian 2001).

To begin, one of the key ways in which Guantánamo's spectacle was presented was through specially developed tours of the facility set up for visitors. These tours, and the objects showcased within them, became a central means by which the US military and Bush administration communicated its messages regarding detention and interrogation. Over time, the tours came to include a number of important features, all intended to demonstrate the strength and security offered by the US military, and by extension the danger associated with terrorism in the 'new' post-9/11 security environment embodied in the alleged terrorists contained there. This began with the site's architecture, the 'structurally imposing, threatening and absolutist sense of enclosure' (Pugliese 2008: 219) provided by the razor wires, concrete blocks and watchtowers of the detention facilities. Based on an iconography of punishment, the architecture of detention on which Guantánamo was built presented 'a daunting sight' to visitors (Greenberg 2007). It was a 'very scary looking place, with guard towers and dark green canvas covering the chain link fence, which was topped by concertina wire' (Levant 2007: 3). Meanwhile, within its walls were visible the orange-clad bodies of the guilty. For those touring, Guantánamo, therefore, firstly served to render as spectacular the object lessons of punishment by making visible the suffering and containment of alleged terrorists through this razor wire. The objects, bodies and spaces contained within the tours, rather than neutral and apolitical, not only reflected meaning but also helped to produce it. The ways in which this matter was articulated, brought forward or rendered invisible constituted the first layer in the 'triple screen'.

Over time, as the US military sought to counter mounting criticism of Guantánamo, this first level of the simulation evolved. Not only did the spectacle need to communicate danger contained and therefore security, but the

US military and Bush administration also sought to present a more 'humane' face to its practices and policies. As permanent facilities were built, and the detainees shifted from the expeditionary Camp X-Ray (the original camp as depicted in the iconic images) to a newly constructed Camp Delta, the spectacle of Guantánamo as articulated through these tours grew correspondingly to include features such as visits to the 'state-of-the-art' medical facilities, 'humane' interrogation facilities and 'modern' courtrooms. Included in the tours was therefore also a stop at the 'showcase' (cf. Rosenberg 2011) Camp 4 to peer inside the wire to see where the most compliant detainees were housed more communally, an opportunity to step inside one of the 'tour cells' of the newest facilities (a solitary confinement cell in the supermaximum facilities laid out with 'comfort items' permitted detainees) as well as a visit to the disused Camp X-Ray to 'see the weeds growing'.[1]

Moreover, at the heart of the spectacle was the desire to demonstrate through these materialities how humane Guantánamo was; to sterilize representations of Guantánamo of the violence and controversy associated with it. Gone were the orange jumpsuits and the images of kneeling detainees, to be replaced by views of clean and sterile cells and modern facilities. In so doing, the spectacle evolved such that not only was the simulation useful in creating the understanding of detention as necessary and effective – and by extension communicating a particular understanding of the GWoT and the United States in relation to it as humane – but the materiality of it also became essential in transforming understandings of what it meant *to be* 'safe, humane, legal and transparent'. In other words, by articulating material counterparts to the linguistic constructions of Guantánamo, a specific reality was reinforced: Guantánamo is not only humane, but *this is what humane looks like*; Guantánamo is not only legal, *this is what legality looks like.* Through the spectacle of the tours, not only did the US state demonstrate to domestic and international audiences the effectiveness of the US military by proving the existence of terrorists (that they can be identified and captured), and to constitute itself as a humane, law-abiding and transparent agent, but also used the simulation to shift the meaning of these constructions themselves; to produce a new reality of what detention looks like, to sterilize and therefore legitimize the violence through this telegenic spectacle.

The tours of Guantánamo that were understood as 'message force multipliers' for the Bush administration and US military nevertheless functioned as the first layer of simulation, not only repeating meaning, but helping to produce it. Like maps, the tours can be understood as 'an assemblage of signs [. . .] like other texts, open to interpretation, contestation, refutation, exculpation [but] they are also simulations in search of a particular and sometimes false reality' (Der Derian 2008: 935–36). Through their categorizing, spatializing, articulating and leaving out objects and ideas, the tours therefore not only reflected a 'reality', but predetermined the meaning of Guantánamo and the GWoT and in so doing acted as the first layer in the triple screen.

THE SPECTATORS

While military photographers documented the opening of Guantánamo and the arrival of the first set of detainees, a group of specially selected journalists were also invited to witness the event from a hill in the distance. Within two weeks, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was touring the site with Senate colleagues for a 'photo op', a 'symbolic show of support for Guantánamo's

1   As I argue elsewhere, the material of the site was intricately connected to the construction of meaning. Through the architecture and design features built into the fabric of the detention facilities, the material of the site was essential in constructing not only the subject positions within the GWoT discourse but also shaping what was understood as the evolving 'commonsense' of the site and of the war more broadly. The architecture of the prison, from Camp X-Ray to the more recent additions of Camps 5 and 6, the 'supermax' camps, worked first as 'architecture of dis-assurance' and then as an 'architecture of reassurance' (Boddy 2008). The maximum exposure provided by the chain-linked cells of X-Ray through which all was visible, as the name implies, first acted as a visual and material analogue of the discourse associated with the war, emphasizing fear and danger. This was replaced, however, by the more traditional prison designs of Camp Delta, resulting not only in a transformation in the scopic regimes and gazes of the site, reshaping what was visible and changing how encounters were mediated, but also changed the iconography of the site. Guantánamo became a space of reassurance, like Disneyland, offering comfort that this is what the United States is 'really' like (Baudrillard 1983; Marling 1997) providing once again the spectacle that war

can be accomplished
in a 'humane' way,
and materializing
safety and security.

2   Indeed, the continued
emphasis on
transparency,
particularly through
these everyday tourist
practices of
Guantánamo, is a
double move that not
only attempts to 'sell'
Guantánamo as
transparent, but to sell
transparency itself as
possible and
achievable virtue.

future' (Greenberg 2009: 119). From that point onwards, a steady stream of visitors made the special flight to the US naval base in order to take part in the packaged tour of the facilities and witness this spectacle. Nearly every day, government VIPs, military personnel, journalists and intelligence officials from the United States and abroad arrived for the tours (Greenberg 2009: 90). Their visits were so numerous that military personnel were assigned to manage the tours, and so commonplace that staff at Guantánamo 'called these official visitors "looky-looks," or "looky-loos" ' (Greenberg 2009: 90). By 2005, the US military had permitted 77 US representatives, 11 US senators, 99 congressional staffers and over 1000 journalists to take part in VIP and media tours of the facilities (Dillon 2005; JTF-Guantánamo 2008). In 2009 alone, 100 visitor groups were organized to tour the facilities and meet service personnel, in addition to the hundreds of media who travelled to Guantánamo annually to report on the site (Heusdens 2009). As one congressional representative exaggerated: 'More people go to Guantánamo than they do to most international resorts' (Representative James P. Moran Jr. (D-Va.), in Allen 2005: 1). Guantánamo, initially on the fringes of the GWoT, became a favourite field trip and required visit for anyone who was anyone. The spectacle was not to be viewed at a distance but was cultivated by the Bush administration as a national-security tourism hotspot especially for elite spectators. As controversies surrounding Guantánamo and the GWoT grew – including the allegations of torture and abuse by US military personnel (waterboarding and other 'harsh interrogation' techniques); on-going hunger strikes and force-feeding; and suicides – members of the Pentagon communication team turned to visitors to 'bear witness' to Guantánamo's reality as a facility that respected 'the spirit of the Geneva Conventions'.

So, while lawyers struggled over the years to gain access to clients, family members, journalists and human rights organizations (including the United Nations and Amnesty International) were denied access to detainees, and concerns were expressed over the 'extreme isolation' in which high-value detainees were kept, many amongst key lawmakers, media personalities, celebrities and families of 9/11 victims – those with a media profile – were selected and even invited to witness the spectacle of Guantánamo. As Rumsfeld boasted, 'no detention facility in the history of warfare has been more transparent or received more scrutiny than Guantánamo'; 'The situation in Guantánamo Bay has been looked at by literally hundreds of journalists, by hundreds of members of the United States House and Senate' (Rumsfeld 2005). In other words, Guantánamo as a spectacle was a transparent one. The numbers of spectators attested to that.[2]

Moreover, for organizers and most participants in these tours, visits to Guantánamo presented the opportunity to 'see the real' Guantánamo. Guantánamo visits, like visits the site of the former World Trade Center (Lisle 2004), were therefore more than an opportunity to engage in voyeurism but were intended to confer legitimacy to the claims made about the site, its humaneness and legality and therefore to authenticate the simulation. Being a spectator at Guantánamo was a 'certificate of presence' (Back 2009), a way to convince those who had not participated in the tours of a 'reality' of Guantánamo 'by making something cultural and something theatrical out of it' (Baudrillard 1994b; Hammond 2011). The presence of the spectators, as the second layer in the triple screen, therefore facilitated the presentation and production of the *hyperreal* version of Guantánamo. The signs of Guantánamo, witnessed as part of the spectacle by these specially selected spectators, did not need to connect

to what transpired inside the wire but to conform instead to expectations of what detention *should* look like. Ironically, even celebrity tours, such as the visit of Miss Universe (arguably a simulation in her own right) to Guantánamo in March 2008, became part of the authentication of this hyperreality.

Above all, what was most important was that these messages, the signs of the 'real' Guantánamo, could circulate to those outside. What Guantánamo required was a special kind of spectator, one who would not only see 'the real' Guantánamo from the tours, but use a public profile to declare it transparent, as well as legal, humane and safe (safer than supermaximum prison on US soil at least). The most important role of spectators was therefore to communicate the simulation to the general public. Visiting politicians, celebrities and military analysts were expected to act as mediators through which the 'reality' of Guantánamo was to be communicated to those 'outside the wire'. As part of the second layer of the 'triple screen', the specially selected spectators were therefore an opportunity to counter opposition not only by communicating key themes associated with the GWoT, but by authenticating these themes based on their visits.

THE SCREEN

Though the tours of Guantánamo evolved and the number of spectators permitted to witness it increased, the most important aspect of Guantánamo was that it was the subject of extensive mediation. Unlike any other US military detention facility, the tours, and the spectators who went to witness it, were photographed, televised and publicized to an unprecedented degree. From the start, military-approved images of Guantánamo were readily available and circulated courtesy of the US Department of Defense and the thousands of journalists who toured the facility. Guantánamo was the subject of a National Geographic channel special, *Inside the Wire: Guantánamo* (Cohen and Else 2009) and the US military even developed its own Internet tour, a 'Virtual Visit' of the facilities which curious members if the public were welcome to view for a look 'behind the scenes'; 'designed to give you the viewer a feel for what it is like to be a visiting journalist on a media tour' (JTF-Guantánamo 2008).

But more importantly, congressional delegates and other Guantánamo visitors, including celebrities such as Miss Universe, appeared on national media outlets such as CNN and Fox News, in local newspapers or media outlets or blogged on personal websites, following their visits. After an initial trip to Guantánamo with Rumsfeld in 2002 to view Camp X-Ray, both senators Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-TX) and Daniel Inouye (D-HI) received national press coverage: Senator Hutchinson appeared on CNN the following day declaring the facilities (the open-air cages) 'very clean', while Senator Inouye held a press conference at the State Department's Foreign Press Centre declaring that 'If I were a detainee, I'd rather be detained there than in Kabul' (Gilmore 2002). These public appearances continued over the years and reached a peak in 2005. Representative Duncan Hunter (R-CA), upon returning to Washington following a visit to Guantánamo in June 2005, notoriously held a press conference that was broadcast on CNN, during which he brandished a chicken to demonstrate the high-quality diet that detainees were receiving, and distributed copies of daily menus. In some instances, Guantánamo tourists spent as much or more time promoting their visit to Guantánamo in the media as they did touring the site.[3]

3   While I focus in this article on the constructions of Guantánamo that were most closely aligned with the 'reality' presented by the US military and Bush administration, new media formats such as blogs, YouTube or the online virtual world, Second Life, *provided* a greater range of actors with opportunities to screen their own telegenic spectacle of Guantánamo. This has enabled the production and dissemination of a range of alternative 'realities' of Guantánamo, often dissenting ones. For example, artist Nonny de la Peña and academic Penny Weil developed an online (re)creation of Camp X-Ray based on the original footage circulated by the US military and on the descriptions of the experiences drawn from memoirs and interviews. Entitled *Gone GITMO,* their protest/project involved encouraging 'visitors' in Second Life to experience virtual Guantánamo through their avatars (Weil and De la Peña 2008). A short video summarizing the project can be seen on YouTube (see Drax 2007). My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for the suggestion to include a discussion of the 'counter-representations' surrounding Guantánamo.

In particular, during the expansion of the White House military analyst programme in the summer of 2005, six separate tours were organized for the dozens of retired military officers who worked as media 'military analysts' (Barstow 2008). After receiving their tours, the military analysts then covered their visit for various news outlets, in many cases (but not all) repeating word for word the Pentagon talking points, as evident from Department of Defense briefing notes from the Guantánamo tour. Pentagon staff in turn

> marvelled at the way the analysts seamlessly incorporated material from talking points and briefings as if it was their own. 'You could see that they were messaging', Mr. Krueger said. 'You could see they were taking verbatim what the secretary was saying or what the technical specialists were saying. And they were saying it over and over and over.' Some days, he added, 'We were able to click on every single station and every one of our folks were up there delivering our message. You'd look at them and say, "This is working." '
>
> (Barstow 2008)

So, despite marketing themselves as independent commentators for US television networks and magazines, these retired US military officers actually functioned as *reverse embeds*, military personnel embedded within news organizations and tasked to work for the Pentagon to communicate key messages in exchange for receiving privileged access to the US military and senior policy makers (who might be in a position to negotiate lucrative defence contracts) (Barstow 2008). Based on their military expertise and coupled with the experience of having toured Guantánamo, these reverse embeds were a telegenic spectacle in their own right, which conferred not only authenticity but also authority onto Guantánamo. Though they presented themselves as unbiased and objective observers, their function was not only to act as message force multipliers but also to assist in the circulation of specific images of Guantánamo as spectacle. These touring VIPs facilitated the production of 'spectacular objects of visual consumption' (Debord [1977] 1983: 10) associated with Guantánamo, not only constituting operations at the site as 'transparent', but enacting or performing their own telegenic spectacle and helping to produce a specific simulation of Guantánamo and the GWoT. They were 'image-objects' (Debord [1977] 1983: 10) in their own right, 'put to the service, both by the state and its mediative organs, of contemporary telegenic spectacle' (Pugliese 2008: 212).

In other words, by appearing on television news programmes, military analysts, and equally journalists, Congressional representatives and celebrities reporting from the front line, who toured and then appeared in the media, became the means through which Guantánamo as a simulation was widely reproduced. Capitalizing on their telegenicity, the safety, legality, humaneness and transparency of Guantánamo was performatively constituted through their appearances on the screen. Their presentation of a telegenic spectacle meant that these visitors became mediators through which this representation was relayed. And in so doing, these mediated spectators came to 'exemplify the effective operation of state power and its capacity for specialization' (Pugliese 2008: 212).

However, for those witnessing this telegenic spectacle, this 'reality' was not the only way to understand Guantánamo. Activists campaigning to close Guantánamo (such as Reprieve or Amnesty International) as well as artists seeking to make a critical intervention (Banksy's 'Escaped Enemy Combatant' or Penny Byrne 'Guantánamo Bay Souvenirs', for example) called forth their own dissenting 'realities' of Guantánamo. Most of these 'performances' of Guantánamo featured the 'icon of outrage' (Perlmutter 1998) of the orange-suited detainee in an effort to contest the official 'reality' and transform the detainees from terrorists to torture victims.[4]

Given the presence of these competing 'realities' of Guantánamo, the official simulation therefore required constant monitoring and reinforcement. For example, journalists covering Guantánamo reported being confronted with pressures to stay 'on message'. Images and video footage that did not meet the US military's criteria were destroyed. Or, for example, television crews were encouraged to use the specially constructed 'tent city' erected for journalists and staff associated with the trial as a backdrop, 'a set design' (Rosenberg 2008):

> So what you see on TV are reporters standing up in what looks like an expeditionary setting – they call it Camp Justice – but it doesn't look like the rest of the base that we've been coming to at all for the past six years. And what they say is, is that this is the battlefield, and this is an outpost in the global war on terror. And so, when you have Fox and CNN standing up and reporting, I think they prefer to have three or four tents in the background with flags flapping in the breeze, rather than, you know, another shot with, like I said, McDonald's in the background.
>
> (Rosenberg 2008)

As this anecdote therefore illustrates, the presence of these spectators and then their mediation as controlled by the US military again helped to produce the simulation of Guantánamo, taking full advantage of the power of the MIME-Net (Der Derian 2009). The visit of spectators and then their performances in the media following their visits was the final step in the precession of the simulacra, the final layer in the triple screen that was used to produce and authenticate a reality of Guantánamo. In mastering this level of the triple screen, Guantánamo is therefore illustrative of how 'state-of-the-art military power is now virtual in the sense that it is deployed in an abstract, electronic and informational space, and in the sense that its primary mechanism is no longer the use of force' (Patton 1995: 9). Instead, through this mediation a 'reality' was produced, echoing and gaining 'truth' as it was mediated through the authority conferred by the triple screen of the tour, the visitor and then the media. The promotion and dissemination of the simulation of Guantánamo through this final layer helped to produce common sense of the war, to reinscribe the 'good' of detention, the GWoT, of the US military and state.

CONCLUSION

Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: A hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it

4 However (as I discuss elsewhere), as these performances of Guantánamo most often rely on the same visual elements and employ the same logic of the spectacle as 'reality', it could be argued that their critical capacity is somewhat limited. For an alternative form of critical resistance to the spectacle of Guantánamo, see the work of photographer Margot Hester, who deliberately avoids the iconography of the site in attempts to 'reveal' its hidden truth.

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survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory – precession of simulacra – that engenders the territory, and if one must return to the fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts and that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours. The desert of the real itself.

(Baudrillard 1994a: 1)

In 'a culture driven by visual regimes that transmute everything into representations of spectacle available for consumption' (Pugliese 2008: 216), Guantánamo is an example of how the US military and Bush administration used media strategies as 'message force multipliers' in their attempts to manage the war. The production and control of tours of Guantánamo along with the deployment of the military analyst programme were part of the development in the US military's prosecution of the war, in which an infowar must be fought over the reality of war. As Foucault suggested, disciplinary power is exercised through its invisibility (Foucault 1977: 187). But as Baudrillard (1994a, 1995) argued, this invisibility is produced through the production of the hyperreal, the collapse of the real and simulation.

The telegenic spectacle that was Guantánamo was unique. Unlike US military detention sites, such as those in Iraq or Afghanistan, or those operating as part of the rendition programme, such as the 'ghost sites' or Diego Garcia, Guantánamo was actively promoted as a spectacle. Tourists – provided they had a media presence and could remain 'on message' – were welcome to tour the facilities. Once 'outside the wire' these spectators were then expected to share their findings of the 'reality' of US military detention with the public, particularly as a 'safe, humane, legal, and transparent' detention facility.

Filtered through the 'triple screen' of manufactured tour, selected spectator, and mediation, the telegenic spectacle of Guantánamo not only produced a 'reality' of Guantánamo, but one that worked to communicate a particular reality of detention and interrogation. In particular, this process succeeded in sterilizing the violence associated with detention. Polls within the United States consistently showed a majority of Americans perceived the treatment of detainees as treated 'better than they deserve' or 'about right' (Anon 2005). In other words, within a society that is 'fundamentally specialist' (Debord [1977] 1983: 10), the 'mediated trauma' of detainees was sterilized of violence and transmuted into signs of the 'real' Guantánamo, one that was more consistent with an understanding of the United States as a humane and just actor.

But more importantly, this triple screen also worked to produce a simulation of war, one where the GWoT is necessary and just, and the United States by extension humane and good. Through the everyday repetition of this spectacle, particularly through the work of the reverse embeds, this reality of Guantánamo came to dominate. As Michelle Brown argues with regards to culture and prisons (Brown 2009), for the majority of the population detention is experienced through these mediations; particular attention therefore needs to be paid to the reality that they constitute. In other words, it is not that the signs of Guantánamo dissimulate a reality, but that the signs come to take the place of the real, and suggest an access to reality that we do not have. These mediations become the reality. For those outside the wire, Guantánamo does not exist except in this mediated form. It is a simulation produced by the US state through the triple screen in order to achieve information dominance and win the battle over the reality of Guantánamo, the GWoT and the US identity.

Looking at the tourist practices at Guantánamo through a poststructuralist lens and examining the mediation of these practices therefore offers insight into the extent of power in operation as part of modern warfare.

As Baudrillard suggested, 'war is no less atrocious for being only a simulacrum – the flesh suffers just the same, and the dead and former combatants are worth the same as in other wars' (Baudrillard 1994a: 37–38). Guantánamo detainees have suffered. Some have been tortured; many have been detained indefinitely and without charge, some for almost ten years, often in solitary confinement. What Guantánamo provides, however, is also a justification for detention and for the GWoT. Guantánamo is a battlefield, not in the manner in which it is attributed with producing 'enormously valuable intelligence', but in the way it simulated war. It made the GWoT look real and commonsensical, and produced the meaning of the US state in the process. In other words, without this triple screen, Guantánamo does not exist.

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