

The Norman Lear
CENTERTAINMENT
Studying and Shaping the Impact of Entertainment & Media on Society

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**U.S. HUNTS WHITE TERRORISTS, SHUNS TORTURE
& PROFILING IN PRIMETIME WAR ON TERROR**

*In TV Dramas' War on Drugs,
Users and Dealers Are Mostly White, Rarely Arrested*

LOS ANGELES – Providing a surprising portrait of the War on Terror and the War on Drugs as seen in TV dramas, a new study says that America's most popular shows stayed closer to reality than common stereotypes about what terrorists and drug users look like and what drugs Americans are abusing. But these ripped-from-the-headlines crime shows largely left out the basic mechanisms of the justice system: the reading of Miranda rights, and the presence of lawyers at interrogations, trials and punishment.

The Primetime War on Drugs & Terror report was released by the **Norman Lear Center** at the **University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism**. The study analyzed 49 hours of 10 top-rated TV series with storylines including terrorism or drugs that aired in 2010. Shows included *NCIS*, *CSI: Miami*, *24*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *House* and *The Good Wife*.

Major findings included:

- In the public's mind, terrorists are mainly Middle Eastern, Arab and Muslim. But in the scripted shows studied, terrorists were white Americans most of the time.
- Despite a majority of Americans supporting racial profiling at airports, not one single drug or terror suspect was racially profiled in these episodes.
- Despite 63% of Americans supporting the use of aggressive interrogation tactics to get information, government actors rarely used them. Not surprisingly, Jack Bauer on *24* was the exception to this rule.

- Drug users in these shows were not always portrayed as bad guys, and they were never arrested or tried.
- Despite the predominance of African-Americans and other minorities in U.S. prisons for drug violations, most drug manufacturers and dealers in the series studied were white.
- In the 49 episodes monitored, Miranda rights were never read to drug or terror suspects who were under arrest.

“On the 10th anniversary of 9/11 and the start of the War on Terror, and on the 40th anniversary of Richard Nixon’s declaring the War on Drugs, we wanted to see how popular culture portrayed those wars, and how those depictions squared with public opinion and with the facts,” said **Martin Kaplan**, USC Annenberg professor and director of the school's Norman Lear Center, which studies the impact of media and entertainment on society.

Added Lear Center managing director and director of research **Johanna Blakley**, who co-authored the report with **Sheena Nahm**, “Overall these storylines present a complex portrait of how these wars are being waged, but not how they’re being won. Arrests, trials and convictions were the bread and butter of pre-9/11 crime shows. Now, we’re far more likely to see drug and terror suspects committing crimes than to see them tried or sentenced.”

A video by digital remix artist **Joe Sabia** featuring the report’s findings on the War on Terror can be found at www.primetimeterror.com.

The full report can also be found at www.primetimeterror.com. The content analysis was carried out by Princeton Survey Research Associates International using an instrument designed by the Lear Center. The ACLU provided funding for the study, which was conducted and released independently.

For more information about the project go to www.primetimeterror.com.

The Norman Lear Center is a multidisciplinary research and public policy center studying and shaping the impact of entertainment and media on society. From its base in the USC Annenberg School, the Lear Center builds bridges between faculty who study aspects of entertainment, media and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. For more information, visit www.learcenter.org.

Located in Los Angeles at the University of Southern California, the **Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism** (www.annenberg.usc.edu) is a national leader in education and scholarship in the fields of communication, journalism, public diplomacy and public relations. With an enrollment of more than 2,200 students, USC Annenberg offers doctoral, graduate and

undergraduate degree programs, as well as continuing development programs for working professionals across a broad scope of academic inquiry. The school's comprehensive curriculum emphasizes the core skills of leadership, innovation, service and entrepreneurship and draws upon the resources of a networked university located in the media capital of the world.

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