

**The Salvatore Santoro Photographs (Dec. 15, 2004)**

On December 15, 2004, shortly after being assigned to cover Ramadi, Hussein took photographs of an Italian citizen named Salvatore Santoro, who had been killed by insurgents at a checkpoint outside of Ramadi. Hussein's photographs of Santoro show him bound and blindfolded, an apparent hostage of gun-wielding masked insurgents. These are the only photographs that Hussein took in his 20 months of work for the AP that show an apparent hostage.

The factual background to the photographs is as follows: On December 15, 2004, Hussein, an AP news stringer, and an AP Television News ("APTN") stringer, were travelling in the news stringer's car from Ramadi to Baghdad. All main roads were blocked because of fighting in the Fallujah area. Accordingly, the men were travelling on side roads. Outside of Ramadi – in an area called Al-Jaraishi – the car was stopped at a checkpoint by approximately 30 armed, masked insurgents. The insurgents demanded identification documents. The three men either produced press ID or told the insurgents that they were journalists. The insurgents asked who the men worked for. After being told the AP, the insurgents asked, "where do your photos go?" The men answered, "the whole world." At that point, the insurgents told the three men, "we have a hostage," "come take a picture." This was not an optional request, but a demand.<sup>1</sup>

Hussein and the APTN cameraman got out of the car with their respective cameras. The insurgents led Hussein and the APTN cameraman over a small hill. On the other side of the hill, propped against the incline, was Santoro's body. Hussein was shaken by this

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<sup>1</sup> Hussein's brother told us that Hussein told him, shortly after this incident, that the insurgents also said, "if the picture is not published, we will take revenge on you." The APTN stringer also told us that the insurgents threatened reprisals against the journalists if photos of Santoro were not published.

encounter. He told us: "I was shaking. This was the first time I had ever seen a human being in this condition. I was so distressed to see him in this position." Hussein assumed that Santoro was alive, because the insurgents said that they had a "hostage"<sup>2</sup> and instructed the journalists to simply take pictures and not to speak to Santoro, who was blindfolded. Hussein quickly snapped two photos of Santoro, turned around, and returned to the car. The APTN cameraman shot footage with his videocamera. (This footage indicates that Santoro was dead at the time.)

After they returned to the car, one of the AP employees asked the insurgents who the victim was. The insurgents said that they had documentation, but that it was at a different location. They then took Hussein's camera and the APTN cameraman's videocamera, and took photos and shot footage of both Santoro's identification documents and the mujahadeen group that had killed him. In the footage shot on the videocamera, one of the mujahadeen reads a statement – in Arabic – in which he explains that Santoro ran the checkpoint, ran down and killed one of the insurgents, and was in turn killed by the insurgents.

Certain aspects of the Santoro incident remain unclear. For example, the insurgents went to some trouble to make it appear that Santoro was alive, but then announced on the videotape that Santoro had been killed. What Santoro was doing in the middle of Anbar Province during a war is also entirely unclear. What is clear, however, is that Hussein was forced to take the photos of Santoro. It is also clear that these are the only photographs he took of a hostage or a purported hostage in insurgent custody. Given that insurgents took hundreds of hostages in Fallujah, Ramadi, and elsewhere in Anbar province during the years that Hussein worked for the AP, one would expect that a photographer truly "plugged into" the insurgency would have been able to obtain many such photographs.

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<sup>2</sup> The APTN cameraman likewise recalled that the insurgents used the term "hostage," which is a distinctive word in Arabic that, as in English, connotes a living person.