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# A Grenade Attack and the Fog of War

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**Abstract.** This article describes the social psychological and political psychological contexts within which attributions of causality may have been constructed concerning a grenade attack within Camp Pennsylvania, Kuwait, on the very early Sunday morning of March 23, 2003.

The construct fog of war often denotes a significant difficulty in apperceiving what is happening as well as the happening's who, when, how, and why. What follows are inferences about the fog of war related to one event occurring early Sunday morning, March 23, 2003, within Camp Pennsylvania, a Kuwait-located military base containing elements of the 101st United States (US) Airborne Division. At the time of this writing, it seems that anywhere from 3-4 grenades were rolled into 3 tents including command personnel. Concurrent or proximal shots were fired at the tent entrances. At least two persons have died and at least 12 others were wounded.

Based on accounts of co-located journalists and soldiers, it appears that the first inference made was that the event was an act of terrorism. This inference was a well-supported one in the context of what the Camp's occupants had been experiencing both distally and proximally before the event. The prior 2 days comprised a series of alerts for possible Iraqi missiles and actual Iraqi missile attacks. Although this aspect of the context might have more saliently suggested that the present event was some sort of Iraqi military attack, other aspects such as sightings of grenades being rolled into the command tent and the quality of the explosions might well have ruled out the hypothesis of a missile attack while still suggesting an attack by some psychological alien other--some adversary outside of the US military and US Government like a terrorist or terrorists. Given the sightings of the rolling of grenades, the quality of the explosions, the hearing of shots, and the physical fact of being within a supposedly secured space, one might well have made terrorism a very likely hypothesis.

This latter hypothesis became even more likely because the event occurred within a supposedly secure area and because of a recent history of other terrorist attacks on US military and civilians within Kuwait in the months leading up to the US-led military attacks against the Iraqi regime. The history minimally comprised an October 2002 terrorist attack that killed a US Marine during military training on a Kuwaiti island, the November 2002 shooting and serious wounding of 2 US soldiers by a Kuwaiti policeman on a highway south of Kuwait City, and the January 2003 killing of 1 US civilian and the wounding of another.

Other contextual aspects contributing to arriving at a terrorism hypothesis could well have been many of those which precluded complex cognitive analysis such as fatigue, fear, darkness, the belief of relative safety within a patrolled compound within a larger more threatening environment, concurrent missile alarms, the immediate post-attack reality of not knowing who was in charge because the attack had injured many of the local military leadership, and the general cognitive response set of not immediately suspecting one's own.

Once leadership was restored and an accountability operation (assessing the presence of all who should be within the compound, seeking out any other casualties, and generating other hypotheses) was effected, it soon became likely that the terrorism hypothesis might be jettisoned and that the

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hypothesis of an attack by a disgruntled soldier might be embraced. This was because a soldier was found hiding nearby--while other soldiers were engaged in the accountability operation or strengthening security activities. (If the soldier had quickly blended into the scene by carrying out activities similar to others or by taking on the role of the victim--since he appears to have been injured--he might never have been identified as a suspect so quickly if at all.)

The disgruntled soldier hypothesis was further supported by the growing realization that the soldier who had been apprehended had a recent history of being reprimanded for insubordination, was perceived by many of his peers and formal superiors as having an "attitude problem," and was to have been left behind when his unit moved out of Kuwait and into Iraq. Whether disgruntlement was merely related to being reprimanded or to other political, religious, and ethnic beliefs was still unclear as of this writing. It has been reported, for example, that the individual had "an Islamic name" and was a recent convert to Islam. It had also been reported that two Islamic contractors working for the US Army within Camp Pennsylvania had been detained soon after the attack--although a linkage among the three had not yet become part of public discourse. That the disgruntlement might have been related to psychological dysfunction and outright psychiatric symptoms was not yet being strongly suggested. That the individual might have been partially motivated by real or imagined ethnic and racial slights had been.

The fog of war will gradually lift, and the event may well be shorn of ambiguity and misperception. In this case, the fog paradoxically highlights one of the greatest fears of all of us--that danger can come from within and without. (See Keinan, G., Sadeh, A., & Rosen, S. (2003). Attitudes and reactions to media coverage of terrorist acts. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 31, 149-165; Merryfield, M.M. (2002). Rethinking our framework for understanding the world. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 30, 148-149; One dies in attack at U.S. camp; Soldier is held. (March 23, 2003). *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Soldier detained in fatal grenade attack on Army base. (March 23, 2003). *CNN.com World*. <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD>; US soldier "attacks own base." (March 23, 2003). *BBC News*. <http://news.bbc.co.uk>.) (Keywords: Kuwait, Terrorism.)