

## CONTROL ROOM

The military. The media. The war in Iraq.  
Who is making history?

In the early days of the war in Iraq, Americans could turn on their televisions twenty-four hours a day and take a front row seat with coalition troops careening across the desert. We could follow the action live as precision bombers brought Iraqi cities to their knees and American POWs were rescued and triumphantly returned home as television heroes. We could watch soldiers toppling statues of Saddam Hussein.

But as Americans witnessed U.S. victory at home, a different story unfolded on television sets throughout the Arab world. Qatari-based Al-Jazeera broadcast images of Iraqi civilian casualties and American POWs that were taboo in the American media. Many claim that as a result, America barred Al-Jazeera journalists from reporting on Wall Street and bombed their headquarters in Baghdad.

As the saying goes there are always two sides to every story, but in a media-managed war where does the truth lie?

With exclusive behind-the-scenes access to Al-Jazeera, American journalists, and the players at Central Command, **CONTROL ROOM** takes an unprecedented look at the business of war.

Uniquely qualified with a cross-cultural perspective, Egyptian-American filmmaker Jehane Noujaim (Startup.com), travels to the headquarters of Al-Jazeera and U.S. Central Command to capture the staging of the war in Iraq and the media's vital role in writing history.

## STARRING...



### SAMEER KHADER SENIOR PRODUCER, AL-JAZEERA

After touring the Arab world as a journalist, Sameer settled as a senior producer for Al-Jazeera. His insights on the war go beyond politics to philosophical musings on history and human nature. Although deeply against Bush's policies, Sameer has an appreciation for American values and a strong personal desire to move to the US, send his children to college there and "exchange the Arab nightmare for the American dream." Still, he is critical of America's distrust of Al-Jazeera and argues that "we [Al-Jazeera] don't want to alienate the Americans... we are what they want for the region—an Arab channel with western mentality." As **CONTROL ROOM** reveals, this conflicted love-hate mentality lies at the core of Arab American relations.



### LIEUTENANT JOSH RUSHING PRESS OFFICER, CENTRAL COMMAND

Lt. Rushing has the daunting task of defending America's military operation to the worldwide media. With an open-mind and a deep concern for the Arab perception of America, he engages in interviews and fierce debates. Although he is close to many Al-Jazeera journalists and respects their freedom, he believes that the news station itself is slanted towards Saddam's regime and portrays the U.S. inaccurately. Before going to the Middle East, Lt. Rushing worked in Hollywood negotiating script content with big budget studios on behalf of the US military. His job was to ensure that the military was portrayed well in films. After his service as press officer for CentCom ends, Rushing plans to move back to Hollywood to pursue an acting career.



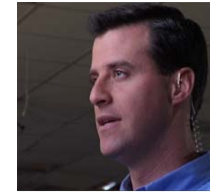
### TOM MINTIER CORRESPONDENT, CNN

Tom Mintier is a seasoned CNN correspondent who began his career as a cameraman in Vietnam. As one of the most experienced journalists at CentCom, Tom uses his power to ensure that all journalists are given equal access to information. Several times, his perception of unfair favoring of American reporters during press conferences lead him to request that his chance to ask a question be transferred to a foreign journalist. Like most reporters, he is frustrated by the lack of accurate information coming out of CentCom and is outraged by the coalition's bombing of Al-Jazeera.



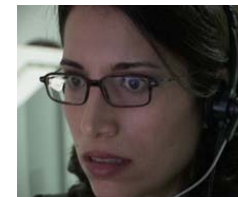
### HASSAN IBRAHIM JOURNALIST, AL-JAZEERA

A Sudanese journalist, Hassan was raised in Saudi Arabia where he was a classmate of Osama Bin Laden, attended American universities, and headed the BBC Arab News Service before joining Al-Jazeera - which he believes is the only free news station in the Middle East, if not in the world.. A passionate Arab nationalist, vehemently against the war and the US presence in the Middle East, Hassan also continually praises the US and its constitution saying, "while the White House has been hi-jacked by a bunch of oil men, the American people will be the only ones to stop this madness." As the war wears on, we watch as mounting civilian casualties pull Hassan down into a spiral of depression.



### DAVID SHUSTER CORRESPONDENT, NBC

David Shuster is a young NBC correspondent, proud to be a member of what he sees as a Western free press as opposed to the state-controlled media of the Arab world. His views are a fascinating foil to Deema. The two clash not only in their stances about what makes a free media, but also in their attitude towards covering the war.



### DEEMA KHATIB PRODUCER, AL-JAZEERA

Through her energetic commitment to Al-Jazeera, Deema challenges those who believe the days of genuine loyalty to a television network are gone. This young Syrian producer claims that her witty sense of humor allows her to face the horrors of war and "American occupation," as she calls it. Deema describes the Western war coverage as the most incredible piece of theatre she has ever seen.

“Al Jazeera is the channel that takes a licking and keeps on ticking. It’s been called biased and seditious by many of the countries to which it broadcasts, it’s been denounced by the Pentagon, banned from Islamic nations and the NYSE and, most recently, been accused of collaboration with Saddam Hussein” Antonia Zerbisias, *Toronto Star*, June 5, 2003

“Censoring death and suffering cuts us off from reality, severing the ties that ought to bind one human to another. Never forget, too, that an image can bring home the truth in a way words cannot.” Rowat, *The Herald* (Glasgow), May 30, 2003

“Al Jazeera, which has gained a reputation as an unusually independent voice in a region where many news media are government controlled, says it only airs messages according to news value” Tarek Al-Issawi, AP, May 22, 2003

“Like it or not, the media have become part of the arsenal of the political conflicts that define many aspects of U.S.-Arab relations. This is not incitement; this is digitized combat” -Rami G. Khouri, for *The Los Angeles Times*

“From Algeria to America, Al Jazeera’s unfiltered approach to reporting the news has garnered enemies all over the world” Anthony, *The Scotsman*, May 31, 2003

“The US-led war in Iraq was almost certainly the most intimately observed in history” - Michael Jansen in *The Irish Times*

“Al Jazeera’s reporters have been bombed and even killed by American forces; they’ve been beaten up by mobs in Detroit, tossed out of Iraq by Saddam and harassed by the British in Basra” Zerbisias *Toronto Star*, June 5, 2003

“Don’t Shoot the Messengers of the War” Alison Rowat, *The Herald* (Glasgow), May 30, 2003

“Al Jazeera, which claims to have doubled its worldwide audience during the war, on numerous occasions has enraged the Bush Administration with what was seen in Washington as an anti-U.S. bias” Paul Martin, *The Washington Times*, May 12, 2003

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**Directed by:**  
Jehane Noujaim

**Produced by:**  
Rosadel Varela (USA)  
Hani Salama (Middle East)