

U.S. Lifts Ban on Coffin Photographs

Posted At : March 2, 2009 3:57 PM | Posted By : Bob
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Earlier this week, Defense Secretary Robert Gates removed the ban on pictures of coffins of returning war dead. The article at CNN.com includes [video of the announcement to the press](#) and [the video of the news conference](#) where President George H.W. Bush is simultaneously broadcast with an inset footage of the first casualties being brought home from Panama. Unbeknownst to the first President Bush at that time, his light attitude while these images were displayed side by side was not taken well. This broadcast is thought to have led to the government ban two years later in 1991 on photographs during the first Gulf War. Now the ban has been lifted provided the living family gives consent.

Glenn Ruga, founder of [SocialDocumentary.net](#), commented on the lifting:

“ The ban amounted to government censorship of the media and denial of vital public information to the American public. It is the public's right and responsibility to see these images and learn about the consequences of military actions. These images, if done respectfully, only add to documenting the honor of the soldiers and their ultimate sacrifice. The photographs also ensure that there is transparency in government and visual information available on casualties from war to inform future generations.

Read more on the lifting of the ban and some of the controversy surrounding the decision at [SocialDo](#)
[SocialDocumentary.net](#), [CNN.com](#), and [NYtimes.com](#).