



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 16, 2010

Green Zone: Pulse-pounding Political Thriller

Paul Greengrass' *Green Zone*, starring Matt Damon, is a thrilling cinematic experience that effectively raises some very important questions regarding the American presence in Iraq. Damon plays Chief Warrant Officer Roy Miller, whose primary purpose is to find the weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Miller discovers a major problem, however: they don't exist.



Set in 2003 Baghdad, one month into the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Chief Miller is driven by his duty to secure sites that are believed to harbor WMDs. In the process, lives are lost with no discoveries to show for it, and Miller begins to detect a pattern of inaccurate intelligence.

As such, Miller questions the higher-ups about the false intelligence, only to be reprimanded by his superiors for doing so. Surrounded by soldiers who feel their dutiful obligations inhibit them from asking questions, Miller becomes a lone ranger of sorts, hell-bent on uncovering the truth. Luckily, Miller enlists the aid of an Iraqi civilian and informant, referred to as Freddy (Khalid Abdalla), and earns the support of a CIA member, Martin Brown (Brendan Gleeson), to assist in his efforts to uncover the truth about the purported weapons of mass destruction.

The conflicts in the film extend far beyond the obvious war between the United States and Iraq, focusing on the backstabbing and direct conflicts of those on the same side, particularly between Pentagon intelligence officer Clark Poundstone (Greg Kinear) and Martin Brown.

In his determination to succeed in transforming Iraq into a democracy, Poundstone intentionally falsifies testimony provided to him by a source, known as "Magellan" to corroborate claims that there was indeed a WMD program under Saddam Hussein.

Once Miller discovers Magellan's identity, he decides to bring him to Brown to rectify the false allegations contended by Poundstone. When Poundstone learns of Miller's intentions, he decides that a live Magellan will endanger the mission in Iraq and seeks him out to silence him permanently. What ensues is a thrilling and exciting pursuit, similar to the exhilaration of Greengrass' *Bourne* movies.

Writer Brian Helgeland clearly constructed this story with parallels in mind. Poundstone mirrors Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld when he insists that "Democracy is messy." *Wall Street Journal* reporter Lawrie Dayne (Amy Ryan) emulates *New York Times* writer Judith Miller, whose reports both before and after the invasion of Iraq helped reinforce claims made by the Bush administration.

The political focus of the film has prompted allegations that *Green Zone* is an unpatriotic and anti-American film. In reality, the movie seems to highlight the potential benefits of the war for the Iraqi



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citizens while still questioning the original reasons for justifying the Iraqi invasion. This theme is exemplified by the presence of Freddy, the informant who takes an interest in aiding the American soldiers because of their role in disbanding Hussein's evil regime. Freddy, though uncertain of the extent to which he should trust the American liberators, supports the role that America has played in Iraq, with the exception of the direct and indirect operations with sectarian insurgents. Freddy represents the hopeful Iraqis who welcomed the American presence believing it will culminate in a new and better Iraq. Likewise, in one of the first scenes of the film, waving and cheering Iraqis greet Miller and his troops as they enter a neighborhood in Baghdad.

Another point that resonates throughout the film is that the United States should not be operating alone in Iraq, but should enlist the help of Iraqis, both the police force and military. This would serve to ensure that whatever power is installed in Iraq will remain in power as a result of Iraqi support. This is emphasized at the end of the movie when Freddy remarks, "It is not you who will decide what happens here."

Arguably, it is these themes that viewers are meant to grasp by the end of the movie. In fact, it seems to be the conclusion to which Miller accepts as well, i.e., that despite the lack of evidence to support the original reasons for entering Iraq, something positive may very well come from the operation. Miller encounters this first-hand when he sees what a single Iraqi is willing to do to protect the future of his country. This should explain why Miller remains in the military even after all that transpires.

Others may take issue with this conclusion. The United States military should be limiting their military engagements to those who are a direct threat to the United States. If it turns out that there truly was no American threat in Iraq, then it is arguable that the military had no business being in Iraq.

Many moviegoers and reviewers were inflamed by the film's accusations that the CIA and Bush administration intentionally mislead the American people to believe that Hussein was an immediate threat to the United States. *New York Post* film reviewer Kyle Smith calls the movie "slander" and considers it "one of the most egregiously anti-American movies ever released by a major studio." While anti-American is not quite an accurate description of the film, it can be accused of oversimplifying a complex state of affairs by placing the blame for the Iraq invasion on one man who intentionally provided faulty intelligence. Likewise, the film makes definitive claims about the presence of WMDs that may be too soon to confirm.

As is always the case, viewers would do well not to allow themselves to be indoctrinated by a film, book, or any tool of the media. Rather, every moviegoer should be well versed in the subject at hand and come to their own conclusions.

Because of the violence and explicit language throughout the film, *Green Zone* is rated R.

Photo: Actor Matt Damon and wife Luciana Barroso attend the world premiere of 'Green Zone' on February 25 in New York: AP Images



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