

My favorite Middle East sage, Robert Fisk of *The Independent* has written [another spectacular column](#). "Accurate information in Iraq is like water in the desert: precious, rare, often polluted."

Here is an excerpt which brings home a particularly startling aspect of the current situation in Iraq:

The reality is that Iraq's war now exists in a fog through which we can see only vague figures. They may be insurgents or they may be soldiers. Or they may, for all the Iraqis know, be units from the 120,000 – yes, 120,000 – Western mercenaries now believed to be operating in Iraq for any number of legal and quasi-legal organisations. These hired gunmen constitute a force almost equal to the entire US contingent in Iraq. Who do they work for? What are their rules? The answer to the first may be "everyone". The answer to the second question? None. Besides these great mysteries, what did the lives of 18 teenagers matter to the world yesterday, let alone who killed them?