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## **From Pacifists to Cowboys to Torturers: The Different Representations of the US Military and Intelligence Agencies in Post-9/11 American War Films**

**Abstract:** The horrifying images of the terrorist attacks on New York’s World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, in which three thousand civilians were killed, have become some of the most famous images ever committed to film or television. In the decade following the attacks, a wealth of war films were released, including *Redacted* (Brian De Palma, 2007), *The Hurt Locker* (Kathryn Bigelow, 2009) and *Zero Dark Thirty* (Kathryn Bigelow, 2012) amongst many others. Many films from this period of US cinema addressed both the 9/11 attacks as well as the US military’s conflicts in various countries suspected of harboring terrorist groups. When analyzing the ways the military and intelligence agencies (such as the CIA) are represented in some US films from this period, it becomes clear that such representations changed over just a few years: *Redacted* showed the military to be polarized—a place for pacifists, rapists and murderers. *The Hurt Locker* later depicted successful soldiers as having a “gung ho” attitude, and the military as a permanent fixture in Iraq. Finally, *Zero Dark Thirty* included scenes of CIA torture, which is suggested as being necessary and justified. Surprisingly, however, the ways the military and intelligence agencies are represented in these films did not necessarily mirror the political change that was occurring.

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