

REUTERS/El Pais/Landov



Original photo distributed by Reuters news service.

What's different about these two photos of the 2004 Madrid train bombing? Does one shock or offend you more than the other? Do you even notice the differences? As a news consumer, does it bother you to think the images you see may be edited? ■



Photo as edited by the Telegraph.

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Are There Limits to What Media Images Should Display?

At first glance, the photo of the terrorist bombing of a Madrid train in 2004 taken by Spanish photographer Pablo Torres Guerrero is disturbing enough, with its visage of carnage and death. But after you look at the original photo for a few moments, you realize that there is a portion of a severed leg in the foreground, bright red with blood.¹

How was the photo changed to be printed in the British newspaper the *Telegraph*? Do these changes make the photo less graphic? Do these changes make the photo less honest? What else could have been done to tone down the gore in this

photo? Or is it wrong to take the horror out of the photo?

The Telegraph wasn't the only newspaper to tone down the graphic image of the train bombing. *The Guardian* (not pictured) left the limb in the photo but took the color out of the limb so it wasn't so graphic. And *The Times* of London took the limb out of the photo all together. Paul Johnson, an editor at *The Guardian*, said that removing the color from the photo was the best compromise the staff could come up with:

"We could have cropped it out, but someone came up with the

suggestion that we bleed out the colour. It is not perfect by any means but I felt it was the best solution all round because it didn't eradicate anything from the picture."²

¹Claire Cozens, "Editors 'Clean Up' Bomb Photo," *Guardian*, March 12, 2004, www.guardian.co.uk/media/2004/mar/12/pressandpublishing.spain.

²Ibid.



Web 15.8: Read the *Guardian's* story on how and why the editors altered the photo.