

NBC anchor admits telling false story

By Travis J. Tritten, Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON – NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams admitted Wednesday he was not aboard a helicopter hit and forced down by RPG fire during the invasion of Iraq in 2003, a false claim that has been repeated by the network for years.

Williams repeated the claim Friday during NBC's coverage of a public tribute at a New York Rangers hockey game for a retired soldier that had provided ground security for the grounded helicopters, a game to which Williams accompanied him. In an interview with Stars and Stripes, he said he had misremembered the events and was sorry.



Brian Williams

The admission came after crew members on the 159th Aviation Regiment's Chinook that was hit by two rockets and small arms fire told Stars and Stripes that the NBC anchor was nowhere near that aircraft or two other Chinooks flying in the formation that took fire. Williams arrived in the area about an hour later on another helicopter after the other three had made an emergency landing, the crew members said.

"I would not have chosen to make this mistake," Williams said. "I don't know what screwed up in my mind that caused me to conflate one aircraft with another."

Williams told his Nightly News audience that the erroneous claim was part of a “bungled attempt” to thank soldiers who helped protect him in Iraq in 2003. “I made a mistake in recalling the events of 12 years ago,” Williams said. “I want to apologize.”

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