

# Adam Ciralsky

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**Adam Ciralsky** (born September 22, 1971) is an award-winning journalist, TV producer and attorney.

His television career includes CBS News' *60 Minutes* and later NBC News where, over the course of a decade, he captured broadcast journalism's highest honors, including three Emmys,<sup>[1][2][3]</sup> a Peabody Award for Significant & Meritorious Achievement in Broadcasting & Cable,<sup>[4]</sup> a Polk Award for Outstanding Television Reporting,<sup>[5]</sup> an Alfred I. duPont–Columbia University Award for Breaking News & Sustained Coverage,<sup>[6]</sup> a Loeb Award for Distinguished Business & Financial Journalism and a Barone Award for Excellence in National Affairs/Public Policy Journalism.<sup>[7]</sup>

Prior to his journalism career, Ciralsky was recruited to join the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) while still in law school.<sup>[8]</sup> Described as “a wunderkind of the national security establishment”, Ciralsky began his career in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD).<sup>[8][9]</sup>

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## Early life & education

Ciralsky grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin before attending George Washington University in Washington, DC where he graduated *magna cum laude* with a B.A. in International Affairs.<sup>[10]</sup> His work on weapons proliferation issues landed him a research scholarship in Arms Control, Disarmament and International Security at the University of Illinois where, in 1996, he received his Juris Doctor (J.D.).<sup>[11]</sup>

## Career

### 1990s

As a student at George Washington University, Ciralsky began work in the Pentagon's Office of

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<b>Born</b>	September 22, 1971
<b>Education</b>	George Washington University, B.A. University of Illinois, J.D.
<b>Occupation</b>	Journalist
<b>Years active</b>	1999 – present

Non-Proliferation Policy where, among other things, he served as a representative to interagency working group on the United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM). While in law school, Ciralsky returned to Washington to spend his summers working in the newly renamed Office of Counter-Proliferation Policy. A budding lawyer, he analyzed sensitive intelligence helping provide legal rationales for the imposition of sanctions under the Missile Technology Control Regime.

Ciralsky's work caught the attention of the CIA, which offered him a slot in its Legal Honors Program.<sup>[12]</sup> During his tenure at the CIA, Ciralsky handled a variety of sensitive matters involving CIA operations and officers and was honored with an Exceptional Performance Award from Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet.<sup>[13]</sup>

In July 1997, Richard Clarke, then President Clinton's Counter-Terrorism Czar, offered Ciralsky a rotational position at the National Security Council (NSC), which he was slated to begin in early 1998. However, in August 1997, the CIA's Counterespionage Group (CEG) blocked the rotation citing concerns about Ciralsky's "Jewish roots".<sup>[14]</sup> Ciralsky fought the allegations and, in so doing, unearthed many documents. Ciralsky subsequently sued the CIA and FBI for discrimination, which led to a CIA investigation of the CEG in 1998. The Anti-Defamation League was hired to perform "sensitivity training" of CEG employees at that time.

Before Ciralsky was officially released from the CIA, he was subjected to a polygraph test, questioning his loyalties. The CIA polygraph administrator referred to Ciralsky as "that little Jew bastard" when speaking to a colleague about giving the test. Tenet said that these actions were "insensitive, inappropriate and unprofessional", and could be construed as anti-Semitic.<sup>[15]</sup>

The lawyers successfully deposing CIA director George Tenet was an unprecedented move. Victoria Toensing, the former chief counsel for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said that she hadn't heard of anything like this happening before. She elaborated, saying "Usually the agency tries to circle the wagons and protect the director from ever having to provide facts...The fact that he was privy to the gross violations that occurred here is what is significant."<sup>[15]</sup>

After 12 years, Ciralsky withdrew his suit. He said that he was not concerned with the financial compensation. Instead, Ciralsky successfully achieved his goals of bringing facts to the public eye and using these to spur changes in the CIA. He said that he is still "proud of [his] service with the CIA and [has] a deep and abiding respect for the organization and its mission."<sup>[15][16]</sup>

## 2000s and current

Following his departure from the CIA in December 1999, Ciralsky was hired by the CBS Newsmagazine *60 Minutes*. His first story, "Death by Denial", which dealt with the scourge of HIV/AIDS in Africa, won a Peabody, broadcast journalism's equivalent of the Pulitzer Prize.<sup>[4][17]</sup> While at *60 Minutes*, Ciralsky's stories were nominated for three Emmy Awards.<sup>[18][19][20]</sup>

In 2004, Ciralsky was hired away by NBC News where his work covering the 2006 Lebanon War earned him his first Emmy.<sup>[1][21]</sup> After exposing a fraudulent passport ring in South America and rescuing a young woman from human traffickers in Malaysia, Ciralsky went on to produce two stories about malfeasance by Pentagon procurement officials.<sup>[22][23]</sup>

His multi-part series entitled *Trophy*, about U.S. Army efforts to scuttle an Active Protection System designed to shoot down rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs),<sup>[24][25][26]</sup> earned Ciralsky his second Emmy as well as the George Polk Award for special achievement in journalism; in particular, "investigative and enterprise work that

is original, requires digging and resourcefulness, and brings results.”<sup>[2][27][28]</sup> Trophy also went on to capture the Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business and Financial Journalism. As the judges put it:

This report revealed a secret effort by the US Army to thwart development of a new Israeli device called "trophy," designed to defend soldiers from rocket-propelled grenades. Over an eight-month period, the reporting team uncovered the army's aim to protect a \$70 million Raytheon contract to produce a competing product from scratch. Their timely story triggered a government accountability office investigation and a new law in Congress.<sup>[7]</sup>

The *Trophy* series, for which NBC's Lisa Myers served as the correspondent, also garnered the Barone Award from the Radio and Television Correspondent Association (RTCA) for excellence in Washington-based reporting on national affairs and public policy.

Ciralsky followed *Trophy* with another multi-part series about the U.S. Army's decision to ban Dragonskin, a flexible form of body armor, and instead force soldiers to wear Army-issue body armor called Interceptor.<sup>[29][30]</sup>

Despite significant pushback by the Army, Ciralsky's stories not only resulted in multiple investigations - by the Pentagon's Inspector General and the General Accountability Office - but also a decision by the Army to recall "16,000 sets of ceramic body armor plates that the Pentagon's inspector general believes were not properly tested and could jeopardize the lives of U.S. service personnel."<sup>[31][32]</sup> The body armor series won Ciralsky his third Emmy award.<sup>[3]</sup> While at NBC News, Ciralsky earned an additional four Emmy nominations.

In 2008, Ciralsky started his own production company, Physics Package Productions (P3), which in 2009 landed a primetime docu-series on NBC entitled, "The Wanted". Although NBC purchased twelve episodes, the network aired two. After Shine Reveille negotiated the overseas rights, six episodes aired worldwide. The show's premiere focused on Mullah Krekar, the founder of the Ansar al-Islam organization, an Islamist group considered a terrorist organization by U.N. authorities as well as by the European Union. Krekar's group, an affiliate of al-Qaeda, claimed responsibility for hundreds of killings including gruesome beheadings captured on video and distributed through the internet. The NBC show aired in Norway in July 2009 where the topic was a hot-button political issue leading to considerable media interest and focus on the fact that Krekar was a free man in Norway. Overwhelmed by criticism in local media, the Norwegian foreign ministry responded by calling the show "superficial" and promising to deport Krekar to Iraq where he was wanted.<sup>[33]</sup> Krekar roamed free in Oslo until March 26, 2012 when a Norwegian court convicted him of issuing fatwas ordering the death of Norwegian citizens and for threatening the death of a political party leader in Norway.<sup>[34]</sup>

In the fall of 2009, Ciralsky left NBC to focus full-time on P3 which in early 2010 began production on a secretive docu-series called *Project X*.

Ciralsky co-wrote and co-directed with journalist Shawn Efran the documentary film *The Project*, a profile of the Puntland Maritime Police Force, that was selected to appear as a Spotlight film at Tribeca Film Festival 2013.<sup>[35][36]</sup> The film follows the "intense, gripping and disarming ride" of the PMPF as they take "the hijacking of the African waterways and the kidnapping of innocent citizens into their under-trained hands" and "face mutiny, death and a loss of corporate funding in their dangerous quest to free the Middle East shipping industry from terror."<sup>[37]</sup> *The Hollywood Reporter* described the film as "a stark and shocking look at the outlaw police force that seems a world away, but has a vast impact on the way [Americans live]."<sup>[38]</sup>

# Controversy

While at *60 Minutes*, he shed new light on the war on terror by, among other things, helping track down and interview the only participant in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing to remain at large.

## See also

- List of George Polk Award Winners

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