

Perhaps the movies made too literal a translation

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Raymond Chen

One person in our group that went to see the movie *True Lies* back in 1994 is a native of the Middle East and knows Arabic. Our friend was therefore able to give us a side commentary on the quality of the Arabic used in the movie. The opening sequence takes place at the embassy of a Middle Eastern country, and Arnold Schwarzenegger's character infiltrates the affair, in part by speaking what the movie subtitles reassure us is "perfect Arabic". Our friend leaned over and confided in us, "That Arabic is awful." This was, of course, hardly surprising. Towards the end of the movie, Arnold's character has infiltrated the bad guys' secret hideout and listens in to a fiery speech given by the head bad guy. Jamie Lee Curtis's character asks him, "What's that guy saying?" Arnold's character responds, "We shall triumph over the evil Americans, blah blah blah." We asked our friend, "What is that guy really saying?" "Believe it or not, he's saying 'We shall triumph over the evil Americans,' and the rest is gibberish." The translators must have left that in as a little bonus joke for the Arabic speakers in the audience. In 1995, the Windows 95 team dispatched pairs of employees to meet with IT departments around the country and install betas of Windows 95 on their computers to see how well it integrated with their networks, how well it handled that company's hardware configurations (Windows 95 being the first Microsoft operating system to support Plug and Play), ran the company's line-of-business applications, and generally see how it fared in a "real-world environment". (There were also follow-ups to see how Windows 95 was doing after being up and running for a while.) My friend happened to be on one of those trips at the Pentagon on April 19th, 1995. They were installing Windows 95 on a set of machines, when somebody came into the room and said, with a very serious expression, "You need to leave now. Stop whatever you're doing and come with me." If you're in the Pentagon and somebody tells you, "You need to leave now," you don't ask any questions. You just leave. They went to a nearby pub for lunch and saw on the television the reason why everybody at the Pentagon was so nervous: A bomb had just gone off in Oklahoma City, and public suspicion was initially cast on Middle Eastern terrorists. Being a Middle Eastern person in Washington, DC right after the Oklahoma City bombing was "very uncomfortable", my friend told me.

Sidebar

April 19th is a particularly bloody day in United States history. April 19, 1775 marked the Battles of Lexington and Concord, generally considered to be the opening battle of the American Revolutionary War. Four score and six years later, on April 19, 1861, the Pratt Street Riot in Baltimore marked the first death of the American Civil War. More recently, April 19, 1993 marked the deadly end of the siege of the Branch Davidians, followed two years later by the Oklahoma City bombing.

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