

PSYOPS

Cruel and Unusual

Washington may be trying to win hearts and minds in Iraq. But those recalcitrant Saddam supporters who don't want to hear of it are being forced to listen to a very different message. Some U.S. military units have taken to exposing uncooperative Iraqis to long doses of heavy-metal music or even popular children's songs in an effort to convince them not to resist Coalition forces. "Trust me, it works," says one U.S. operative on the ground. "In training, they forced me to listen to the Barney 'I Love You' song for 45 minutes. I never want to go through that again."

The idea, explains Sgt. Mark Hadsell, is to break down a subject's resistance through sleep deprivation and annoyance with music that is as culturally offensive and terrifying as possible. Hadsell's personal favorites include "Bodies" from the "XXX" soundtrack and Metallica's "Enter Sandman." "These people haven't heard heavy metal before," he explained. "They can't take it. If you play it for 24 hours, your brain and body functions start to slide, your train of thought slows down and your will is broken. That's when we come in and talk to them." The sledgehammer riffs of Metallica, that's understandable. But can children's songs really break a strong mind? (Two current favorites are the "Sesame Street" theme song and the crooning purple dinosaur Barney—for 24 hours straight.) In search of comment from Barney's people, Hit Entertainment, NEWSWEEK endured five minutes of Barney while on hold. Yes, it broke us, too.

—Adam Piore, Newsweek