



Could Saddam Have a New Face?

Dictator Could Conceivably Change His Look, Though Profiler Doubts He Would

By MICHAEL S. JAMES

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Could that nondescript, paunchy guy sitting next to you on the bus be Saddam Hussein?

It's medically possible, say plastic surgeons.

The former Iraqi leader, not seen publicly since at least April 9, could conceivably be nearly healed from soft-tissue plastic surgery and have the look of a dapper businessman, a mustache-free version of his younger self, or an uglier man than he ever was.

Given a bit more healing time, he could have his facial structure transformed so dramatically that even members of his inner circle and high-tech facial recognition programs would have trouble recognizing him.

"If you went ahead and just painted your house, that would just take a few days to make a little bit different," said Dr. Henry Kawamoto, a plastic surgeon at the University of California, Los Angeles. "But if you wanted to change the structure & that would take a little bit longer."

There is no evidence to suggest Saddam has had any surgery. In fact, a profiler who has studied Saddam believes he's way too vain to agree to change his appearance, and may be dead.

At the very least, many believe he's likely in too much of a scramble to escape to make time for an operation.

Not Hard to Change

Nevertheless, several plastic surgeons contacted by ABCNEWS offered their takes on how different he could appear if he wanted to.

"It would be quite easy to change his appearance," said Dr. Julius Few, assistant professor of plastic surgery at Northwestern Medical School in Chicago. "It is technically easier to change a person's appearance than to enhance it and maintain the same character. He could be transformed and significantly recovered by three to six weeks."

To make Saddam look like a younger man with male-pattern baldness, Few might "recede his hairline, elevate his brow, smooth out his upper and lower eyelids, adding a subtle slant to the corners, place cheek implants, soften his nose, give him a facelift and chin implant, and reduce the size of his ears."

Even a quick, non-surgical restyling such as mustache, hair and makeup changes might be enough to fool Saddam pursuers who don't look too closely, said Kawamoto, who is perhaps best known for separating 17-month-old Guatemalan twins conjoined at the head last year.

"I would think he'd have things to do other than to lie on the table," Kawamoto said. "Certainly, if the bombs are falling all over, you're not going to think about having plastic surgery."

If Saddam had time for soft tissue surgery and reshaping, he could appear much younger, but perhaps not different enough to fool those who know him well.

For a more dramatic change, Kawamoto said surgeons could "physically change the position of his eye sockets & but it's not something that most people would have done to themselves."

Such a change would be painful, but could fool many facial-recognition programs, Kawamoto said.

Dr. Russel Kridel, of Facial Plastic Surgery Associates in Houston, told ABCNEWS station KTRK-TV he might remove fat and skin from around Saddam's eyes, shave his mustache, tweeze and reshape his eyebrows, reshape his face, remove his jowls with a facelift, thin his nose and inject his forehead and other areas with Botox.

The process would involve about nine hours of surgery and cost about \$20,000 in Houston, he said. Before-and-after renderings of the look are pictured atop this story.

"At this point, after three weeks or four weeks, if he'd had the surgery when the war started, he'd be almost healed," Kridel told KTRK. "Now, he has a more triangular face, rather than the square face he previously had."

Really Beat-Up Look

Dr. Garry Brody, of the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, said there might be a different course for plastic surgeons hoping to fool Saddam's pursuers.

"I think I'd go in the reverse direction and make him look uglier," Brody said. "Instead of defining that nose, I'd break it, squash it, widen it, make it really look beat up."

Brody said the kind of changes suggested by Kridel might make Saddam look younger, but would not necessarily hide his identity.

"I think if you're going to use standard techniques and try to make him look beautiful or young, you're going to have a hard time really changing his appearance to people who know him," Brody said.

Brody would encourage Saddam to grow his hair longer and dye it a dirty gray, to gorge on food and gain weight, and to stop wearing any makeup. He might lower Saddam's hairline, lighten his skin, discolor his teeth, give him chin and cheek implants to lengthen his face, and add facial scars.

"Finally, I would probably change the direction of his eyes and turn them down, give him sort of a Mongoloid look," Brody said. "All of the things I'm suggesting would heal fairly quickly. & If all went well, he'd probably be presentable in a week to 10 days."

The scars might take more time to age, but raw scars could be attributed to war injuries, he added.

Unlikely to the Extreme

However, while it may be possible for Saddam to rapidly change his look, it may not be in his emotional makeup to distort himself, according to Jerrold Post, a former CIA profiler who is director of the political psychology program at George Washington University in Washington.

"This seems to me unlikely to the extreme," said Post, editor of *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders: Psychological Profiles of Saddam Hussein and William Jefferson Clinton*.

"This is a man who is strongly concerned with his image," Post added. "He's made his visage a prominent piece of Baghdad's and other cities' architecture."

Judging from the contrast between the tight control Saddam's regime once had over Iraqi society and the apparent lack of a coordinated response to the U.S.-led invasion, Post believes Saddam may be dead or incapacitated.

The recent videotape of Saddam in Baghdad, released last week and purported to have been shot April 9, may have been issued by Saddam's inner circle "as an effort to hold things together" among those still loyal to or fearful of the deposed leader, Post said.

Christi Myers of ABCNEWS station KTRK-TV in Houston contributed to this report.

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