



Campaign 2004

Media Reality ✓ Check

Expert Documentation of the Latest Liberal Media Bias ✪ Wednesday, April 21, 2004

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Papers Highlight Kerry Backing Away from Vietnam "Atrocity" Claims, But TV Networks Stay Quiet

The TV Elite Downplays Kerry vs. Russert

On Monday, *Washington Post* media reporter Howard Kurtz presented results of a *Post* study of cable news coverage from March 3 to April 16. The main finding: President Bush received three times as much live event coverage as John Kerry. If so, is that unfair to Kerry? Or is it unfair to President Bush?

In the last few weeks, almost all of the TV news scrutiny has flowed in Bush's direction. Nothing Kerry has said or done – unless it figures into the media attack on Bush – gains any traction. Take, for example, Kerry's Sunday appearance on NBC's *Meet the Press*. This

could have been a high-profile news story which resulted in much pundit evaluation, as President Bush's grilling from Russert was in February. But only NBC found the interview worth a whole story, with a summarizing story on Sunday's *Nightly News* and a shorter piece on Monday's *Today*.

In the Sunday night story, NBC's Carl Quintanilla focused on Iraq, but also noted Kerry "supported Israel's actions against Hamas, bristled at suggestions his wife release her tax returns, and once again refused to name those now-infamous foreign leaders he says wanted him elected."

Quintanilla added: "Kerry may also be dogged by his stance on another war, Vietnam." Asked about a 1971 *Meet the Press* interview in which the young Vietnam vet claimed to have seen and committed war atrocities, Kerry backed away from his wildest claims, vaguely telling Russert "I'd have framed some of that differently." Quintanilla finished: "That issue is likely to get more play this week as his Senate testimony against the war marks its 33rd anniversary."

But neither of these passages about potential problems for Kerry aired on *Today* the next morning. That's strange, since Kerry's backing away from his 1971 overstatements

appeared in the second paragraph on the front page of the *Washington Post*, and led the *New York Times* story on the Russert interview, headlined "Kerry Backs Off Statements on Vietnam War."

ABC and CBS chose not to air any of Kerry's quotes about his wife's tax returns, or his wild statements about

supposed Vietnam atrocities. ABC only mentioned Kerry as a potential 2004 partner for Hillary Clinton as they promoted the paperback edition of her memoirs on *Good Morning America*.

On Sunday's *CBS Evening News*, (which aired only in

Western time zones), Joie Chen showed viewers just one Kerry quote, where he used claims from Bob Woodward's book to trash Bush. On Monday's *Early Show*, CBS's Bill Plante used a Kerry quote attacking Bush on Iraq. But the networks all ignored Kerry stumbling over Russert's question about his Iraq plan: "How can you possibly say the U.N. and NATO are going to come to our rescue when they don't have the troops or the interest of going in there?"

Once print reporters pressed the Kerry campaign to post Kerry's military records on his Web site, based on the Russert interview, CBS aired two sentences at 7:30 on Wednesday morning. ABC's Dan Harris did a story pointing fingers at "Kerry's opponents" for the disclosures on *Good Morning America*. Neither used NBC's Sunday clips.

Why is John Kerry going unscrutinized on the network newscasts? Have they decided that Kerry is not worth scrutinizing? Or do they fear that the more people look at Kerry, the worse he will fare? He ought to be scrutinized by the networks as a potential President, not just another negative voice on their daily anti-Bush soundtrack.

— Tim Graham

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To schedule an interview with an MRC spokesman, please contact Katie Wright at (703) 683-5004