



# Media Reality ✓ Check

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Media Establishment Embraces Washington Post Breach of Government Secrecy, Mourn Firing of Leaker

## Saluting an Act of National Security Sabotage

A number of journalists made a big show out of being appalled that CIA employee Valerie Plame's name made it into the *Washington Post* in 2003, a "leak" that led to Plame being celebrated on the cover of *Vanity Fair* magazine. In some circles, her fame continues — on Saturday, Plame and her husband will be the guests of ABC News at the annual White House Correspondents dinner, even as shows like MSNBC's *Hardball* continue to fixate on every element of the case.

But when the *Washington Post* published a story exposing "secret prisons" used to house top al-Qaeda captives — including some of those behind the 9/11 attacks — journalists rose up to defend the sabotage. Just last week, in fact, *Washington Post* reporter Dana Priest was given a Pulitzer Prize for revealing the classified program, which her original November 2 story admitted was a tightly-held secret "known to only a handful of officials in the United States and, usually, only to the President and a few top intelligence officers in each host country." President Bush had personally asked the *Washington Post* not to run the story.

After the *Post* story, European liberals threatened to retaliate against any European Union members which had helped the United States. The Associated Press, in a story about the CIA's firing of suspected leaker Mary McCarthy, acknowledged that "government officials have said it [the *Post* report] did significant damage to relationships between the U.S. and allied intelligence agencies."

But instead of condemning those who would divulge their government's secrets during a time of war, many journalists are now praising McCarthy, Priest and the *Post*:

■ On Sunday's *This Week*, ABC news veteran Sam Donaldson called the prison story disclosure "a victory for the American people....Remember the great American saying, 'Disobedience to tyranny is obedience to God.' In

this case, it was something that clearly, I think, most Americans would agree is not what we want to do, secret prisons, the right of detention not being open to public scrutiny. I mean, I think exposing something like that does not hurt us. It helps us."

■ CBS's Bob Schieffer ended his *Face the Nation* by agreeing that the *Post* story was a public service: "It's not the leakers, it's what they're leaking that scares me. After all, why should a democracy be operating secret prisons? If the government hadn't told us they exist, can we ever be sure who might wind up inside them? Isn't finding out stuff like that what reporters are supposed to do?"

■ On *Fox News Sunday*, discussing the firing of CIA employee McCarthy, NPR's Juan Williams also justified her act: "She felt what their activities were doing was hurting the American — hurting America both at home and abroad in terms of our ideals...I do believe it an act of conscience."

■ On MSNBC's *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* on Monday, NBC's Andrea Mitchell bemoaned the CIA's firing of McCarthy as likely to reduce future leaks: "They've found someone who was about to retire and they're sending a very tough message. The bottom line is that no one is going to have the courage or the stupidity, however you put it, or the, ah, the, I don't know, the will to talk to reporters from now on. Very few people will, because they can see right now from this example, what can happen to them."

By saluting those who sneakily undermined a top-secret national security project, the liberal media establishment has given sad illustration to the phrase "journalist first, American second." — *Brent Baker and Rich Noyes*

### Top Secret Program = "Abuse of Power"

"[The Pulitzer Prizes] recognize the sort of journalism — courageous, costly and comprehensive — that only papers can provide....The biggest story that newspapers unearthed last year was the abuse of power by the Bush administration. The *Post* won an award for revealing a system of secret prisons maintained by the CIA in Eastern Europe to interrogate terrorism suspects." — ABC's Cokie Roberts and her husband, former *New York Times* reporter Steven V. Roberts, April 23 column.

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