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Newsweek Editor Reveals: "The Media Beast Was So Happy...We All Jumped Up and Down"

Pushing a "Phony, Bogus" Anti-Bush Story

The liberal media are continuing to push the canard they developed last week that President Bush "knew" before September 11 about Osama bin Laden's scheme to hijack jets as a way to make war against the United States — equating a vague briefing about a possible hijacking with some of the worst scandals of the past two generations.

"Every President seems to struggle through a credibility gap at some stage, such as Richard Nixon with Watergate, Ronald Reagan with Iran-contra, and Bill Clinton with the Whitewater affair. What did he know, and when did he know it? Now it's George W. Bush's turn to answer Washington's favorite question," Kenneth T. Walsh and Kevin Whitelaw declared in the May 27 edition of *U.S. News & World Report*.

Amid the media hype, there are some good questions about how effectively U.S. intelligence sifted through all of the real clues and phony leads last summer. But beginning with CNN's Judy Woodruff — who on Wednesday's *NewsNight* charged that "President Bush knew that al Qaeda was planning to hijack a U.S. airliner and he knew it before September the 11th" — media bigwigs have oversimplified and exaggerated the story to put the blame on Bush:

■ On Thursday's *Good Morning America*, ABC's Charles Gibson promoted the cynical idea that Bush had faked his shocked reaction. The President's vague August briefing, Gibson charged, "calls into question what happened when Andy Card, Andrew Card, the White House chief of staff, that morning went and whispered in the President's ear, as the President was talking to a group of school students in Florida. Was the President really surprised?"

■ ABC, CBS and NBC each began their Thursday evening newscasts with the story, ratifying its importance: "On *World News Tonight*, the White House admits President Bush knew before September that Osama bin Laden was plotting to hijack planes. Was there enough information to make a difference?" Peter Jennings rhetorically challenged.

■ In his book, *Mobocracy*, Matthew Robinson exposed

the media's practice of using quick and methodologically-suspect public opinion polls to reinforce the tone of their coverage. Sure enough, on Thursday evening's *NewsNight*, anchor Bill Hemmer showcased a CNN poll echoing the liberal media spin that Bush had mishandled the "warnings" he received: "This is only preliminary, it is still early on this story," Hemmer cautioned, "but when asked, 'Did the Bush administration act on 9/11 warnings in the proper way,' 41 percent said yes, 52 percent said no."

■ Outgoing CBS *Early Show* host Bryant Gumbel on Friday echoed his brethren by quoting the media's hoary scandal question: "In light of revelations that the White House had several terrorist warnings prior to the 9/11 attacks, top Democrats are demanding to know what the President knew and when he knew it."

■ On Saturday's *McLaughlin Group*, *Newsweek*'s Eleanor Clift shifted a portion of the responsibility from al Qaeda's terrorists to the White House: "What we

learned this week is the President is not entirely blameless" for the death and destruction on September 11.

■ On Sunday's *This Week*, anchor-designate George Stephanopoulos wrapped an accusation in a compliment when he said the Bush White House has "been very careful with their words and, I think for the most part, the White House has not lied here." For the most part?

Over the weekend, *Newsweek* Assistant Managing Editor Evan Thomas, appearing on *Inside Washington*, dismissed the media's idea of a Bush scandal as "phony" and "bogus." He contended that journalists were "so happy to have a scandal here that we jumped up and down and waved our arms and got all excited about it." In other words, liberal journalists put their personal desire for a Bush scandal ahead of accurate reporting. — Rich Noyes & Brent Baker

Making Nefarious Scandal Insinuations

"Good morning. What did he know and when did he know it? The Bush administration admits the President was warned in an intelligence briefing last summer of the possibility that Osama bin Laden's terrorist network might hijack American planes, raising more questions about whether the attacks on America could have been prevented." — *NBC's Katie Couric opening the May 16 Today*.

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