



Media Reality ✓ Check

A Regular Report on Major News Stories Distorted or Ignored ☐ www.mediaresearch.org

Major Networks, News Magazines, Even Newspapers Ignore Potentially Embarrassing New Stories

Little “Sleaze Factor” Coverage of Clinton

As Ronald Reagan wrapped up his second term in 1988, there was no scandal fatigue. Each new scandal, such as controversies over Attorney General Ed Meese, led to reporters decrying ever-increasing evidence of a “sleaze factor.” But the media tend to yawn past the latest Clinton scandal news.

Saving Reno’s Job? On May 18, Associated Press reporter John Solomon dropped a bombshell: “FBI Director Louis Freeh wrote a memo in the earliest days of the Democratic fund-raising investigation suggesting a top Justice Department official was under pressure not to proceed with the probe to save Attorney General Janet Reno’s job.” Coverage? Just 20 seconds on the ABC and NBC morning shows.

At a Senate subcommittee hearing on May 24, FBI Assistant Director for National Security Neal Gallagher corroborated Freeh’s recollection about top Justice Department official Lee Radek making it clear that Reno was in peril if she named an independent counsel. Radek told the Senators that Freeh was mistaken. Coverage? Only FNC’s *Special Report with Brit Hume* aired a story on the hearing. All the other networks were absent.

Starr’s Not a Liar? On May 19, Associated Press reported that former Kathleen Willey friend (and Geraldo Rivera favorite) Julie Hiatt Steele, who joined a lawsuit alleging Ken Starr pressured her to offer false testimony, was rebuffed by U.S. District Judge John Nangle, who found “absolutely no evidence that [Mr. Starr] ever directly or impliedly asked her to lie.” Coverage? Not only did all the networks miss it, but the *Washington Post* was the only national newspaper or news magazine to come up in the Nexis database, on May 21.

Tripp’s Good Week. On May 24, Maryland prosecutors dropped their attempt to indict Linda Tripp for illegal

wiretapping in the taping of Monica Lewinsky. Coverage? All the networks were there in July of 1998, when the grand jury investigation began (and none mentioned that the prosecutor, Stephen Montanarelli, was a Democrat). When the probe ended, it drew anchor briefs on NBC, CNN, and a full story on FNC, but nothing on ABC or CBS.

Reno’s Job On The Line Spiked, But...

“MSNBC’s The News with Brian Williams skipped it but devoted a lengthy segment to the role of comedy shows in the campaign followed by an interview with Jay Leno. In a synergy of news judgments, both ABC’s World News Tonight and the NBC Nightly News ended with pieces on the movement to get pets to be treated by the law as more than mere property.” — Brent Baker in the May 25 Cyber Alert.

Tripp also received good news the next day, when the Pentagon’s Inspector General found that the release of her personnel file to *The New Yorker* in 1998 “constituted a clearly unwarranted invasion of her privacy” and a violation of the Privacy Act. Defense Secretary William Cohen slapped the wrists of his press people Ken Bacon and Cliff Bernath. Coverage? On ABC, Peter Jennings gave it an anchor brief and worked in nine words on the dropped Maryland case. CNN also

carried briefs on *Inside Politics* and *The World Today*. FNC’s *Special Report with Brit Hume* aired a brief, then a discussion the next night. *Time* gave it a sentence at the front of the magazine, adding “Now *pleeeze* disappear.” (Italics the irs.)

Juanita Broaddrick’s Audit. On May 30, AP reported that Clinton rape accuser Juanita Broaddrick received notice of an audit from the Internal Revenue Service. The IRS is focusing especially on 1998, when Broaddrick first became known as a potential Clinton accuser. “I believe it’s not a coincidence. I am clearly being targeted because I came forward,” she told Fox News. Coverage? Only AP, FNC, and *The Washington Times* have reported the story so far. — *Tim Graham*

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; **Brent Baker, Tim Graham**, Editors; **Jessica Anderson, Brian Boyd, Geoffrey Dickens, Ted King, Paul Smith, Brad Wilmouth**, Media Analysts; **Kristina Sewell**, Research Associate; **Liz Swasey**, Director of Communications. See FNC’s story on Neal Gallagher’s and Lee Radek’s testimony and other media bias videos at www.mrc.org/news/biasvideo.html