



Tell the Truth! 2004

Media Reality ✓ Check

Expert Documentation of the Latest Liberal Media Bias ☪ Wednesday, July 21, 2004

Press Contact:
Katie Wright
(703) 683-5004
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Dan Rather Disparages "Carefully Orchestrated Leak" That Upsets His Carefully Orchestrated Newscast

Sandy Berger's Defense Lawyers in the Press

It's like the Clinton administration never ended. Once again, a Clinton aide is caught doing suspicious things with documents — "inadvertently" disposing of a few — and some national newscasters are making excuses for potentially criminal behavior, or changing the subject to identifying a vast partisan conspiracy at work.

Sandy Berger, President Clinton's National Security Adviser during his second term, removed highly classified material from the National Archives, triggering a federal criminal investigation. When the story broke, some reporters protested the story's timing.

CBS anchor Dan Rather insisted "this was triggered by a carefully orchestrated leak about Berger, and the timing of it appears to be no coincidence." Reporter John Roberts found: "Republicans and Democrats alike say the timing of the investigation's disclosure smells like politics, leaked to the press just two days before the 9/11 Commission report comes out."

The problem with Rather's "carefully orchestrated leak" language is that he has no idea of the leaker or their orchestration. On August 17, 2000, Rather used the same phrase when it leaked on the night of Al Gore's convention speech that a new grand jury would investigate Bill Clinton. Rather suggested a GOP dirty trick: "Timing is everything," he began, and now Gore must speak "against the backdrop of a potentially damaging, carefully orchestrated leak about President Clinton." The next night, CBS's Jim Stewart noted "a judge appointed by a Democrat," Jimmy Carter, was actually the leaker. Rather never apologized for his error.

ABC also portrayed the controversy last night as a "political firestorm between Republicans and Democrats," but Pierre Thomas noted what CBS ignored: "some of the

information [removed] was apparently critical of Clinton's anti-terror efforts." ABC's *Nightline*, which often spotlights critics of Bush's foreign policy, skipped Berger last night.

Today on *Good Morning America*, co-host Charlie Gibson interviewed George Stephanopoulos, who predicted "I think this is likely to blow over." Gibson did not explain that George worked for years with Sandy Berger, or ask him questions based on that experience. ABC also failed to produce their consultant Richard Clarke, who wrote the document at the center of the probe.

NBC reporter Pete Williams noted Berger's defenses, then balanced them: "Government officials tell NBC

News that Archives employees say it wasn't so innocent, that they noticed documents were missing after day one" and that the purloined pages suggest the Clinton team "was not paying enough attention to terrorism." By contrast, *Today* has underlined Berger's defense with soft interviews two days in a row. Yesterday, Katie Couric talked to Berger's friend David Gergen. Today, Couric interviewed Berger's defense lawyer, former Clinton aide Lanny Breuer. No Berger critics have been interviewed.

CNN's *NewsNight* also featured Gergen last night, with his talk of Berger the "hero" of the war on terror. Reporter Kelli Arena went furthest in describing Archives employee claims that Berger shoved documents in his socks and pants. CNN also had a tough *Wolf Blitzer Reports* interview with Berger's lawyer, with Blitzer insisting "Sandy Berger doesn't do things inadvertently," and asking: "How is it possible that this document so sensitive, which he took home, took to his office at his home, presumably, disappeared?" The other networks should ask that, too.

— Tim Graham and Brent Baker

The last time Dan Rather found a "carefully orchestrated leak," against Clinton and Gore in 2000, his assertion was anything but careful. The next night, CBS reported the leak came from a judge appointed by Jimmy Carter.

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