



Tell the Truth! 2004

Media Reality ✓ Check

Expert Documentation of the Latest Liberal Media Bias ☪ Thursday, September 9, 2004

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ABC, CBS, CNN and NBC Ignored or Disparaged Swift Vets Against Kerry but Hype Anti-Bush Charges

Pro-Kerry Media Expose Their Partisanship

If there were any lingering doubts about whether network reporters are in the tank for John Kerry, Wednesday's newscasts put them to rest. From May to August, the networks ignored or disparaged charges against Kerry by his fellow Swift Boat veterans, but last night the claims of a Democratic partisan topped the *CBS Evening News* and were featured in prime time on CBS's *60 Minutes*. ABC, CNN and NBC also pounced in seeming unison on the supposed "new questions" about Bush's Guard service:

■ **CBS Evening News.** Dan Rather led off with "new questions tonight about President Bush's service in the Texas Air National Guard." Rather tried to build his prime time audience: "*60 Minutes* has obtained government documents that indicate Mr. Bush may have received preferential treatment in the Guard after not fulfilling his commitments." The documents Rather touted came from "the personal files of the late Colonel Jerry Killian." Since Killian is dead, one wonders who gave the papers to CBS. Thursday's *New York Times* reports CBS News has "declined to say how it obtained the documents."

■ **60 Minutes:** Rather interviewed former Texas House Speaker Ben Barnes, who says he's "very sorry" he helped young George W. Bush get preferential treatment to secure a spot in the Air National Guard. Rather noted in passing that Barnes is a lifelong Democrat who's hard at work raising money for John Kerry, but he still gave Barnes a prime time venue to level charges that the first President Bush branded a "total lie" in convention interviews last week. Presuming Barnes really did help Bush, Rather asked, "Did you have long talks with your conscience? Did you say to yourself, 'I'm a little uncomfortable with this?'"

But if Barnes's partisanship was a minor detail, CBS acted as if the Swift vets were the dirty-tricks arm of the Bush campaign. "Others allied with the Bush campaign attacked Senator Kerry today more directly and more personally," Rather grumped on May 4. "Their tactic was to depict Kerry — a wounded, highly-decorated Vietnam

combat veteran, who eventually became a vocal opponent of that war — as unpatriotic and not a worthy leader."

■ **ABC's World News Tonight** would not mention the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth at all until Kerry attacked them as liars on August 19. But on Wednesday, ABC immediately showed excerpts of a "Texans for Truth" ad claiming Bush failed to report

for duty. "For opponents of President Bush, it's payback time," reporter Terry Moran rationalized.

■ **CNN's NewsNight**, which avoided the Swift Boat veterans for 100 days, immediately touted the attacks on Bush's National Guard service. CNN's Aaron Brown framed the debate exactly as Kerry's spinners: "One guy went to Vietnam, the other guy didn't."

■ **NBC Nightly News.** On MSNBC's *Imus in the Morning* yesterday, NBC's White House reporter David Gregory doubted the new Bush revelations were much of a story: "I don't know that it's going to strike people as big news." But last night Tom Brokaw wondered, "Did he fulfill his obligations?" before reporter Andrea Mitchell cut loose with a story detailing the Democratic charges. A month earlier, Mitchell hated the Swift Vet ads, devoting an entire story not to their substance, but to deploring the "loophole" that allowed them to publicize their message.

— Brent Baker and Rich Noyes

But Doubts About Clinton Were "Smears"

"Bill Clinton says President Bush's 1988 Willie Horton crowd is smearing him with new campaign dirty tricks....In the presidential campaign, Democrat Bill Clinton says Bush-Quayle re-election forces are using a smear campaign to constantly raise questions about his past."

— Dan Rather introducing a Feb. 12, 1992 *Evening News* story about a letter from Clinton thanking his ROTC commander for "saving me from the draft."

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