

Notable Quotables

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A bi-weekly compilation of the latest outrageous, sometimes humorous, quotes in the liberal media.



Bringing Political Balance
to the Media

ABC News Boss's About Face

"The Pentagon as a legitimate target? I actually don't have an opinion on that and it's important I not have an opinion on that as I sit here in my capacity right now....I can say the Pentagon got hit, I can say this is what their position is, this is what our position is, but for me to take a position this was right or wrong, I mean, that's perhaps for me in my private life, perhaps it's for me dealing with my loved ones, perhaps it's for my minister at church. But as a journalist I feel strongly that's something that I should not be taking a position on. I'm supposed to figure out what is and what is not, not what ought to be."

— **ABC News President David Westin to students at a Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism event on October 23 and shown four days later on C-SPAN.**

"When asked at an interview session at the Columbia Journalism School whether I believed that the Pentagon was a legitimate target for terrorists I responded that, as a journalist, I did not have an opinion. I was wrong. I gave an answer to journalism students to illustrate the broad, academic principle that all journalists should draw a firm line between what they know and what their personal opinion might be. Upon reflection, I realized that my answer did not address the specifics of September 11. Under any interpretation, the attack on the Pentagon was criminal and entirely without justification."

— **Westin in a statement e-mailed to the Media Research Center on October 31.**

Slight Edge to the U.S.

"You're sitting interviewing someone and you're listening to him. He's plausible, he's making sense. But you know that they've lied in the past. I'm more inclined to believe my government."

— **CBS's Lesley Stahl on the syndicated *Access Hollywood* October 26, discussing her interview with Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz for *60 Minutes*.**

No Edge to the U.S.

"I don't believe that I'm being a particularly patriotic American by slapping a little flag in my lapel and then saying anything that is said by any member of the U.S. government is going to get on without comment and anything that is said by someone from 'the enemy' is immediately going to be put through a meat grinder of analysis. Our job is to put it all through the meat grinder of analysis."

— **ABC's Ted Koppel at an October 31 Brookings Institution forum, "The Role of the Press in Wartime."**

ABC Acknowledged Taliban's PR Aim & Delivered for Them

"[The Taliban] invited us in, we think, because they've woken up to the PR value of having Western journalists here in this country. They have one single, unerring goal which is to show that civilian casualties are mounting that the U.S. is responsible for. They hope, of course, that undermines support in the West and among Muslim countries that have allied themselves with the West in this strike against terror."

— **ABC's Dan Harris on *Good Morning America*, October 31.**

"Taliban soldiers led a caravan of reporters on a tour of Kandahar this morning, a tour with one overriding goal: To make their case that indiscriminate U.S. bombing has killed hundreds of civilians. They say this house, a medical clinic, was hit this morning killing 15, injuring more than 20. The chief doctor says the U.S. is targeting civilians. He now wants to fight the Americans. Many of the reporters on the tour were skeptical. There was no way to confirm the number of casualties and we weren't taken to a hospital to see the injured."

— **Harris on the October 31 *World News Tonight*.**

"This morning, our Taliban guides took us deep into the desert...to see what one called 'the real face of the U.S. army,' Chokar Karez, a village dismantled in a bombardment ten days ago, an attack witnessed by a local shepherd. 'Nobody was able to escape,' he said. 'They were all trapped.' It's tough to get an exact number, but based on interviews with people who live in the area it appears around 50 people died here. If this was a Taliban or Al-Qaeda base, there were no signs amid the rubble, only remnants of household life and pieces of exploded bombs....Today the Pentagon said it did hit the village and hit it on purpose. They called it a Taliban encampment with many Al-Qaeda collaborators. No matter what the truth is, the Taliban are clearly making this attack one of the highlights of our visit."

— **Harris on the November 1 *World News Tonight*.**

"The 26 journalists on the tour knew exactly why we had been invited: the Taliban wanted us to tell the world about innocent people being killed by U.S. bombs....While it's clear some civilians have died, many of the reporters were suspicious that the Taliban were exaggerating the casualty figures and we had no way to confirm their numbers....The Taliban were apparently satisfied with the results of their media tour. There's already talk of more trips this week."

— **Harris, in Pakistan, reviewing his trip to Afghanistan on *Good Morning America*, November 5.**

Objecting to Reminder of 9/11

"We want to say, as we will often be saying now from now on when we show you these reports from inside Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, that the United States is fighting this war in response to a terrorist attack that killed close to 5,000 innocent people in the United States. All that to keep in perspective."

— **Judy Woodruff on October 30 following a report on civilian casualties inside Afghanistan, illustrating a policy directive from CNN Chairman Walter Isaacson that reporters should remind viewers of the September 11 terrorist attacks to "make sure we do not seem to be simply reporting from [the Taliban's] vantage or perspective."**

"It reflects a kind of defensiveness already displayed in the reaction to Condoleezza Rice's warning to not use all this propaganda, not only because it might contain coded messages, which is really rather silly, but also because it conveyed propaganda and might affect the American people adversely. Once we begin to see that the government will try to involve the press in playing a positive role in whatever it is that the government wants to transmit, we are in trouble if the press is willing to accept that."

— **NPR senior analyst and former CBS correspondent Daniel Schorr, criticizing the CNN policy at an October 31 Brookings Institution forum.**

U.S. & Taliban Equally Upsetting

NPR Morning Edition Senior Editor Susan Feeney: "Well, you can't blame journalists for taking whatever information they can get in this environment. It's sort of, we have this semi-controlled reporting that's coming out of Afghanistan, and not to be too snide, but you can balance it against the semi-controlled information you have sitting at the Pentagon everyday. And I think it's fair to say we're not getting very much out of either side."

CNN's Howard Kurtz: "So you're saying both sides in effect are engaged in a propaganda war?"

Feeney: "Absolutely."

— **Exchange on CNN's *Reliable Sources*, November 4.**

Demanding Immediate Results

"The Secretary of Defense said today that those people who are questioning the effectiveness of the U.S. bombing campaign in Afghanistan are too impatient, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said much the same thing. The Pentagon is being pressed harder to be specific about what it has accomplished so far. The bombing campaign against the Taliban is now entering its fourth week and the Taliban are still standing."

— **Peter Jennings, October 29 *World News Tonight*.**

U.S. "Touched Off" Terrorism

"In Pakistan, religious tensions are running higher after the U.S.-led terror war in Afghanistan touched off such events as a funeral today for Pakistani Christians gunned down during church services yesterday. Three masked gunmen fired on the Protestant congregation, meeting in a Catholic church, with automatic weapons, killing at least 16 people. No one has claimed direct responsibility."

— **CBS's Dan Rather on the October 29 *Evening News*.**

"Wrong Man Was Inaugurated"

ABC legal analyst Jeffrey Toobin: "George Bush is...the Commander-in-Chief, he's the President. No dispute from me....But I do conclude that, based on what I saw in a year of investigation, that Al Gore won this election."

Katie Couric: "In fact, you write Jeffrey, quote, 'The wrong man was inaugurated on January 20, 2001, and this is no small thing in our nation's history. The bell of this election can never be unrung and the sound will haunt us for some time.'"

Toobin: "This was a bad process in Florida. This was a process that I don't think led to the democratic will of the electorate being, being vindicated."

— **Segment discussing Toobin's new book about last year's election re-count, October 30 *Today* on NBC.**

Journalists Even Annoy Geraldo

"Helped along by officials who say things that are either incomplete or incorrect, the media is, I'm afraid to say, losing its nerve....You've all seen the melancholy reports over the last few days: 'Our bombing's not working, we're slaughtering innocent civilians, our allies, the so-called Northern Alliance are all bluster, no belly, the Taliban's winning, Ramadan is coming, winter is coming, woe is us!' I think it's time for the nay-sayers to heed the famous philosopher who said, 'get over it!' As Defense Secretary Rumsfeld said today, 'This is a marathon, not a sprint,' and the only war we're losing so far is the battle not to lose our nerve."

— **Geraldo Rivera on CNBC's *Rivera Live*, October 29.**

Idea: Let's Alert the Enemy

"You said that the air strikes are deliberately designed not to hit residential centers, but you also say that the Taliban is hiding weapons, stockpiling weapons in residential areas. Have you ruled out the possibility of dropping leaflets days in advance of an air strike to get residents out and saying, 'This could become a military target'? Is that something, without discussing future operations, could you see that possibly coming to fruition?"

— **Question from an unidentified male reporter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld at an Oct. 30 military briefing.**

Notable Quotables

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