



Campaign 2000 Media Reality Check **QUICK TAKE**

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WHY DO REPORTERS KEEP INSISTING GORE IS "THE MASTER OF THE MATERIAL"?

NETWORKS HAVE YET TO QUESTION GORE'S ERROR ON ALASKAN OIL

On this morning's *Today* show, *Newsweek* writer and MSNBC/NBC talking head Jonathan Alter insisted that tonight's roundtable format will aid Vice President Gore because a more "thoughtful" exchange will showcase that the Democratic nominee "has a greater depth of understanding of some of these issues."

"He's shown he's the master of the material," Alter gushed to host Matt Lauer. "Now he has to be the master of the moment."

Maybe Alter and other journalists who think Gore is a "master" of the issues are just displaying their own ignorance of crucial policy details. Here's one claim the Vice President made last week that has yet to be refuted by anyone at ABC, CBS or NBC:

"Another big difference is, Governor Bush is proposing to open up some of our most precious environmental treasures, like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, to the big oil companies....I think that is the wrong choice. It would only give us a few months worth of oil," Gore said in the October 3 presidential debate.

FACT: The portion of the Arctic Coastal Plain contains an estimated 16 BILLION barrels of oil, or about equal to 30 YEARS worth of imports from Saudi Arabia, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The *CBS Evening News* admitted as much on October 8, when reporter John Blackstone described the region as "a place of rugged beauty and perhaps billions of barrels of oil." But neither Blackstone nor any other network correspondent was rude enough to let the facts get in the way of the idea that Gore is a policy "master."

If he makes the same bogus claim in tonight's debate, TV's self-appointed "truth squads" should tell their audiences that Gore is playing fast and loose with the facts, not hype him as a policy genius whose only flaw is an annoying sigh.