



Media Reality ✓ Check **QUICK TAKE**

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*WHEN CASTIGATING GEORGE BUSH FOR PASSING ON BOGUS INFORMATION,
AARON BROWN PASSES ON WEB STORY HE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN WAS FALSE*

CNN ANCHOR PUSHES ANTI-BUSH RUMOR — FOUR HOURS AFTER ITS RETRACTION!

In the 1990s, the World Wide Web was denigrated in media circles as a nest of White House-bashing conspiracy theorists, a fact-free zone where the scandal stories were too good to check. Last night, CNN *NewsNight* anchor Aaron Brown pulled a fascinating, though embarrassing trick: While castigating the President for passing on bogus information, he passed on a bogus Internet story he should have known was false.

After the lead story on the WMD search by David Ensor, CNN's all-news anchor jumped on the latest juicy rumor, asking Ensor: **"There is, as you know, a story that's been circulating on the Web today that there was at some point a conversation between the President and a CIA consultant where the consultant directly told the President that this African uranium deal was bogus.** Do you have any reporting that supports the idea that the President was directly told it was fake before he included it in the State of the Union speech?"

Clearly flummoxed, Ensor could only say: "I have no way to confirm that story and it is somewhat suspect, I would say, but we'll have to check it."

In searching for the Web source of this rumor today, CNSNews.com Executive Editor Scott Hogenson found the story on CapitolHillBlue.com, where founder and publisher Doug Thompson retracted the story under the headline "Conned big time" at 6:05 pm Eastern Daylight Time — **four hours before Brown's exchange with Ensor!**

Thompson had reported that a man claiming to be CIA consultant Terance Wilkinson said he was at two White House briefings where President Bush was told the African uranium deal was a bogus story. But Thompson confessed: "A White House source I know and trust said visitor logs don't have any record of anyone named Terance J. Wilkinson ever being present at a meeting with the President. Then a CIA source I trust said the agency had no record of a contract consultant with that name."

He also recounted: "I tried calling Terry's phone number. I got a recorded message from a wireless phone provider saying the number was no longer in service. I tried a second phone number I had for him. Same result....His email address turns out to be a blind forward to a free email service where anyone can sign up and get an email account."

Thompson's Internet news site offered a full correction and today instituted a new policy — no more unnamed sources. Are Aaron Brown's standards lower than the Internet's?