



Media Reality ✓ Check **QUICK TAKE**

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WHILE THEY HELP HYPE JOE WILSON'S "LEAKGATE," THE NETWORKS BARELY NOTICED IN '02 WHEN CONGRESS ILLEGALLY LEAKED SECRETS

THE NETWORKS' HIGHLY SELECTIVE OUTRAGE OVER "CRIMINAL" LEAKS

For the last three nights, all three broadcast networks have pounded on the White House for allegedly leaking the name of a CIA agent, a charge which, if true, might be a violation of federal law. "It is a Washington firestorm," NBC's Tom Brokaw declared on Tuesday night, as if the hyper-coverage of he and his colleagues had nothing to do with it.

But in June 2002, when members of Congress were suspected of criminally leaking classified information that posed a far greater potential threat to American security, the networks showed almost no interest in that scandal.

On June 18, 2002, National Security Agency officials briefed a joint House-Senate committee investigating the September 11th terrorist attacks, apparently revealing that, the day before the terrorist attacks, the NSA had intercepted a message saying "Tomorrow is zero hour." The day after the Congressmen were told of the secret intercepts, they were all over CNN — an obviously illegal leak of classified intelligence information that perhaps helped al-Qaeda figure out America's ability to eavesdrop on their conspiracies.

When the committee chairmen called for a full-scale criminal investigation on June 20, only the *CBS Evening News* deemed it worthy of a full story. ABC's *World News Tonight* guest anchor Elizabeth Vargas dismissed it with a 19-second mention, and NBC's Andrea Mitchell tacked a nine-second mention to the end of a *Nightly News* story about problems with the Department of Homeland Security. None of the three newscasts followed up the next day with stories showcasing demands for full cooperation or dire warnings about the dangers of revealing closely guarded secrets.

If they helped the terrorists determine how to avoid U.S. surveillance, Congress's criminal leaks in 2002 may have done far greater damage to American security than the divulging of Joe Wilson's wife's name in 2003. The networks' double standard shows they care far more about playing politics than about keeping our secrets safe.