

# THE WAPO'S VERY FUNNY IDEA OF SOURCE PROTECTION

So on the same day that WaPo accepted Dave Weigel's resignation for the unauthorized publication of emails that were off the record, it also published an article relying on anonymous sources—with no discussion of whether these sources have a motive for their comments—claiming Rolling Stone journalist Michael Hastings violated journalistic rules by publishing comments that were off the record. Mind you, the article itself supports the conclusion that the Bud Lite Lime imbibing blabbermouths just assumed their comments were off the record but never asked for them to be, particularly given the several other comments which they explicitly asked to be treated as off the record.

But that's not the weirdest thing about the WaPo's funny treatment of sources today.

In addition to the article beating up on the Rolling Stone for what appear to be unsubstantiated anonymous charges, they also post the entirety of a fact-checking exchange between an editor at Rolling Stone and Duncan Boothby, the McChrystal press aide who was fired after the article came out. And that exchange gives a fairly detailed description of who the Bud Lite Lime-imbibing blabbermouths were.

2.) Are the following people on McChrystal's staff, and, are these titles correct:

a. Col. Charlie Flynn, McChrystal,s chief of staff – NO,CHARLIE IS HIS 'XO' OR EXECUTIVE OFFICER

b. Brig. Gen. Bill Mayville, McChrystal,s chief of operations—NO, MAJOR GENERAL, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, OPERATIONS

c. Gen. Mike Flynn, McChrystal's second-in-command – NO, MAJOR GENERAL, DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE

3.) The reporter doesn't name the following people, but he does give a list of vague descriptions for other people on McChrystal's team. Can the following be found on McChrystal's team:  
FINE, NO NAMES PREFERRED

a. A Navy SEAL (TWO NAVY SEALS)

b. A British Special Forces officer (NO – NOT ON HIS TEAM, BUT THE FORMER HEAD OF BRITISH SPECIAL FORCES, THE SPECIAL AIR SERVICE (RETIRED) IS ON HIS TEAM)

c. An Afghan Special Forces commando (YES WHO IS HIS AIDE DE CAMP)

d. A lawyer (SPECIAL FORCES LAWYER)

e. Two fighter pilots (YUP)

f. And at least two dozen combat veterans and counterinsurgency experts. (EVERY ONE HAS COMBAT TIME AND COIN EXPERIENCE OF SOME FORM OR ANOTHER)

Now, we shouldn't be surprised that the Flynn's were involved. As Jeff Stein reported earlier this week, there were rumors that they had been fired, which were subsequently denied.

In the shock wave following Gen. Stanley McChrystal's abrupt summons from Kabul, word raced through Washington's special operations circles that his senior staff had been relieved of duty, too.

"They were told to pack a suitcase and get on that plane," one veteran of McChrystal's staff said Wednesday. "They said 'We'll forward the rest of your belongings, your danger pay is done.' "

Chief among those said to be ordered out was Maj. Gen. Michael T. Flynn, McChrystal's intelligence chief, who

authored a controversial denunciation of U.S. spying efforts in Afghanistan early this year, and his brother, Charlie, an Army colonel who is the general's chief of staff.

Charlie Flynn had a cameo role at the top of the infamous Rolling Stone piece that did his boss in.

But the fevered buzz was false – or at least premature – according to a McChrystal spokesman who was still on duty in Kabul as the cashiered general left the White House.

“Col. Flynn accompanied him back because he is the general's executive officer,” Tadd Sholtis said in an e-mail. “MG Flynn remained in Afghanistan to carry out his duties as our intelligence chief.”

And, as Stein points out, Charlie Flynn was named by name in the Rolling Stone piece.

Still, after ousting its own reporter because other DC journalists had violated the expectation that JournoList would be off the record, Karen DeYoung seems to be bending over backwards to claim that the Rolling Stone violated the expectation that the Bud Lite Lime blabbermouths were off the record. And she's doing so by granting anonymity to people without at the same time telling her readers whether these folks refuse to go on the record because they're trying to save their jobs threatened because they were too blabby on Bud Lite Lime to make sure their comments would be treated as off the record.

And then, the WaPo is naming three of these blabbermouths, and providing fairly explicit descriptions of seven more of them—remarkably, adding up to precisely the number of staff members traveling with McChrystal on that blabby trip to Paris (though I'm guessing there was just one Navy Seal and Boothby himself was the

tenth man on the traveling team).

The Rolling Stone, apparently, had protected the identity of all but Charlie Flynn in this profile (Mayville is mentioned, but not in connection with the Paris trip). But the WaPo, with its very funny idea of source protection, has taken upon itself to out them.

Update: As Nitpicker notes, the Army Public Affairs Handbook states,

Before beginning the interview, collect your thoughts, remind yourself of the ground rules, and remember **there is no such thing as “off the record.”**  
[Emphasis original]