

CBS COLLABORATES IN TORTURE

The most interesting thing about the Dan Rather complaint, IMO, is the description it gave of CBS and Administration attempts to spike the Abu Ghraib story.

In late April 2004, Mr. Rather, as Correspondant, and Mary Mapes, a veteran producer, broke a news story of national importance on *60 Minutes II*—the abuse by American military personnel of Iraqi prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison. The story, which included photographs of the abusive treatment of prisoners, consumer American news media for many months.

Despite the story's importance, and because of the obvious negative impact the story would have on **the Bush administration with which Viacom and CBS wished to curry favor**, CBS management attempted to bury it. As a general rule, senior executives of CBS News do not take a hands-on role in the editing and vetting of a story. However, CBS News President Andrew Heyward and Senior Vice President Betsy West were involved intimately in the editing and vetting process of the Abu Ghraib story. However, for weeks, they refused to grant permission to air the story, continuously insisting that it lacked sufficient substantiation. As Mr. Rather and Ms. Mapes provided each requested verification, Mr. Heyward and Ms. West continued to "raise the goalposts," insisting on additional substantiation.

Even after obtaining nearly a dozen, now notorious, photographs, which made it impossible to deny the accuracy of the story, **Mr. Heyward and Ms. West continued to delay the story for an additional three weeks**. This delay was,

in part, occasioned by acceding to pressures brought to bear by government officials urging CBS to drop the story or at least delay it. As a part of that pressure, **Mr. Rather received a personal telephone call from General Richard B. Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, urging him to delay the story.**

Only after it became apparent that, due to the delay, sources were talking to other news organizations and that CBS would be "scooped," Mr. Heyward and Ms. West approved the airing of the story for April 28, 2004. Even then, **CBS imposed the unusual restrictions that the story would be aired only once, that it would not be preceded by on-air promotion, and that it would not be reference on the *CBS Evening News*.**

By my count, we've got: