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Forum: The greatest story never told

How is it that the mainstream press can invest hundreds of man-hours sifting the detritus of President Bush's National Guard service in order to report on it, yet they relegate the stunning announcement by Matt Drudge that John F. Kerry may have had an extramarital affair with an intern to the most sidebar of sidebar stories?

Since a few weeks ago when Michael Moore, who apparently is considered the definitive source for Mr. Bush's service, informed America that President Bush was a deserter from the Alabama National Guard, the media have treated us to every facet and nuance of their effort to discover the truth of the president's service. The collective media must have accidentally destroyed their notes and records from 2000, because the story is being treated as undiscovered.

Yet when the independent Internet reporter Matt Drudge publishes a breaking story on Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts and allegations of infidelity, provides attribution and multiple sources, mum is the word.

Could it be a source credibility problem? After all, Matt Drudge is considered alternative and worse still, conservative. Additionally, it has been shown Matt Drudge does not exercise the same

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editorial discretion as the mainstream press. When all of big-media decided not to sully the occupant and office of the president of the United States in 1998, Mr. Drudge forged ahead and broke the story of Bill Clinton and an intern named Monica Lewinsky.

When Mr. Drudge broke the Monica story, he was initially labeled as a "conservative/Internet/Alternative/unconfirmed source in conjunction with the story. This is the same thing happening now in relation to the Kerry story.

Matt Drudge and the Drudge Report have a daily readership of more than 8 million (for the 24 hours following the Kerry story, Mr. Drudge logged almost double that). His sources have consistently proven to be uncannily accurate.

In the Kerry story, Mr. Drudge claims at least three mainstream reporters have confirmed key elements of the story. Subsequent reports in the U.S. have independently confirmed Mr. Drudge's story, or elements of it.

The British press jumped all over the story, bringing additional facts to light, such as the name of the intern cited in the Drudge piece as well as alleged quotes from her parents, who call Kerry a "sleazeball." When John Kerry appeared on Don Imus' radio show the day after Mr. Drudge broke the story, he was asked about and flatly denied the reports.

Yet the mainstream U.S. media are barely reporting the story. This includes TV, Internet, and newspaper outlets. When mentioned, the story is described as "reports on the Internet." This begs the question of whether big-news has made a conscious decision to avoid the story.

Rush Limbaugh spent hours on the story in the first 36 hours of it breaking. Yet the number 2 talk-radio conservative, Sean Hannity, has barely mentioned it. Mr. Hannity is a talking-head on Fox, which has paid little or no attention to the story.

In deference to the mainstream media, it is possible the story is being investigated and will grow soon. With the additional information associated with the story being reported in Britain, however, this theory strains incredulity.

Friday the White House released hundreds of documents relating to the president's service in the National Guard. Friday night, every pundit on the cable networks wondered if the story is still a story.

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In the Kerry infidelity story, scraps of information are coming out that are explosive; multiple sources are confirming key elements of the story; and there is a real interest in the story as evidenced by Drudge site-visits in the first 24 hours and the buzz on talk-radio and Internet.

The Kerry story is definitely still a story, and it is a story in need of the type of examination only the U.S. mainstream media can conduct.

There are many viewpoints represented in the mainstream press. Perusal of such notable outlets as the New York Times, The Washington Times, The Washington Post, Fox News, CNN, and others will confirm this. But not one major headline has appeared regarding the story in the U.S. Why?

Why would the U.S. press not want to report on this story?

JOHN S. PAPPAS

Mr. Pappas is a Maryland-based writer.



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