

WHY IS DANA SO TOUCHY?

In all fairness to Dana "Pig Missile" Perino, she probably doesn't want to become the next Scottie McClellan, forced to say things from the podium while Dick Cheney is hiding his criminal ways behind those public statements. Still, Dana comes off very badly in yesterday's attempt to explain why anonymous sources at the White House are saying one thing and she's saying another.

Q Dana, can you tell us why you decided to put out this statement this morning about The New York Times story? Why did you feel compelled to respond?

MS. PERINO: Well, the subhead of the newspaper indicated that the White House – well, it says the White House role was wider than it said, implying that I had either changed my story, or I or somebody else at the White House had misled the public. And that is not true. And I heard now from The New York Times that they will retract that headline, and they are going to run a correction tomorrow.

Q But the underlying facts, four White House lawyers who are named knew about the destruction or the intent to destroy the tapes beforehand. Are you disputing that?

MS. PERINO: I have not commented on that – and when we are in that –

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PERINO: Helen, I'm going to finish this answer. The White House has not commented on anybody's involvement or knowledge, save for me telling everybody that the President had no recollection of being briefed on the existence or the destruction of the tapes before he was

briefed by General Hayden. **After that, I did not comment on anybody's knowledge or involvement. So if somebody has information that contradicts the one thing that I've said, then this would be true – but it's not.** And that is why I asked for a correction and The New York Times is going to correct it.

Q So you're disputing the characterization in that –

MS. PERINO: Absolutely, it's wrong.

Q – not the underlying facts of the story.

MS. PERINO: I'm not commenting on the underlying facts of the story. I'm sticking with what I have done in the past, which is that –

Q (Inaudible.)

MS. PERINO: Well, there is a –

Q (Inaudible) – it was back before (inaudible) was involved and The New York Times has information saying that they were involved. Isn't that wider than you were saying? You're only saying, well, the President had no involvement – therefore, you're saying that, you know –

MS. PERINO: If you want to defend The New York Times, then you might look at it that way. I'm looking at it from anybody White House –

Q It does seem like it's not that –

MS. PERINO: I think anyone – **and believe me, the people that I've talked to, the reading of it – when I first looked at it, I felt that that was saying that I had misled the American public on this, and I have not.** There is nothing I have said that has been contradictory. And there is a preliminary inquiry being led

by Attorney General Mukasey and General Hayden, and it is appropriate to let that play out.

Under our Constitution the press is free to speculate as much as they want, and they can report on as many former administration officials or unnamed current officials that they want to, that contradict each other throughout this story. I'm not allowed to do that. I am an employee of the federal government. **I respect the request from the White House Counsel's Office that we not comment from this podium, and I have not. And for someone to imply that I had is offensive.**

Q Well, you're the one (inaudible) implication. You're the one who said –

Q You're the one who's drawing the implication. Would you have been happy if the subhead had read, "White House role was lighter than previously understood"?

MS. PERINO: **I have not – what it says is that I had changed my story, and I have not.**

Q It doesn't say that.

MS. PERINO: It – that's how I took it, and I am not –

Q It does not say –

MS. PERINO: – the only one.

Q It simply says that the White House does not comment on this, then it goes on to –

MS. PERINO: That is not – that's not what it says in its headline, Bill. And there was editorial decision that led to this subheadline, because **if they didn't want to make this point to try to say that the White House had misled the**

public, why would they put it in bold face above the fold, and then not – and then it's not supported by any of the facts or the contradictory statements in the article.

[snip]

Q – you say it was contradicting you –

MS. PERINO: It says the White House role was wider than "it" said – "it" is referring to the White House, I am the spokesperson for the White House.

Q Okay. Okay, but you're defining it that way. In fact, right after the first – this story first broke, people within the administration did say privately that, in fact, Harriet Miers had told the CIA not to destroy the tapes and that that suggested that the White House, in fact, was saying don't destroy. Now this New York Times story is saying four people in the President – or Vice President's inner circle actually talked to the CIA about it. So that does suggest a wider role.

MS. PERINO: **I am not accountable for all the anonymous sources that you turn up. I'm not. I am accountable – I speak for the President and the White House. This says that I was misleading, and I was not.**

Q It doesn't say you. It doesn't say you at all. And there were other people in the administration who –

MS. PERINO: The White House does not comment. The only thing that I have said from this podium is regarding to the President and his recollection. And if CNN has different information that they want to provide to me that contradicts what I've said, you know, let's see it.

Q They didn't specifically say it's you.

It's talking about the White House, the administration in general.

MS. PERINO: I speak for the White House. I represent the White House.

Q Why do you take it personally?

MS. PERINO: **I'm not taking it personally. I'm taking it – I speak for the White House. It's not a personal thing. The White House asked for a correction.** And I would remind you, The New York Times is going to do one.

Of course, Dana's fighting a losing battle, since several of the journalists know that someone in the White House was floating the Harriet Miers story, and the more Dana pretends that those people weren't floating the story, the more it will erode her own credibility.

At least, that's the way it should work. Those journalists who got the false Harriet Miers story should expose their source—who was, after all, misleading the journalists—and illustrate the degree to which this Administration abuses journalistic rules to sow lies. That's the way it should work. But it probably won't.

I wonder who's in charge of taking journalists to the St. Regis these days...