

MATT APUZZO PUSHES BACK

If Matt Apuzzo doesn't watch out, he's going to be given DOJ's silent treatment, as TPM once was. It seems Apuzzo (who covered the Libby trial) was none too happy being told that the "press conference" DOJ had organized to talk about the Boumediene decision was totally off the record.

Justice Department media representatives set up a briefing with department lawyers, but insisted the question-and-answer session be off-the-record. They acknowledged it was an unusual demand, but said they couldn't discuss the decision because they were still reviewing it.

But that meant that *nothing* from the briefing could be used – not even comments from the obligatory nameless Justice Department officials who usually appear in such stories. Note to readers: You didn't miss much.

That's because Associated Press reporter Matt Apuzzo quickly objected, saying the off-the-record rule "does nothing to help anybody understand anything."

When he said he would consider the discussion on the record, he was told he should get off the call. Apuzzo refused, saying "there's just no reason for this to be an off-the-record call." A conference call mute button prevented 40 other reporters from chiming in.

But Justice Department officials wouldn't budge and the call was cut short. A follow-up call was hastily rescheduled with a warning: "If you are not able to accept the off-the-record ground rules, please do not join the call."

Without explanation, officials appeared to relent by issuing a terse statement – eight hours after the ruling came down.

Good for you, Matt.

The big story—as Taylor and Youssef point out—is that this nation’s highest ranking lawyers, when faced with a resounding slapdown from the highest court in the land, could do nothing more than pout.

Remember when I speculated why Paul Clement, who left just 10 days ago, might not want to stick around? You think maybe he knew how pouty folks at DOJ were going to get when they got pwned by SCOTUS?