

POLITICO: “OH NOES! THE BEST REPORTER ON A SUBJECT GOT CALLED ON!!!”

Michael Calderone is way out of line with his article bitching that Nico Pitney got called on at Obama’s press conference today.

In what appeared to be a coordinated exchange, President Obama called on the Huffington Post’s Nico Pitney near the start of his press conference and requested a question directly about Iran.

“Nico, I know you and all across the Internet, we’ve been seeing a lot of reports coming out of Iran,” Obama said, addressing Pitney. “I know there may actually be questions from people in Iran who are communicating through the Internet. Do you have a question?”

Pitney, as if ignoring what Obama had just said, said: “I wanted to use this opportunity to ask you a question directly from an Iranian.”

[snip]

According to POLITICO’s Carol Lee, The Huffington Post reporter was brought out of lower press by deputy press secretary Josh Earnest and placed just inside the barricade for reporters a few minutes before the start of the press conference.

When I heard, **before the presser**, that Nico was hoping to pose a question from an Iranian, I knew some beltway idiot would bitch if the HuffPo got a question. I just thought the bitching would come from someone with a more

consistent record of being a complete idiot than Calderone.

As to Calderone's bitching, it's out of line for several reasons. First, if **I knew** that Nico was hoping to ask a question from an Iranian, then chances are the people paid to know these things at the White House knew. What better tribute to democracy and free speech could the White House make than to allow this question to be posed to the President?

And, after all, one primary focus of the presser was Iran. There are few who would argue but that Nico's reporting—his tireless compilation of news coming in from both traditional and citizen media—has been far and away the best minute-to-minute news on the Iranian crisis (to take nothing away from the people offering superb commentary and expertise, which I consider something different). Maybe the Politico's media reporter has missed it, but Nico's doing something pretty historic with his reporting on Iran. So even assuming the White House isn't as up-to-speed as I am, how hard do you think it would have been for them to guess that Nico, who has been living and breathing the Iranian crisis since it started, would ask a question about Iran?

I mean, c'mon. To try to turn this into a scandal is to assume that both the White House and Politico itself are a lot stupider than I think they are.

Update: Calderone has updated his post—and, in fact, the folks paid to know this stuff at the White House did know this stuff!!

Deputy press secretary Bill Burton responds: "We did reach out to him prior to press conference to tell him that we had been paying attention to what he had been doing on Iran and there was a chance that he'd be called on. And, he ended up asking the toughest question that the President took on Iran. In the absence of an Iranian press corps in

Washington, it was an innovative way to get a question directly from an Iranian."

Which means Calderone's pout-rage amounts to a journalist complaining about free speech and those in power getting asked tough questions.