

POLITICO'S "MEDIA CRITICISM" MULTIPLIES THE ERRORS

Like me and Glenn, the Politico has decided to cover that outrageous WaPo story on KSM on Saturday. Only they've apparently decided to multiply the damage of a really crappy story. There's Ben Smith's "Post story bolsters Cheney." And Michael Calderone's "Torture critics question WaPo sources."

The structure of both is the same. They start with a first paragraph repeating—perhaps in even stronger terms, in the case of Smith—the WaPo conclusion that torture worked with KSM.

Smith:

The Washington Post leads today with **an extraordinary story cutting** against the conclusions of a series of recent government and media reports to cast as straight news — with a few hedges and qualifications — that **waterboarding and sleep deprivation worked like a charm** to turn Kalid Sheik Mohammed from an enemy into an "asset."

Calderone:

Several prominent bloggers slammed the Washington Post this weekend following an explosive story about **how subjecting Khalid Sheik Mohammed to torture techniques appeared to be successful** in gaining useful intelligence — that's according to the paper's anonymous sources.

Smith includes the four lead paragraphs from the story itself, while Calderone—purportedly engaging in media criticism—includes links to me and Glenn and Sully, but includes a mere fraction of Glenn's substantive argument and

none of mine.

And (at least before Calderone's update linking to Sully) they end on a high note, scoring this as a win for Cheney.

Smith:

Cheney biographer Stephen Hayes noted the story this morning on the blog of The Weekly Standard.

"Is the mainstream media coming around?" he asked.

Calderone:

Still, despite criticism from prominent voices on the left, the piece is getting a lot of play.

But neither of these posts engages on the merits of the article itself. Calderone chooses to focus on Glenn's critique of the WaPo's use of anonymous sources, and not his demonstration that the documents cited by WaPo refute its claims. And he cites only my "immoral and irresponsible" comment, and not my description of the huge detail WaPo ignored (the rapport-based interrogation that directly preceded his cooperation) nor my focus on the dishonest chronology the WaPo presents in the story.

In other words, half of Glenn's critique and all of mine have to do with evidentiary problems in the story, not an argument based on our opposition to torture itself (though half of Glenn's might be characterized as such).

But both Smith and Calderone want to ignore those real evidentiary problems and score this as a win because the torture apologists managed to set up Cheney's Sunday appearances such that credulous Politico reporters and right wing hagiographers could revel in the torture apologists skillful playing of the press.

I guess, in the Village, it's not about the

truth of the matter. It's about measuring how well Village journalists—themselves included—get played.