

BRADLEY MANNING PROTEST: WHITE HOUSE BANS JOURNALIST FOR DOING JOURNALISM

To a degree, this reminds me of the Joshua Claus moment, when DOD banned reporters like Carol Rosenberg and Michelle Shephard because they uttered the name “Joshua Claus” in their coverage of his testimony in Omar Khadr’s trial. (Shephard had interviewed him previously, so they were basically asking her to forget information she had gathered independently to be able to cover Gitmo.)

White House officials have banished one of the best political reporters in the country from the approved pool of journalists covering presidential visits to the Bay Area for using now-standard multimedia tools to gather the news.

The Chronicle’s Carla Marinucci – who, like many contemporary reporters, has a phone with video capabilities on her at all times – pulled out a small video camera last week and shot some protesters interrupting an Obama fundraiser at the St. Regis Hotel.

She was part of a “print pool” – a limited number of journalists at an event who represent their bigger hoard colleagues – which White House press officials still refer to quaintly as “pen and pad” reporting.

As with coverage of Omar Khadr’s trial, the Obama Administration seems to be demanding that journalists abdicate their jobs and their instincts to play by the rules.

But the event reminds me of something else: how the White House asked (and persuaded) all the

big US outlets to suppress the widely discussed news that Raymond Davis was a spy, even while publications overseas and dirty fucking hippie bloggers were reporting on it.

As the account of Marinucci's treatment makes clear, the rules they want to enforce on pool reporting basically put her at a disadvantage to everyone else in the room who had and used a cell phone video.

Carla cannot do her job to the best of her ability if she can't use all the tools available to her as a journalist. The public still sees the videos posted by protesters and other St. Regis attendees, because the technology is ubiquitous. But the Obama Administration apparently wants to give the distinct advantage to citizen witnesses at the expense of professionals.

While there's a bit of professional snobbery here, it is entirely justified. The White House bizarrely imagines it can manage Obama's image by imposing rules on journalists it can't impose on others. Not only does that not do a damn thing to prevent videos like this from getting out. It profoundly corrupts the role of journalists, imposing requirements that ensure they offer only a highly scripted and obviously false view of an event.

It's simply not fair to require that journalists not tell stories that are already out there in the public sphere. That turns them, once and for all, into stenographers. That's not what our country needs from presidential press coverage.