

# IF BY “FACT CHECK” YOU MEAN “SPY ON MODO”

A funny  
thing  
happened  
when  
Judicial  
Watch tried  
to catch  
the White  
House  
buttering  
up Kathryn  
Bigelow and  
Mark Boal  
for the  
Zero Dark



Thirty film. It caught CIA doing so.

More embarrassing still, it caught the CIA asking NYT’s spook reporter, Mark Mazzetti, to find out how much Maureen Dowd (pictured here posing as a blogger covering the Prop 8 trial) would expose the CIA’s own involvement in the movie.

It seems some DOD sources had leaked information to MoDo that exposed the CIA.

It was clear that the White House had outsourced the job of manning up the president’s image to Hollywood when Boal got welcomed to the upper echelons of the White House and the Pentagon and showed up recently – to the surprise of some military officers – at a C.I.A. ceremony celebrating the hero Seals.

“This didn’t come from me...and please delete after you read,” Mazzetti wrote when he forwarded MoDo’s entire column to Marie Harf. “See, nothing to worry about”

Except Harf apparently is less skilled at destroying evidence than Jose Rodriguez, cause there the email is, exposing the collaboration between reporter and reportee.

Things got more interesting when NYT Managing Editor Dean Baquet got involved, after Politico's Dylan Byers asked for comment. Baquet stuck up for Mazzetti.

"The optics aren't what they look like," he went on. "I've talked to Mark, I know the circumstance, and given what I know, it's much ado about nothing."

At which point, I suspect, MoDo went apeshit, given the suggestion Baquet left that she routinely shares her work before publication with her colleagues, allowing them to warn others about what she writes. Cause then NYT's own flack, Eileen Murphy, wrote Byers to assure him this is not, in fact, "much ado about nothing."

"Last August, Maureen Dowd asked Mark Mazzetti to help check a fact for her column. In the course of doing so, he sent the entire column to a CIA spokeswoman shortly before her deadline. He did this without the knowledge of Ms. Dowd. This action was a mistake that is not consistent with New York Times standards."

Consider: this is the best face the Gray Lady can put on this rather cozy relationship with the nation's spy agency, claiming that Mazzetti's spying on MoDo for the CIA was a "mistake."

But what I want to know is this: is this how the NYT conducts fact checks? Or just fact checks of its MoDos and other columnists? "Here, beat writer. I'm writing a column suggesting Obama has a very small penis. Can you 'fact check' it and make sure I've got the details correct?" And how often do these "fact checks" get sent off as

a beat sweetener in the information economy of  
the beltway?