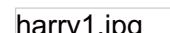


Why aren't we angry about Harry cover-up?

lse.blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2008/03/01/why-arent-we-angry-about-harry-cover-up/

2008-3-1

 Thanks to the Internet's back-alleys we can trace the history of the [Harry story](#) even though some of the webpages have been taken down. Thanks to [Leftluggage.blogspot.com](#) for pointing the way to the Google cache of the original story in a crappy Australian tabloid website on January 7th. This was even picked up by Bild magazine in Germany but no-one here noticed before [Matt Drudge](#) ran it last week. Bizarrely the British media turned upon Drudge for reporting it, while accepting themselves that their cozy pact with the MoD was now redundant and that the UK public finally deserved to hear from its own media about what the young Royal was up to. Then followed some fantastic [PR coverage](#) of our brave boy fighting the evil Taliban.

 I am amazed that some media commentators such as [Roy Greenslade](#) can't see that the media's self-imposed 'embargo' (i.e. censorship) does not enhance its reputation for honesty. There is a [debate](#) to be had here and I recognise that there were practical issues. Once the MoD had decided that Harry could go there were issues about the safety of other troops, for example. But he didn't need to go. The media was far too enthusiastic about the prospect of all that lovely jingoistic copy. I am not anti-war. Quite the opposite. I was one of the people who got it wrong about invading Iraq, for example. But I am genuinely surprised at the lack of unease exhibited by the British media about this deal. One expects the News of the World or Telegraph to be loyal but even the Guardian and Indie appear to have swallowed this. This was not the same situation as a news blackout during a hostage crisis, for example. This was a pre-done deal. It takes a Yank to lay it on the line. This is what Bob Steele of [Poyntor](#) says:

There are times when it might make sense for news organizations to agree to a military or government request to delay reporting a story. The case of Prince Harry soldiering in Afghanistan was no such time...That term "informal embargo" has a stench about it. It reeks of a backroom deal where an important ethical principle — independence — ends up in the spittoon...It would have been one thing if the news organizations had discovered Harry's whereabouts after he was already there — and simply delayed their reports long enough for him to be removed from the front lines. It's their long-term collusion with the government that so seriously undermines the media's credibility in this case.

I can see that despite all that, some editors would still want to comply. But it is odd to hear representatives of the media crowing about their complicity. Bob Satchwell from the [Society of Editors](#) wrote with pride about how the UK press had swung in to line and saluted the flag:

Editors across the UK media have known since last December that the prince was fighting the Taliban. Until they were told that he would be going to war fewer than 20 people knew of the plans. The secret was then kept close among senior journalists on a need-to-know basis. Even high-ranking officers, junior government ministers and staff at the prince's home, Clarence House, were not told at first...It was an extraordinary and rare display of unity for national and regional newspaper and magazine editors and broadcasters not to report the story.

How utterly marvellous for Bob and the boys to have their little secret. How wonderful that we could get together to let Harry have his adventure in Afghanistan. Never mind the readers, we'll let them see the jolly snaps when it's all over.

I am sorry, but I just think it reeks of the mainstream media complicity and arrogance that was supposed to be a thing of the past. It's a shame that on this occasion it took so long for the Internet to do its job.

This is the response of the [BBC's Foreign Editor Jon Williams](#) which makes the 'we were protecting Harry's colleagues' argument.

There is a good argument on [Channel 4's community forums](#).

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