



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 30, 2014

Is This White House the Most “Dangerous” to Media? One Reporter Says So

The *Washington Post* has taken an in-depth look at the complete lack of transparency characterizing the Obama administration and its clear abhorrence of the media, ultimately concluding that this administration is at least *one* of the most dangerous to the media in history.

It was *USA Today's* Washington Bureau Chief Susan Page who conclusively declared that the current White House is not only “more restrictive” but also “more dangerous” to the media than any other White House in history. Page’s comments were made at a White House Correspondents’ Association (WHCA) seminar on October 25.



According to the *Washington Post*, Page’s remarks are a “clear reference” to the Obama administration’s naming of Fox News’ James Rosen as a “co-conspirator” in a violation of the Espionage Act, as well as the White House’s investigations into leaks.

The very purpose of Saturday’s seminar was to discuss the administration’s lack of transparency and its ill treatment of the press. The *Post* wrote:

The WHCA convened the event both to strategize over how to open up the byways of the self-proclaimed most transparent administration in history, as well as to compare war stories on the many ways in which it is not.

But Page is not the first person in the press to make such a claim about the Obama administration. Former *New York Times* executive editor Jill Abramson had said, “It is the most secretive White House that I have ever been involved in covering,” while *New York Times* reporter James Risen remarked, “I think Obama hates the press.” And CBS News’s Bob Schieffer opined, “This administration exercises more control than George W. Bush’s did, and his before that.”

Those reporters do not work for conservative media outlets. But their statements are certainly not unwarranted.

Just one day before the seminar took place, reporters had been in a dispute with the White House after it was announced that the press would not be permitted to be present when the White House was to meet with Nina Pham, the Texas nurse who had just recovered from Ebola, at the National Institutes of Health.

According to *Bloomberg* White House correspondent Margaret Talev, it was “ridiculous” that the White House would not allow full media access to the meeting. However, this was not the first time that reporters were not provided access to White House events.



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In November of 2013, a group of news organizations sent a letter to the White House addressing that particular issue. The letter read:

The restrictions imposed by the White House on photographers covering these events, followed by the routine release by the White House of photographs made by government employees of these same events, is an arbitrary restraint and unwarranted interference on legitimate newsgathering activities. You are, in effect, replacing independent photojournalism with visual press releases.

Still, when asked about greater press access to the White House, White House spokesman Eric Schultz said, "We believe in the value of transparency, and that is why we work to provide as much access as we can. That said, the press has a responsibility to always push for more access and if they didn't, they wouldn't be doing their jobs."

Quite ironically, President Obama received a transparency award in 2011 that was given to him during a closed, unannounced meeting that was originally supposed to be open to the press. According to [Politico](#), the meeting was "inexplicably postponed" and rescheduled without notice and "without disclosing the meeting on [the president's] public schedule or letting photographers or print reporters into the room."

Carney declared just hours before the White House postponed the meeting:

This President has demonstrated a commitment to transparency and openness that is greater than any administration has shown in the past, and he's been committed to that since he ran for President and he's taken a significant number of measures to demonstrate that.

It is certainly true that Obama made transparency a talking point both during his campaigns and throughout his administration, but any assertions that he has made good on his word are misguided. In fact, a federal court actually [fined](#) the Obama administration for lack of transparency back in January 2010, when the Justice Department failed to provide information in the case of *U.S. v. Sturdevant*. The fine came as no surprise, as the Justice Department had already acquired a reputation for dodging requests for information related to its dismissal of the voter intimidation case against the New Black Panther Party. One government transparency watchdog, the Sunlight Foundation, [noted](#) the lack of transparency in the Obama administration days before the president received his transparency award. The group's director, Ellen Miller, called 2010 "tremendously disappointing" and remarked that little has happened in 2011 to change her view. *The Hill* reported:

Miller said the president's open government directive had made the open government community hopeful after years of secrecy from the Bush administration, particularly because the government promised things like data audits of federal agencies and the publishing of high-value government data sets for public use that have yet to come to fruition.

Prior to that report, FavStocks.com [reported](#) that the Obama administration had employed "political operatives" to screen Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests:

Uncensored emails newly obtained by the AP show that employees within the Homeland Security Department were warning that senior Obama administration appointees were delaying the release of government files. Department employees' emails described the appointees' behavior as "meddling" and even "crazy." One email from the deputy to the department's chief privacy officer said of the political appointees, "They don't like to abide by the law or be reminded that they are breaking it." That employee has since been replaced, a move that has raised questions of "retaliation."



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In September 2009, three human rights groups [targeted](#) the Obama administration for its refusal to confirm or deny the existence of documents regarding the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay, asserting that the Obama administration's "persistent secrecy becomes more inexcusable by the day."

Meanwhile, the Obama administration has been more than simply secretive, but has been aggressive in its efforts to silence the press.

On August 6, 2013, DHS agents entered the home of *Washington Times* reporter Audrey Hudson with a warrant to collect information about guns that her husband possessed in the house. While in the Hudson home, the agents also took the opportunity to seize reporting materials from Hudson, including items that she obtained from under the Freedom of Information Act and documents pertaining to issues in the agency's Federal Air Marshal Service. Hudson had reported that the DHS Air Marshal's program lied about the number of air marshals actually protecting American flights. Hudson stated the seized files contained information on a number of "whistleblowers." Eventually, the *Washington Times* was able to reach a settlement that forced the agency to return the documents.

In a similar case involving the Associated Press, the government seized records of 20 office and home phone lines for AP reporters and editors.

In the case involving Fox News correspondent James Rosen, prosecutors obtained a search warrant for Rosen's phone and e-mail records, after describing him as a possible "co-conspirator" for publishing information about a potential North Korean missile test.

Meanwhile, *New York Times*'s James Risen faces jail over his refusal to reveal a source and testify against a former CIA agent accused of leaking secrets. *The Guardian* reported, "Risen faces jail over his reporting of a botched intelligence operation that ended up spilling nuclear secrets to Iran. The Justice Department has long been seeking to force him to testify and name the confidential source of the account, which is contained in his 2006 book *State of War*."

Risen failed in his effort to have the Supreme Court review an order for him to testify, ultimately exhausting the last of his legal options. Risen has been an outspoken critic against the Obama administration for its claims about supporting press freedom, noting their hypocrisy. It's hypocritical," Risen said. "A lot of people still think this is some kind of game or signal or spin. They don't want to believe that Obama wants to crack down on the press and whistleblowers. But he does. He's the greatest enemy to press freedom in a generation."



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