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WHITE HOUSE SCRAMBLES TO EXPLAIN FAKE REPORTER IN ITS PRESS CORPS

Feb. 17, 2005 -Internet researchers have uncovered new evidence that contradicts the Bush Administration's claims about James Guckert, a Republican activist allegedly involved in criminal activities and linked to an incident involving a major breach of national security. Guckert, operating as "Jeff Gannon," was granted daily access to White House press briefings for more than two years as a "reporter" for Talon News.

White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan stated that Guckert was granted access in part because he was affiliated with a news organization that "publishes regularly." But yesterday, bloggers discovered video footage suggesting this standard was not applied to Guckert. Video footage of a Feb. 28, 2003 White House press briefing shows Guckert, apparently unaffiliated with any news organization, asking former White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer a question. It is unclear why Guckert was granted any pass at this time, since the Internet-based Talon News did not register its domain name until March 29, 2003.

Maureen Dowd, a Pulitzer Prize winning columnist for the New York Times, reported today she was denied press credentials at the start of the Bush administration in 2001. Yet Guckert, whose only journalistic training was derived from a \$50 weekend seminar, was repeatedly granted access.

Despite calls from Congress for the White House to disclose its standards for entrance to the briefing room, the Bush administration has yet to reveal its credentialing standards or details surrounding the scandal, including: specific dates when Guckert was admitted to the briefing room, how many passes he was issued, as well as how he cleared a Secret Service background check while owing the state of Delaware over \$20,000 in back taxes (penalties and interest) and possibly engaging in prostitution, as revealed by Americablog.org.

Guckert has also been implicated in a leak of federal classified information that revealed the identity of CIA undercover agent Valerie Plame. Revealing the identity of an undercover agent is a federal crime.

White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan has insisted that President Bush will do anything he can to assist the Plame investigation. But the White House has not answered questions about the role of Guckert in the Plame investigation or his inexplicable access to White House Press Corps briefings.

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