

AMANPOUR: CNN PRACTICED SELF-CENSORSHIP

Peter Johnson, USA TODAY, September 14, 2003

CNN's top war correspondent, Christiane Amanpour, says that the press muzzled itself during the Iraq war. And, she says CNN "was intimidated" by the Bush Administration and Fox News, which "put out a climate of fear and self-censorship." As criticism of the war and its aftermath intensifies, Amanpour joins a chorus of journalists and pundits who charge that the media largely toed the Bush administration line in covering the war and, by doing so failed to aggressively question the motives behind the invasion. Said Amanpour: "I think the press was muzzled, and I think the press self-muzzled. I'm sorry to say, but certainly television and, perhaps, to a certain extent, my station was intimidated by the administration and its foot soldiers at Fox news. It's not a question of [direct censorship], it's a question of tone. It's a question of being rigorous. It's really a question of really asking the questions. All of the entire body politic in my view, whether it's the administration, the intelligence, the journalists, whoever, did not ask enough questions, for instance, about weapons of mass destruction. I mean, it looks like this was disinformation at the highest levels."

Fox News spokeswoman Irena Briganti said of Amanpour's comments: "Given the choice, it's better to be viewed as a footsoldier for Bush than a spokeswoman for al-Qeda."

CNN had no comment.