

NBC NEWS STATEMENT

Tim Russert, moderator of NBC's Meet the Press and Washington Bureau Chief of NBC News, was interviewed on Saturday under oath by the Special Prosecutor investigating the leak of a CIA employee's identity last summer. As NBC News previously reported, Mr. Russert was not a recipient of the leak, which resulted in the public disclosure of the name and CIA employment of Valerie Plame, the wife of former Ambassador Joseph Wilson.

During the interview, Mr. Russert was asked limited questions by Special Prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald about a telephone conversation initiated by Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Vice President Cheney's Chief of Staff, in early July of last year. Mr. Russert told the Special Prosecutor that, at the time of that conversation, he did not know Ms. Plame's name or that she was a CIA operative and that he did not provide that information to Mr. Libby. Mr. Russert said that he first learned Ms. Plame's name and her role at the CIA when he read a column written by Robert Novak later that month.

Saturday's interview resulted from a dispute about whether Mr. Russert could be compelled to appear before the grand jury investigating the leak to testify about information provided to him by confidential sources. NBC News, on Mr. Russert's behalf, went to court to prevent such testimony based on the First Amendment. The court rejected the First Amendment arguments in a decision rendered on July 20, 2004 (but not made public until today) and ordered Mr. Russert to provide testimony.

Under an agreement subsequently reached with the Special Prosecutor, Mr. Russert was not required to appear before the grand jury and was not asked questions that would have required him to disclose information provided to him in confidence. Instead, the Special Prosecutor's questions addressed a telephone conversation initiated by Mr. Libby and focused on what Mr. Russert said during that conversation. Mr. Libby had previously told the FBI about the conversation and had formally requested that the conversation be disclosed. The Special Prosecutor can share Mr. Russert's answers with the grand jury.

NBC News President Neal Shapiro released the following statement regarding Saturday's interview: "Compelling reporters to reveal their newsgathering to government investigators is, in our view, contrary to the First Amendment's guarantee of a free press. In this case, we were able to reach a resolution with the Special Prosecutor that permitted Tim Russert to answer only limited questions focused on what he said during the telephone conversation without revealing any information he learned in confidence."

Press Contact: Barbara Levin, NBC News Communications, 212-664-2265

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