

Monday, December 17, 2007

Sometimes studio interviewers cancel.

Camera image from U.S. Geological Survey website.Â Â Â Fortunately, of the dozens of times I have accepted invitations to be interviewed at television and radio stations, I have only been cancelled around two or three times, ordinarily because the segment had to be cancelled or rescheduled in favor of other more late-breaking or seemingly newsworthy segments, and only by smaller news organizations. As a Hollywood insider once told me: "That's showbiz."Â Last Thursday, I blogged that I was scheduled to appear tonight for Arab Television Network's "American Dream" program, about the recent Nebraska mall murders. I wrote: "I did not know about the Iranian government funding aspect of this program until after I appeared on the show the last time. This time around, I told the person inviting me on the show for December 13 that I accepted the invitation so long as I will not be censored, which she said I will not."Â As it turns out, I was not censored, that I know of. Instead, I received a phone call from the inviting person just two hours before I was to arrive at the studio and an hour before I was about to start driving there. She said that the segment was being rescheduled until the new year; however, by then, the story will be stale news, indeed. Â Because my imagination sometimes entertains me better than reality, I wanted to rib the inviter about whether Iran's secret police had directed the switch, but I did not know the name of the organization that replaced the former Shah's brutal SAVAK; later I learned that the successor is the Ministry of Intelligence and Security. Â Speaking of the Iranian government, yesterday's Washington Post carries an interesting article about Columbia University President Lee Bollinger's apparent lack of foresight or willingness to consult his own university's Iran experts for a useful historical and political contextÂ before speaking in such shrill tones when introducing Iran's president this past September. The article says, for instance: "At first, much of the anger [fromÂ some or many faculty members]Â was directed at Bollinger's presentation, which was seen by some faculty members as supportive of the Bush administration's tough stance against Iran. At issue was Bollinger's assertion that Iran has been behind terrorist attacks against U.S. troops in Iraq." Over one hundred faculty members signed a letter asserting that Bollinger "has publicly taken partisan political positions concerning the politics of the Middle East, without apparent expertise in this area or consultation with faculty who teach and undertake research in this area." Â Back to Press TV, which receives Iranian government funding and which broadcasts the "American Dream" program that I was invited to before the invitation was cancelled: Curiously, Amir Afra, who produces and hosts another Press TV news show said earlier this year that "he has tried to invite onto [his] show reporters who have covered Iran for the Wall Street Journal, Forbes, The Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times and The New York Times. 'They often say yes, but then can't get permission from their agency,' said Afra. He said he sees these outlets, and CNN, as having a more subtle focus on a U.S. attack on Iran than Fox News. 'If the lineup of guests seems lop-sided, it's not our fault,' Afra said. 'We try hard to have a balanced show, but the mainstream media shuts you out.'" Whom to believe? Jon Katz.

Posted by Jon Katz in Jon's news & views at 18:00