

A new week: US media frenzy over JonBenet murder carries on

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Despite the serious doubts that have been raised regarding the involvement of John Mark Karr in the Christmas 1996 murder of six-year-old JonBenet Ramsey in Boulder, Colorado, the US media frenzy provoked by his arrest and “confession” continues unabated. If anything, it intensified Monday morning.

While acknowledging that Karr may be mentally unstable and his confession false, American television networks and cable news channels appear unable to get over their obsession with the case. Without any hard evidence, the 41-year-old suspect has been branded a pedophile and sexual predator by an endless parade of sex crimes profilers and analysts.

Much was made on the Monday morning news programs of Karr’s “luxurious” 15-hour flight from Bangkok, Thailand, where he was arrested, to Los Angeles, where he will await a hearing for extradition to Colorado to face potential murder charges. Almost universally, newscasters chafed at the fact that Karr flew in business class without handcuffs, “being treated more like a celebrity than a criminal,” according to MSNBC.

“Karr first dined on pâté, salad, fried king prawn, steamed rice, broccoli and chocolate cake,” lamented the cable channel. In the next breath it asserted that ‘experts’ called “the royal flight treatment a brilliant strategy intended to get the suspect relaxed enough to talk more.”

Not missed by the sleuths at MSNBC was the fact that Karr watched *The Last Samurai* on the plane. Fox News revealed his viewing of *Mission Impossible III* as well.

CNN’s Drew Griffin informed his viewers from inside the plane of the crucial intelligence that Karr “got up about three times during the flight to use the restroom and each time he had to have both of his male

guards there because they wouldn’t let him lock the door, in fact, would not let him close the door all the way. One guard actually would stick a foot in the doorway to make sure that it did not close.”

On arrival in Los Angeles, Griffin was on hand to note that Karr “took a lot of care in dressing for the occasion when he was about to get off the plane.”

One ‘expert’ on MSNBC confidently proclaimed that Karr was “a child molester already or one in waiting.” Alan Lipman, from the Center for the Study of Violence, challenged viewers to read between the lines of Karr’s confession and understand that the narcissistic and psychotic murderer felt he had a special mission to change the attitude of the world regarding children and sex.

ABC’s web site featured home videos of Karr from 1992 and a previously aired segment called “America’s Obsession with Cold Cases,” attributing fascination with the Ramsey case to the unsavory appetites of the American people, who are “cold case and criminal case junkies, vicariously living through the forensic detectives.”

In one fell swoop, the Ramsey murder was linked to other well-known cases, such as the unsolved murder of Teamster leader Jimmy Hoffa, the so-called BTK murders in Wichita, Kansas and those committed by the Zodiac killer in California. Not left out was Lizzie Borden’s 1892 axe murder of her parents.

“People really do enjoy the more heinous details of a crime,” opined the segment’s guest, Dr. Casey Jordan.

Also accessible on the ABC site is JonBenet Ramsey’s autopsy report and a dead psychic’s sketch of her vision of the murderer, shown side-by-side with a photo of Karr.

Another spike in reporting occurred when CNN obtained a copy of Karr’s hotel bill in Bangkok and

found telephone calls had been made to a clinic specializing in cosmetic surgery and sex change operations. Experts were brought in to talk up gender transformation until it was revealed that the clinic did not remember seeing Karr.

A preoccupation with all that is prurient and sick has reached grotesque levels in the broadcasts dealing with Karr's arrest. Nothing in the handling of the episode could reasonably be described as objective reporting.

After telling her audience on Monday morning there is no evidence so far placing Karr in Colorado in 1996, or, in fact, ever, a Fox News anchor said she hoped that the district attorney's office in Boulder had enough on Karr to file charges. She wished more information would surface because the media "has nothing to go on!"



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