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INDEPENDENT REVIEW PANEL EXAMINING CBS NEWS “60 MINUTES WEDNESDAY” BROADCAST OF SEPTEMBER 8 ISSUES REPORT OF ITS FINDINGS

LESLIE MOONVES ISSUES STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO PANEL REPORT

The Independent Review Panel assigned to examine CBS News’ “60 Minutes Wednesday” Broadcast of Sept. 8, 2004 has issued its report. The panel was comprised of the Honorable Dick Thornburgh, former US Attorney General, and Louis D. Boccardi, retired President and Chief Executive Officer of the Associated Press. The 224 page document can be viewed in its entirety at www.cbsnews.com.

Following is the statement from Leslie Moonves, Co-President and Co-Chief Operating Officer of Viacom and Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of CBS:

Statement from Leslie Moonves

On September 22, 2004, we asked an Independent Panel to find out what went wrong in the development, preparation and aftermath of the September 8th broadcast, on *60 Minutes Wednesday*, concerning President George W. Bush’s service in the Texas Air National Guard. I would now like to offer CBS’s thoughts on the comprehensive report issued today by that Panel and to announce what we at CBS intend to do in response to its findings and recommendations.

The Panel’s report outlines the errors committed during the preparation of the September 8th broadcast and mistakes made in its aftermath. Through the commissioning and publication of the Panel’s report, and the subsequent actions taken today, we hope to address those failures fairly, fully and responsibly, and to set CBS News back on its rightful path as a news organization of great depth, integrity and purpose, stronger than it was before.

To begin, I would like to offer my deepest thanks and appreciation to the Independent Review Panel-- Lou Boccardi and Dick Thornburgh. Assisted by their counsel, Kirkpatrick & Lockhart Nicholson Graham LLP, these extremely diligent independent reviewers produced a document that addresses a wide range of issues and concerns, reaching conclusions where that was possible, and refraining from doing so when it was not. In both regards, their wisdom is appreciated.

I think it’s important to note, in the Panel’s own words, that “CBS News did not have any input or influence with respect to the findings of the Panel, other than to commit itself at the outset to make this Report public.” This Panel was truly independent, and

remains so. That is what makes its findings so compelling and, ultimately, so valuable to those who seek to set things right.

Throughout the process, the Panel found that CBS News was totally cooperative, providing unfettered access to all the individuals involved and any other information or documentation it required.

The Boccardi-Thornburgh Panel worked for more than three months to get to the bottom of what happened in the reporting of the *60 Minutes Wednesday* segment on President Bush's National Guard Service. It spoke with more than 66 people, some more than once, including 32 from CBS News – people who were involved with the story, as well as some who were not. The Panel also talked with interviewees featured in the segment, handwriting experts, former Texas Air National Guardsmen and others. The independent reviewers let their investigation take them where they believed they needed to go to ascertain the truth. We believe they achieved their goal. We accept the report at face value and today are taking a variety of actions to put this crisis behind us.

The Panel traces the path from days leading to the September 8th broadcast through September 20th, the day that Dan Rather and CBS News President Andrew Heyward acknowledged that the memos upon which the story was based could not be authenticated and therefore should not have been used to buttress the report that President Bush had received special treatment in the Texas Air National Guard.

The Panel finds that the report was “crashed” – rushed onto the air – to beat the perceived competition, and it further says “the fact is that basic journalistic steps were not carried out in a manner consistent with accurate and fair reporting, leading to countless misstatements and omissions.” Indeed, there were lapses every step of the way – in the reporting and the vetting of the segment and in the reaction of CBS News in the aftermath of the report.

As far as the question of reporting is concerned, the bottom line is that much of the September 8th broadcast was wrong, incomplete or unfair. The Panel found that the producer of the segment, Mary Mapes, ignored information that cast doubt on the story she had set out to report – that President Bush had received special treatment more than 30 years ago, getting into the Guard ahead of many other applicants, and had done so to avoid service in Vietnam. As the Panel found, statements made by sources were ignored, as were notes in Mapes' own files.

Most troubling, however, are the Panel's findings regarding Mapes' ongoing contention, later proven to be false, that the documents used in the story were thoroughly authenticated and had been obtained from an “impeccable” source who had established, in retrospect, a questionable chain of custody for them. Beyond that were the evident misrepresentations of statements made to her by sources who later disavowed them. The Panel also found that Mapes presented half-truths as facts to those with whom she worked. And they trusted her, relied on her impressive reputation and proven track record, and did not hold her to the high standards of accountability that have always been the backbone of CBS News reporting.

There are, of course, supposed to be institutional safeguards against over-eager reporters. In this case, the vetting process failed. On many occasions, Mapes and her team referred to the source of the now-discredited documents as “unimpeachable” and as someone “without an ax to grind” against President Bush. However, there was little or no

attempt along the way to ascertain from the producers who that confidential source was. In the end, it turned out that this individual was anything but “unimpeachable.”

Just as bad was the process of authenticating the documents, as described in the Panel’s report. Assured by Mapes that she had ample expert authentication of the documents, *60 Minutes Wednesday* and CBS News management did little to seek affidavits from the handwriting experts. In fact, the people in charge of vetting the piece were never told that while four people were given some documents to authenticate the handwriting and the typography, two experts were discounted when they raised objections, and all four experts warned that documents could not be authenticated from Xeroxed copies.

Actually, as the report shows, only one expert had tentatively authenticated only one signature which seemed to match a known sample. Thus three documents were put on the air without any sort of handwriting authentication and, in the end, none of the experts consulted by CBS News was willing to authenticate the documents.

There was, in short, no effective vetting of these critical documents by those at CBS News required to do so, or of many other statements in the September 8th report, or of the reports that followed on the *CBS Evening News*. Once again, the system broke down, relying on trust rather than the implementation of existing standards.

Once the report aired, as the Panel makes quite clear, CBS News continued to support the segment and the documents for 12 days, despite rising criticism that the documents were not authentic. Instead of asserting its role of independent oversight, CBS News management circled the wagons and encouraged a campaign of support for the report, going so far as to allow the very personnel who were being challenged in the matter to produce follow-up reports in support of the segment.

There are errors here of both commission and omission, but each and every such failure must be met with an appropriate action that will demonstrate CBS’s intolerance of such performance. The first such actions pertain to people who were involved in the production, vetting and overall decision-making process of the September 8th broadcast. Next, we will discuss other steps that we will be taking to respond to the various recommendations of the Panel and our own sense of what needs to be done.

Therefore, based on the Panel’s findings, we today implement the following actions in regard to the individuals involved in the broadcast:

Mary Mapes. Mapes was the producer of the segment. An Emmy Award-winning producer, one of the most highly regarded professionals in the business, she recently had broken the story on the Abu Ghraib prison abuses. The Panel shows that it was that record and level of trust that led those around Mapes to defer to her to a far greater extent than was warranted.

In this case, as described by the Panel, her basic reporting was faulty and her responses when questioned led others who trusted her down the wrong road. Her confidential source was not reliable and her authenticators were unable to authenticate the documents, and yet she maintained the opposite. In addition, the Panel cites a number of instances where Mapes’ accounts radically differ from those of her colleagues and sources. This is truly disquieting. For these reasons and many others outlined in the Panel’s work, Mary Mapes is terminated, effective immediately.

Josh Howard. Howard, too, has enjoyed a long and impressive career at CBS News, most recently rising to the position of Don Hewitt's deputy on the original *60 Minutes*. He has been the Executive Producer of *60 Minutes Wednesday* since June of 2004, and this was his first big story.

The Panel concluded he participated in rushing this key investigative report onto the air without questioning the producer, Mary Mapes, thoroughly about sources and documentation, and did little to assert his role as the producer ultimately responsible for the broadcast and everything in it. This mistake dealt a tremendous blow to the credibility of *60 Minutes Wednesday* and to CBS News in general, one which it was his duty to avert. For his role in the production of the segment, Howard has been relieved of his duties at *60 Minutes Wednesday* and asked to resign from CBS News.

Mary Murphy. As Senior Broadcast Producer, Murphy was Howard's right hand. She has been a broadcast journalist at CBS News for more than 17 years, an experienced producer and senior producer who most recently had served as the head of the political desk covering the 2004 campaign.

It was Murphy's job to ride herd over the production of the segment at every stage and to make sure that it conformed to CBS News standards. Yet the Panel found little evidence of in-depth questioning by Murphy about the sources and the documents. Instead, the Panel found that, like the other vettors, Murphy deferred to Mapes and her production team and did not perform her important supervisory function. Mary Murphy has therefore been relieved of her duties at *60 Minutes Wednesday* and asked to resign from CBS News.

Esther Kartiganer served as a Senior Producer in charge of reading scripts and unedited transcripts to determine whether an interview segment was used in context. She has been in that position, or others like it, for more than 40 years at CBS and heretofore performed with great distinction. It is difficult to understand how a person of Kartiganer's toughness and experience abnegated her assigned function, but the fact is that she did, and CBS News is the worse for it. For that reason, she has been relieved of her duties at *60 Minutes Wednesday* and, in recognition of her years of service, has been offered another assignment at CBS News.

Yvonne Miller was the New York-based associate producer assigned to Mary Mapes only six days before the story aired. Miller had never worked with Mapes, who arrived in New York to complete her work on the story along with three freelance associate producers, one from Virginia and two from Texas. Miller voiced her uncertainty to Mapes about the validity of the story and the veracity of the documents but, as is made clear in the Panel's report, her questions and concerns were not given proper consideration. She did not, by her own admission, do a good job at authenticating the documents because she did not have the experience and the time to do so. She did, however, show good instincts in this matter, and if she had received even the smallest encouragement from her bosses, she might have made the difference. For that reason, Miller will remain in her position as an Associate Producer at *60 Minutes Wednesday*.

Betsy West. As Senior Vice President, Prime Time, West was the representative of CBS News management in this matter, with direct supervisory responsibility for the entire *60 Minutes Wednesday* broadcast. She was well qualified for this position, after a

distinguished 23-year career at ABC News and more than six years at CBS News, where she has been responsible for the supervision of all primetime news magazines.

Before the broadcast, it was West's job to make sure that the vetting of the documents and sources used in this investigation was complete and that the final segment was fair and unbiased. As noted above, the Independent Panel found that the vetting process was not only incomplete but, in the end, utterly ineffectual. After the broadcast, the Panel found that West continued to defend the segment even when it was becoming increasingly apparent that it was flawed, and even when Howard suggested that the time had come to back away from the authenticity of the documents.

Further, prior to the broadcast, West and Howard received express directions from Andrew Heyward, President of CBS News, to make sure that the *60 Minutes Wednesday* team did not "stampede us in any way." Afterwards, he directed that the authentication of the documents and their source be thoroughly re-examined to answer the growing concerns about the segment. The Panel, while it "does not underestimate the storm that hit CBS News," finds that these instructions were not carried out. As the senior executive in charge of the entire broadcast, West must accept her share of the responsibility. She has therefore been relieved of her duties and asked to resign from CBS News.

This brings us to two senior figures at CBS News whose performance is discussed in some depth in the Panel's report. Based on the findings of that report, we believe the following is appropriate:

The Panel found that **Dan Rather** was pushed to the limit in the week before the September 8th broadcast. He was finishing up the anchoring job at the 2004 Republican Convention and was covering Hurricane Frances in Florida. He asked the right questions initially, but then made the same errors of credulity and over-enthusiasm that beset many of his colleagues in regard to this segment. He was convinced that the documents were authenticated because he was told in no uncertain terms that this was so. He defended the story over-zealously afterwards; again, he believed in a star associate with whom he had worked often, and to award-winning result. The Panel has found that his unwillingness to consider that CBS News and his colleague were in the wrong was a mistake, and that the broadcast would have benefited from a more direct involvement on Rather's part.

Dan Rather has already apologized for the segment and taken personal responsibility for his part in the broadcast. He voluntarily moved to set a date to step down from the *CBS Evening News* anchor chair in March of 2005, which will give him more time to concentrate on his reporting for CBS NEWS. After examining the report and thinking about its implications, we believe any further action would not be appropriate.

This brings us to CBS NEWS President **Andrew Heyward**. The Panel's report shows that before the segment was broadcast, Heyward explicitly warned West and Howard that "we will have to defend 'every syllable' of the segment and, as we mentioned earlier, specifically urged them not to allow the production team to 'stampede us.'" In the aftermath of the report, he issued direct instructions to investigate the sourcing of the story and the authentication of the documents and pressed for his staff to come up with new and substantive information rather than merely standing by the story in

a “stubborn repetition of what we’ve already said.” However, the Panel concluded that Heyward’s directives were not implemented in a prompt or systematic way.

This raises questions about accountability at CBS News – questions that will have to be addressed both by Andrew Heyward and me. We intend to do so. But Heyward is an executive of integrity and talent, and the right person to be leading CBS NEWS during this challenging time.

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Acting on the Panel’s recommendations, I would like to announce the following further steps that will be implemented immediately, not just for *60 Minutes Wednesday*, but for all of CBS News.

Responding to perhaps the most important recommendation of the Panel, we will immediately create a position of Senior Vice President of Standards and Special Projects, reporting to the President of CBS News. This executive will be assigned expanded new duties as part of upholding and enforcing CBS News Standards. Before an investigative report proceeds, the Standards Executive will review the use of confidential sources; will determine the completeness of the authentication and/or chain of custody of materials received from outside sources, ranging from documents to video to photos; and will approve all hidden-camera investigations.

The Standards Executive will be identified throughout CBS News as someone with whom employees can communicate on a confidential basis, without fear of retaliation, if they have concerns that a planned segment may not meet CBS News standards of accuracy and fairness. This executive will also undertake a comprehensive review of the CBS News Standards Manual and will institute a program for regular review of the standards.

Assuming this important new role will be Linda Mason, who has been named Senior Vice President, Standards and Special Projects, reporting directly to the President of CBS News.

Linda has a long and distinguished career at CBS News, which she joined in 1966. She was the first woman in many of the positions she has filled at CBS News: from desk assistant in radio to writer in Newsfilm syndication, to writer/associate producer at WCBS-TV News to writer then producer at the CBS Morning News, to producer, investigative producer, senior producer at the *CBS Evening News* with Walter Cronkite and then Dan Rather, to executive producer of *The CBS Weekend News* and then executive producer of *CBS News Sunday Morning* as well, to vice president of Public Affairs and executive producer of CBS Reports. She has won 13 Emmys, two Peabodies, a Dupont and various other awards.

Linda has acted as the liaison between CBS NEWS and the Independent Panel during the preparation of the Panel’s report. She has been a calm, steady influence throughout that difficult process, and she was recognized for her contributions by the Panel. I know she will be invaluable in this new and crucial role, and I consider her appointment to be an integral part of the re-vitalization of CBS News after this difficult time.

Further, in the midst of this ordeal, the original *60 Minutes* has continued to shine as a beacon of light. The broadcast has continued to blaze a trail of outstanding

journalism and competitive success as the #1 news magazine program under the leadership of Executive Producer Jeff Fager, who launched *60 Minutes Wednesday* in 1999. We have therefore asked Jeff to oversee both *60 Minutes* broadcasts – *60 Minutes Wednesday* as well as *60 Minutes* – at least until the end of the season.

Other steps that will be implemented immediately include, but will not be limited to, the following:

1. If the validity of information presented in a segment comes under a significant challenge, such as occurred with the *60 Minutes Wednesday* segment, reporting on the challenge will not be left entirely in the hands of those who created the segment at issue. Instead, an additional team, led by someone not involved in the original segment, will be assigned to take the lead in the coverage.
2. In sensitive stories relying on sources who cannot be identified on the air, senior management must, when appropriate, know not just the name of the source, but all relevant background that would assist in editorial news decisions. Difficulties in this regard should be reviewed with the Standards Executive.
3. CBS News management must make it clear to all personnel that competitive pressure alone cannot be allowed to prompt the airing of a story. As the Panel points out, it would have been better to “lose” the story on the disputed memos to a competitor than to air it short of vetting to the highest standards of fairness and accuracy.
4. Correspondents, producers and associate producers must disclose to the executive producer and senior producers all relevant information unearthed in reporting the story, both supporting and challenging the segment’s findings.
5. On primetime broadcasts, all on-camera interviews done for a segment, whether or not aired, should be reviewed by the person assigned script review responsibility to ensure that the segment presents fairly and accurately what was said in the interviews and is not contradicted by interviews which do not appear in the finished segment.
6. CBS NEWS producers and management will work closely with the CBS Communications area to ensure that all information provided to the department and then disseminated to the public is fair and accurate.
7. CBS NEWS management should require correspondents to regularly and fully participate to the maximum extent possible in the preparation, vetting and pre-broadcast screening of stories. Management should review instances where the press of other responsibilities does not permit this and make any appropriate changes to the production and vetting structure to take account of reality.

In addition to these steps, in the future we will pursue any other reforms we feel are needed to help CBS News uphold its decades-long tradition of reporting with integrity and without fear or favor.

