



Mr Greenwald's account of the practice of "responsible journalism" has a didactic quality:

"31. It is my view that there will be times when the publication of sensitive material, even national security material, is appropriate, provided the journalist and those working with him or her take great care and act responsibly.

32. But not to publish material simply because a government official has said such publication may be damaging to national security is antithetical to the most important traditions of responsible journalism. That approach is also deeply unhealthy for any democracy. It would have prevented some of the most important information in world current affairs ever coming to light. Publication of information contrary to the wishes of a government is, at times, both the role and the duty of the 'Fourth Estate'. The key is not for journalists to simply defer to the government view, but to act as responsibly and carefully as they can to determine if and when it is in the public interest to publish sensitive material. That is what we have done.

33. From my experience I can indicate that there are many ingredients to the sensible reporting of very sensitive information. They include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) If possible, one should seek to use the skills and judgment of highly experienced journalists and legal experts. This is the most appropriate and safest way to decide whether to publish information and how much of it to disclose. That collective experience enables a careful judgment of both the public interest and any risks or dangers that may arise on publication.

(2) Experienced editors and reporters are able to consider what, if anything, may be published without endangering innocent life. They cannot always, of course, do so with complete perfection. But the history of investigative journalism leaves no doubt that such judgments can be, and almost always are, made with great responsibility.

(3) Editors and other journalists not only have experience, but they also have established methods through which to communicate with government officials in relation to publication. These can be both formal and informal. These procedures enable journalists to determine which stories may be sensitive because they pose a real danger to persons if there is publication; and which stories are sensitive, awkward, embarrassing for the government, or which the government feels may be undesirable to be made public."