

# State/Local

## Newspaper: DEA staged seizures for press

HOUSTON (AP) — The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration directed local law enforcement agencies throughout the country to stage phony drug seizures and generate false news reports to help DEA agents gain the confidence of drug lords, the *Houston Chronicle* reported Sunday.

DEA spokesman Maurice Hill in Washington, D.C., said the technique is employed in high drug traffic areas nationwide, including Florida and Texas.

"It's a procedure that is used, but I can't begin to tell you with what frequency," Hill said. "It's not a new technique, I can tell you that."

The practice of staging the bogus seizures and feeding the information to news reporters apparently came into practice several years ago to resolve a dilemma for undercover drug agents posing as cocaine importers for Colombian drug lords, according to the copyright report.

Often the DEA operatives deliver the drugs according to instructions from Colombian exporters and keep the shipment under surveillance in hopes of intercepting it before it hits the streets, officials said.

But the DEA sometimes ensures that drugs never reach the street by "dropping the load" in cooperation with local authorities, who stage phony seizures and allow the undercover operation to proceed without detection, the newspaper said.

Newspaper clippings generated by the tactic are used to provide cover stories for agents, according to the *Chronicle*, which determined at least two highly publicized seizures in the Houston area had been staged.

"The Colombians, the only way they'll believe you is to show them the stuff (drugs), the money or the newspaper clips," Hill said.

Harris County Sheriff Johnny Klevenhagen said local police agencies use the tactic only at the request of the DEA. He praised the bogus seizures as productive in taking illicit drugs off the street.

Because of its success, he said, the practice has gained widespread national acceptance.

"DEA-Houston is only one finger," he said. "This is going on all across the United States."

While law enforcement agencies defend the ruses on grounds that

they preserve investigations and protect agents, journalists say the ruses raise ethical questions about government deception of the news media and the public.

*Houston Chronicle* Managing Editor Tony Pederson acknowledged that extraordinary measures are necessary to fight drug trafficking, but said government agencies must maintain credibility.

"If the DEA is willing to lie to the media and public about this issue,"

Pederson said, "what else might they be willing to lie about?"

The practice also carries implications about the final responsibility for the actions of government agents, journalists said.

"We almost have a shadow government in addition to the government of the people," Will Norton, chairman of the journalism department at the University of Mississippi, said of the drug agents' actions.

"There seems to have been no ac-

countability in the entire process," Pederson added. "At least some type of judicial review has always been necessary for other elements of law enforcement deception, the key example being wiretaps. But who, if anyone, has reviewed this process?"

In 1984, DEA agents helped smuggle 952 pounds of cocaine into the country, then abandoned their van at a prearranged Harris County roadblock set up by the Texas Department of Public Safety, the

*Chronicle* reported. On Aug. 2, 1984, the DPS alerted news reporters that troopers had found a cache of drugs described at the time as one of Texas' largest seizures.

Alan Spears, one of the state troopers who made the 1984 seizure, said he never was told that it was staged.

Apparently, it is not uncommon for the officers directly involved in the seizure to be used as unwitting participants.

## Former preacher describes battle with incest, fight to see children

DALLAS (AP) — Lewis Charles Elliott, a former minister and father of 18 children, sometimes cries when he looks at pictures of them.

"This one I've never seen," he said. "She was born after they put me in jail."

The 53-year-old Elliott has been sentenced to prison and has had to give up his parental rights because he is not just the children's father. In most cases, in the eyes of the law, he is also their grandfather.

Elliott, a building contractor and former Baptist minister in south Dallas, admitted to fathering 13 children with his three adopted daughters. He also had five children with his wife.

Although he said he loves his family and hopes someday "we'll all be together again," Elliott conceded he was "addicted" to incest.

"The state can't take away the love we have — just like they can't take my blood out of those kids," Elliott told the *Dallas Times Herald* during an hour-long interview in the Dallas County Jail.

"I know people have trouble understanding this, but I was a good father," he said. "I took care of the family."

"Preachers make mistakes like everyone else," he said. "I never told anybody I was perfect. I didn't in-

vent incest. . . . After experiencing it, it was just like drugs; it went too far."

Court records indicate Elliott began having sex with his adopted daughters as they reached adolescence and continued for about 15 years. The records also indicate he used violence and threats to control family members and keep the matter secret.

After being sentenced to 50 years

in prison in the first molestation trial, Elliott said he decided not to contest the remaining charges because "I didn't want the kids dragged into this."

But he insists that his only crime was incest and said some of the youngsters still send him money in jail, where he awaits transfer to state prison.

Elliott said he didn't actually con-

sider the acts criminal because the young women were not his natural children. Nor was the arrangement bigamy, he said.

"I never did consider them my wives," Elliott said. "I just considered we were having sex."

"The only thing that led me (to commit incest) was that human instinct in me," Elliott said. "I was just like any other man."

## Four-car accident hurts 2 at bonfire

A four-car accident left two men pinned between vehicles before bonfire on Nov. 22.

Jeffrey Cox, a 24-year-old Texas A&M computer systems manager from College Station, and Mark DeHart, a 28-year-old assistant lecturer from Fort Worth, were pinned by the tailgate of a truck at about 7 p.m. An A&M student attempting to park on Jersey Street struck another car, which caused a chain-reaction accident, police reports said.

The student was maneuvering to parallel park along the eastbound curb of Jersey Street near Dexter Drive. She apparently placed her foot on the gas pedal instead of the


brake and struck a parked pick-up truck.

Cox, who was seated in a lawn chair between a Dodge Daytona and a Ford Bronco, and DeHart, who was seated on the Bronco's tailgate, were trapped between the vehicles when the pick-up hit the Daytona.

Cox was taken to St. Joseph hospital in Bryan, complaining of pain in his back, the report said. He was treated and released that night, hospital sources said. DeHart was not injured.

As of Sunday night, no charges had been pressed against the driver, College Station police said.

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