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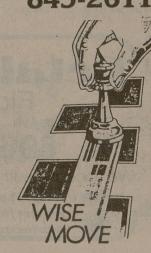


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Press reactions to DEA 'plants' express concern

HOUSTON (AP) — As might be expected, journalism experts and law enforcement officials voice vastly different opinions about the Drug Enforcement Administration's practice of planting false news stories as a tool in the nation's war on drugs.

Media experts generally argue that planting government-generated

See related story/Page 3

misinformation - no matter how well-intentioned - damages the credibility of a free press and under-

mines the trust journalists and the public place in official information.

Will Norton, professor of journalism at the University of Mississippi, minced no words: "I haven't heard of anything order in the professor of the profe of anything quite so insidious be-fore," he said. "Government is sup-posed to be your friend. This doesn't sound too friendly.

And Paul LaRocque, an assistant journalism professor at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, asked, "How can the public trust what they read in the paper, if the paper has been converted to an arm of government?"

Law enforcement officials, however, said the practice is actually in the public's best interest because it is so effective in combating international drug trafficking.

"I support any legal tactic or technique to take the drugs off the street," Harris County Sheriff Johnny Klevenhagen said.

He said that withholding information is a common police procedure, and that it does not constitute lying for officers to withhold the true origin of drugs when discussing a staged seizure.

Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Police Chief Joe Gerwens said that investi-gators walk a fine ethical line which, if crossed, can damage the fragile. credibility police enjoy with the

"I wouldn't put anybody in our organization in the position of lying directly to the media," he said.

But the press should not automatically distrust the police because of deception to protect an undercover operation, Gerwens said.

Credibility should suffer disinformation has a less wor tive, such as political or m

The issue forced Chronick tors to consider the implicaexposing a DEA practice the agency said was designed to the safety of undercover agen maintain ongoing undercove

When law enforcement of became aware that the Chron preparing to run such a stor requested and received adv tice of its publication date: could take action to protect cover agents.

It could not be deter whether the disclosure in

with ongoing investigations.
"I guess if someone gets killed
won't be able to use that techn
anymore," Federal Drug Enfo ment Administration spokes Maurice Hill said.

But SMU's LaRocque said p take a risk by involving the med a masquerade. "If we lie to the

lic, who's going to believe us? Griff Singer, of the Univ Texas journalism depa voiced similar concerns: using the press as a means ends, when the press is tryin

information the public needs Steve Bertucelli, head of t nized crime division for the Br County Sheriff's Departme Florida, said it would be pret to confide in the media when is staged and release the infor

in partnership with reporters.
"I think it's part of the respo ity of the media, for the good," Bertucelli said.

But he conceded that re might be uneasy with that arm ment, and LaRocque said such nerships in deception would we journalistic ethics

Gerwens said he knows of nos arrangements. "I've never km anybody in the press who'd bear ing participant in planting a sm Norton said the DEA practice for increased press skepticism formation released by drug en

Texas book dealer detects forgeries of 13 documents

HOUSTON (AP) - A Texas rare ognized when they appeared in book and document dealer says he market. has uncovered forged and fabricated copies of 13 different Texas documents, including more than 50

Until 1973, only two copies of broadside relating Travis' factorized from the Alamo were message from the Alamo were stated from the Alam facsimiles located in museums, libraries, university and private collec-

tions.
W. Thomas Taylor of Austin said the popularity of Texana and the increase in available cash during the boom days of the 1970s and early 80s created an atmosphere ripe for

forgery.

Among the alleged phony documents are copies of the Feb. 24, 1836
"Victory or Death" letter written by William Barret Travis, appealing for aid at the Alamo, and the declaration of independence from Mexico, approved by rebellious Texas set-tlers in a convention at Washingtonon-the-Brazos in March 1836.

To rally support for the Texas Revolution, Texan printers put out hundreds of copies of Travis' letter and the Declaration of Independence in the form of broadsides, or circulars.

The most lucrative documents came from this romantic period of Texas history, but only rare copies still exist, he said.

"Virtually all the printing done in Texas during that period took the form of highly perishable broad-sides," Taylor said, and only a handful surrvived, generally in institutional collections. "How frustrating that must have been for our bibliographic entrepreneurs," he told the Houston Chroni-

cle. "They moved quickly to remedy the imbalance by two simple expedients: theft and forgery. For several months, the Public Integrity Section of the Travis County District Attorney's Office has been investigating whether criminal violations occurred in the reproduction and sale of the allegedly forged and

fabricated documents first cited last year by Taylor. Assistant District Attorney Steve McCreely said the investigation is nearing completion, and, if indictable offenses appear to have oc-curred, prosecutors will present evi-

dence to a grand jury.

About 1970, thieves systematically stole documents from many impor-tant Texas collections, but for the most part, these thefts were not publicly disclosed, he said. If the thefts had been reported, he said, the stolen items might have been recovered and their copies rec-

Until 1973, only two copies of ported to exist, he said, but then, 10 copies have surfaced number, which to any thinking son, is wholly implausible."
"In the 1970s, I had sold the

copies of the Declaration of l pendence and one copy of the vis letter for a great deal of mon

out looking for trouble."

Among the documents he has termined to be fakes was one Ta unwittingly sold to the San Jad Museum of History in House

be refunded that money.

All told, Taylor said, he has funded \$58,000 for fake documents.

hé inadvertently sold. "The Declaration of Independence proved to be a kind of Room Stone for the discovery of of forgeries," he said. "I simply lot for once-rare documents that become common, that origin with certain dealers, that poorly printed or which sho signs of re-touching a negative."

Among his other discoveries of five forged documents that had be presented as gifts to the University

He also located fake Texas do ments in the possession of the ker Texas History Center, Yale Society, the American Antiqua Society, the Star of the Republic seum at Washington-on-the Bra Baylor University, the Texas Historical Association, the Public Library, the branches of University of Texas system at Antonio and Arlington and asso private collectors.

A forged copy of the Declara of Independence turned up in Texana collection of Gov. Bill Co.

"In addition to the forging a fabricating of printed docum Taylor said, "I suspect a signif number of autograph letters by portant people about impo matters in this state's history prob bly are forgeries and describe end that never happened." 200 \$200 UR Do you particip who qu

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