



ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Attorney General Eric Holder
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder,

I am writing to protest in the strongest possible terms the FBI's fabrication and publication of a fake Associated Press news story in connection with its June 2007 investigation of a school bombing threat in the state of Washington.

AP learned of the FBI's ploy only this week, more than seven years after the incident occurred. Documents released under FOIA reveal that the FBI, seeking to implant a form of tracking technology onto the computer of a bomb threat suspect, created a phony AP news story to entice the suspect to click on the fake article so that the FBI could identify the suspect's location. In carrying out this scheme, the FBI both misappropriated the trusted name of The Associated Press and created a situation where our credibility could have been undermined on a large scale.

While AP is sensitive to the demands on law enforcement, particularly when addressing threats of school violence, the government's actions in this case were entirely unacceptable. It is improper and inconsistent with a free press for government personnel to masquerade as The Associated Press or any other news organization. The FBI may have intended this false story as a trap for only one person. However, the individual could easily have reposted this story to social networks, distributing to thousands of people, under our name, what was essentially a piece of government disinformation.

The FBI's actions also raise serious constitutional concerns. By creating false news accounts, misrepresenting the source of a news story, and falsely attributing it to the AP, the FBI undermined the most fundamental component of a free press -- its independence. Any attempt by the government, whatever its motives, to falsely label its own messages as coming from the news media serves to undermine the vital distinction between the government and the press in society. Such actions also compromise our ability to gather the news safely and effectively in parts of the world where our credibility rests on the basis of AP operating freely and independently. The Department of Justice should neither condone nor permit such conduct.

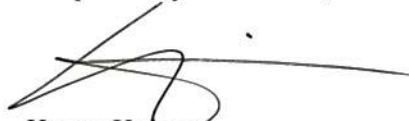
The actions taken by the FBI in this case inflict a very serious harm, and raise issues that need to be addressed promptly by the Department. We ask that you review the circumstances that led to this incident, and disclose promptly the authority under which this action was taken and who authorized the action. We also ask you to make public whether this type of impersonation of the press has occurred in other situations, and if so, how often it has occurred and what policies exist within the Department of Justice to govern this type of activity.

AP does not believe it is ever appropriate for the government to misrepresent itself as an independent news organization, and we seek your immediate assurance that the Department will never again misrepresent itself as the AP. We also call upon you to put into place appropriate policies and guidelines to ensure that the Department never again resorts to the conduct that occurred here.

We request an opportunity to discuss our concerns with the Department in the near future and to learn how the Department plans to address these critical issues.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Respectfully submitted,



Karen Kaiser