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America's Oldest Journal Covering the Newspaper Industry

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

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Radio Station Cries 'Enough' -- Won't Quote From Certain News Stories Relying on Unnamed Officials

By Greg Mitchell

Published: February 13, 2007 10:55 PM ET

NEW YORK After the latest widely-publicized stories in national newspapers about weapons from Iran allegedly killing Americans in Iraq -- based completely on unnamed sources -- at least one smaller news outlet has had enough of it.

The news director of the public radio station in Santa Fe, New Mexico, has directed his staff to "ignore national stories quoting unnamed sources." He also called on other news outlets to join this policy.

Bill Dupuy sent the following to his news staff.

*

Effectively immediately and until further notice, it is the policy of KSFR's news department to ignore and not repeat any wire service or nationally published story about Iran, China, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia or any other foreign power that quotes an "unnamed" U.S. official.

What we have suspected and talked about at length before is now becoming clear. "High administration officials speaking on the condition of anonymity," "Usually reliable Washington sources," and others of the like were behind the publicity that added credibility to the need to go to war against Afghanistan and Iraq.

Our news department covers local news. But, like local newspapers and others, we occasionally are taken in by national stories that we have no way to verify.

This is a small news department with a small reach. We cannot research these stories ourselves. But we can take steps not to compromise our integrity. We should not dutifully parrot whatever comes out of Washington, on the wire or by whatever means, no matter how intriguing and urgent it sounds, when the source is unnamed.

I am also calling on our colleagues in other local news departments -- broadcast and print -- to take the same professional approach.

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