



New York Times: Ex-reporter faces fraud inquiry

Federal probe is related to reporting conduct, paper says

NEW YORK --Disgraced ex-New York Times reporter Jayson Blair is being investigated in connection with allegations "his reporting conduct violated the law," the newspaper acknowledged Tuesday.

The newspaper did not elaborate on what the fraud investigation by the U.S. Attorney's Office encompasses, but it has been detailing in its pages allegations against the former reporter.

The paper says Blair, 27, faked stories and quotes, plagiarized other publications and filed fake expense reports to make it appear he was traveling on assignment when he was actually at his home in Brooklyn. ([Full story](#))

A spokesman for United States Attorney James Comey told CNN: "We never confirm or deny the existence of any investigation."

But Lena Williams, a New York Times reporter and representative of the newspaper's union, The Newspaper Guild, said Blair had told her through an intermediary that he was seeking the help of an attorney and would have no further comment.

"The New York Times has received a request for information from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York," the newspaper said in a statement.

"We understand that the office is attempting to determine whether Jayson Blair's reporting conduct violated the law."

The Times said it did not request an investigation but would cooperate with an inquiry.

Blair resigned this month after the San Antonio Express-News raised questions about whether he plagiarized one of its articles about a soldier missing in Iraq.

The Times has reported problems in several dozen of Blair's articles, and publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr. called it "a huge black eye" for the publication.

The paper said its investigation showed that while Blair was working as a roving national reporter, he was spending much of his time in New York instead of covering stories in remote locations. The paper said he falsified expense reports to cover his tracks.

The inquiry also raised questions about the standard of Blair's supervision. When Blair was hired, executives assumed he had graduated college, but University of Maryland officials say he has a year of coursework to complete, The Times reported.

Blair, who started as an intern, was appointed to a full-time job covering police and was promoted to the national desk despite concerns about the accuracy of his work.

He covered high-profile stories, including the return home of former prisoner of war Pfc. Jessica Lynch and the Washington-area sniper shootings.

Federal officials publicly criticized a front-page, exclusive article of Blair's that said the U.S. attorney had forced investigators to end their questioning of sniper suspect John Allen Muhammad just as he was ready to confess.

His conduct has led to widespread reflection in media circles about the damage the incident could cause the profession's credibility and whether Blair was cut slack because he is black.

"There is no room in our profession for those who betray both their fellow journalists and the readers and viewers they serve," said National Association of Black Journalists President Condace Pressley.

She said that "suggesting Blair's alleged actions reflect on the thousands of black journalists who daily uphold the highest standards of our profession is not only laughable and ludicrous, but also inaccurate and insulting."

-- CNN senior producers Rose Arce, Phil Hirschorn and Shannon Troetel contributed to this story.

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