



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
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WASHINGTON, DC 20350-3000

IN REPLY REFER TO:

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PA

FEB 21 2008

Mr. Thomas Curley
President and Chief Executive Officer
Associated Press
450 West 33rd Street
New York, NY 10001

Dear Mr. Curley,

It is a rare occurrence when a letter of this nature must be sent to the president of a news organization, but the gravity of this situation warrants nothing less. The Associated Press, according to its *Statement of News Values and Principles* "abhors inaccuracies, carelessness, bias or distortions." For many years, the AP has deservedly been considered the 'gold standard' for news reporting. However, a recent news article and the conduct of the reporter and his editor call into question the AP's commitment to these stated principles.

A story on Friday Feb. 15, by AP journalist Richard Lardner, "Vehicle Delay Blamed for Marines' Deaths," mischaracterized the nature of a paper written by a civilian employee of the Marine Corps regarding the procurement of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles. The fact is the paper contained the personal views and opinions of the employee and was clearly marked as such. The reporter knew this fact yet opted to bury that vital detail in the 18th paragraph of his story, after mischaracterizing the paper as a Marine Corps study 10 times prior to referring to the author's disclaimer. Inaccurately implying the work was an official Marine Corps study, despite the facts, ensured the story received a lot of play and forced the Marine Corps to have to respond to numerous questions, from other news organizations, members of Congress and other groups, about the nature of the work and its conclusions.

A subsequent AP article, "Biden, Bond Seek Probe of Vehicle Delay," was posted Feb. 19, and included the following statement: "The Associated Press first reported Friday that hundreds of U.S. Marines have been killed or injured by roadside bombs in Iraq because Marine Corps officials refused the request of the commanders." This statement was presented as fact and not attributed to the author of the paper, as representing his personal views. It is an especially egregious statement without the proper attribution.

We are adamant about our obligation to protect the public record. Our efforts in addressing this matter with the writer and his editors have yielded nothing. I ask that you take appropriate action to correct the record and hold AP reporters and editors to the organization's stated high standards.

Sincerely,

D.A. LAPAN
COLONEL
U.S. MARINE CORPS
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS