
From: Alan White [alan.white@buzzfeed.com]
Sent: 4/21/2015 6:55:38 AM
To: Sean Walsh [sean.walsh@mailonline.com]
CC: Editorial Dailymailonline [editorial@mailonline.co.uk]; Ted Young [ted.young@metro.co.uk]
Subject: Re: Story about Metro / MailOnline

Cheers Sean.

I believe there are 10 other publications mentioned besides Mailonline.

On Tue, Apr 21, 2015 at 11:53 AM, Sean Walsh <Sean.Walsh@mailonline.com> wrote:

Hi Alan - a quick note to acknowledge receipt of your email. We will come back to you.

Are we the only publication mentioned in the piece or will you be including other publications who license CEN's copy?

Regards
Sean

Sean Walsh
Director of Communications & Media Relations, <<http://DailyMail.com>> DailyMail.com
+1-646-678-2858 <tel:%2B1-646-678-2858>

On Apr 21, 2015, at 6:38 AM, "Alan White" <alan.white@buzzfeed.com> wrote:

Dear Sirs,

BuzzFeed News is preparing to publish an article in which we will report that two Daily Mail Group news outlets - MailOnline and Metro - have bought stories from the news agency CEN that have subsequently been proven false either in part or in their entirety, or contain quotes of questionable provenance. We would be really grateful if you could send us your response to this by 5pm Wednesday April 22 so we can make sure we include it in our report.

Here are the stories in question:

1. In August 2014, MailOnline ran a story about a man who was apparently saved from a bear attack by a Justin Bieber ringtone on his phone ("Russian fisherman saved from bear attack when ringtone featuring one of the pop brat's songs scares it away", MailOnline, 5 August 2014). However, the original story about the bear attack, <<http://www.kp.ru/daily/26263.4/3141355/>> which was published in Russia's Komsomolskaya Pravda, said nothing about a Bieber ringtone. Instead, it reported that the man's phone had a setting that caused it to speak the current time, and that's what had scared off the bear. Is MailOnline aware that this story is fake? Did MailOnline look into the story at all after it had purchased the copy?

2. In a <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2947440/Thief-25-tricked-elderly-women-thinking-lost-little-boy-wearing-nappy-sucking-lollipop-let-homes-Paraguay.html>> story about a thief in Paraguay who apparently broke into people's homes by pretending to be a baby ("Thief, 25, tricked elderly women into thinking he was a lost little boy by wearing a nappy and sucking a lollipop so they would let him into their homes in Paraguay", MailOnline, 10 February 2015), there are quotes from a local, Lara Orta Ornelas, 59, who said:

"I am surprised that the police have only just now arrested him. He has been doing this for years and I know the police have had complaints before but it's incredible that they never realised the baby is actually a fully grown man."

A Spanish-language <http://www.hoy.com.py/nacionales/atrapan-a-bebe-ladron> report from four days earlier says that the thief pretended to be mentally ill, but no more. Ms Ornelas's quotes only appear when the story makes its way to the English-speaking media - they don't appear to be in any of the Spanish-language reports. The idea that the thief was tricking his way into people's homes by pretending to be a baby is somewhat contingent on her quotes - did they come from the reporter's research or from CEN? If the latter, did MailOnline do any research into the origin of these quotes?

3. A story from November 2014 about an aunt who castrated her young nephew when he interrupted her was http://msnphoto.eastday.com/2013slideshow/20141116_3/index.html reported in Chinese media, and comes with detailed photos of the boy and his parents ("Cruel aunt cuts her three-year-old nephew's penis off because he burst in on her on the loo and asked to use her phone", Daily Mail, 17 November 2014). But the MailOnline https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCIQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailymail.co.uk%2Fnews%2Farticle-2837967%2FA-wicked-aunt-cut-three-year-old-nephews-penis-burst-loo-asked-use-phone.html&ei=F1MqVf-SFoS17gaoeQ&usg=AFQjCNHILEP_sWM-o5FE83gjNF3biQjliQ&bvm=bv.90491159,d.ZGU version includes two quotes that we couldn't find elsewhere. There is this from a "hospital spokesman":

Unfortunately, the knife was quite blunt and the cut wasn't clean so although we reattached the boy's penis, it wasn't ideal and he had to have further treatment.

And from a "police spokesman":

The aunt was arrested and admitted attacking the boy because she was angry that he had interrupted her on the toilet.

Did these quotes come from CEN or from your reporters? If the former, did MailOnline do any investigation to verify the details?

4. In January pictures surfaced on a since-deleted Chinese Weibo account and then http://news.hnr.cn/dj/201412/t20141231_1774070.html spread to other Chinese sites that described a man whose penis was chopped off twice in the span of a few hours. The version on <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2908057/Wife-chopped-husband-s-penis-discovered-cheated-cut-surgeons-managed-reattach-China.html> MailOnline ("Wife chopped her husband's penis off after she discovered he had cheated on her... then cut it off AGAIN after surgeons managed to reattach it in China", Daily Mail, 13 January 2015) has, at the time of writing, been shared more than 40,000 times. First, it was claimed, the man's wife caught him cheating and she castrated him. Then, she found him at the hospital and undid the work doctors had done to reattach his member.

The http://news.hnr.cn/dj/201412/t20141231_1774070.html earliest version we could find of the story in Chinese included a quote from the mistress saying that it was fine if he was now infertile, as he already had five children. However, the Mail's story has this set of quotes from an anonymous hospital spokesman:

The first we were aware of what happened was when someone came into the reception area to say a naked man was beating up a woman outside the hospital.

Staff rushed out to see what was happening and found the patient with blood streaming down his legs hitting the woman.

He was stopped and the woman was taken in for treatment, and then we discovered she had chopped his penis off again.

The man had lost a lot of blood and was taken in for emergency surgery.

He is now in a stable condition but is extremely emotionally distraught.

Would you be able to provide any more information about this spokesman? Were his quotes provided in the CEN copy? If so did MailOnline do any investigation to verify the details?

5. In November 2014, there was a story about an Argentinian teacher, apparently named Lucita Sandoval, who was alleged to have featured in a sex tape showing her having sex with a 16-year-old pupil (e.g.

"Boy, 16, secretly films sex with teacher then uploads it to WhatsApp", Metro, 3 November 2014). The <http://metro.co.uk/2014/11/03/boy-16-secretly-films-sex-with-teacher-then-uploads-it-to-whatsapp-4933699/> Metro story has subsequently been updated. It <http://www.buzzfeed.com/ryanhatesthis/the-lucita-sandoval-sex-tape> had already been debunked by a local paper in Argentina, Nuevo Diario on 22 October. As BuzzFeed News <http://www.buzzfeed.com/ryanhatesthis/the-lucita-sandoval-sex-tape#.mo4oaXjGgG> reported at the time, the video didn't show an underage boy; the woman in the video was a teacher, but she wasn't from Santiago del Estero and she doesn't appear to have been called Lucita Sandoval. Some of the sites updated their articles, but <http://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/408443/Lucita-Sandoval-sex-tape-teacher-pupil-Argentina> some remain inaccurate to this day. Were both the picture and the accompanying copy in the first Metro story sold by CEN? When did the Metro become aware there was an inaccuracy in the story? It <http://www.georgianewsday.com/news/regional/299428-teacher-lucita-sandoval-suspended-after-student-films-her-having-sex-with-him.html> appears the MailOnline story on this has been updated, but there's no note to indicate this is the case on the post, can you confirm this is the case and what the decision making process was?

6. In January this year the Metro <http://metro.co.uk/2015/01/14/public-shaming-underwear-thief-forced-to-walk-around-the-block-wearing-the-bras-he-stole-5021898/> ran a story about an underwear thief who was forced to walk around a block of flats in Singapore with bras and underwear hanging from his neck after residents trapped following a spate of thefts ("Public shaming: Underwear thief forced to walk around the block wearing the bras he stole", Metro, 14 Jan 2015). Conspicuous by its absence from any of the original sources was a quote that appeared in the the Metro from a "police spokesman", who said

"We don't condone vigilante activity but in this case it seems to have turned out OK."

Also missing were quotes from a "local man" Teo Goh, who <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/furious-women-set-trap-underwear-4979426> apparently said:

"We realised he was targeting windows where he knew women lived. He came at around midnight and as soon as he was in the room we grabbed him, forced him to wear the girl's lingerie and then frog-marched him from door to door making him confess what he had done and to promise he would never do it again."

Did Metro acquire these quotes from CEN? If so, did it attempt to verify their provenance in any way?

7. There's a quote in this Metro <http://metro.co.uk/2014/12/16/spurned-wife-leaves-cheating-husband-and-twin-naked-in-busy-car-park-4988779/> story which claims a wife discovered her husband cheating with her twin sister and then left them naked in a parking lot. ("Spurned wife leaves cheating husband and twin naked in busy car park", Metro, 16 December 2014). It comes from a witness identified as You Meng, but reads like it's being spoken by someone interviewed on a London street:

It was so funny. Loads of people were grabbing their phones and I did as well. He was banging his fist on the window and shouting at her, and she just wasn't playing ball.

While the story was covered by the Chinese-language media, none of the earlier online posts included the names of the man and his wife or their ages, or any quotes from a witness. Did Metro acquire these quotes from CEN? If so, did it attempt to verify their provenance in any way?

8. In <http://metro.co.uk/2014/06/18/naked-sunbather-hanging-out-of-window-causes-crash-in-vienna-austria-4766142/> this story about a woman who caused a car crash in Vienna by sunbathing with her bottom half hanging out of her window, the photo <http://italia99.blogspot.se/2011/12/avatar.html> dates back to at least 2011, and no such incident has been recorded by the city's police. the Metro appears to have picked up the picture after a reader tried to <http://www.heute.at/leser/art23650,1030078> fool an Austrian newspaper with it. Do you have any explanation for why these photos got redistributed?

9. In May 2014, a story appeared on sites including Metro <http://metro.co.uk/2014/05/02/chinese-teens-taking-cabbages-for-walks-to-get-over-loneliness-4716551/> which claimed that Chinese teenagers were attempting to alleviate feelings of loneliness by taking cabbages for walks.

The story included quotes from "Chinese psychiatrist Wen Chao" explaining how walking a cabbage on a lead can help reduce feelings of isolation, and from a 17-year-old called Lui Ja Chen, who supposedly said:

"I feel I can transfer my negative thoughts about myself to the cabbage, go for a walk with it and come home feeling better about myself." The pictures were credited to CEN.

However, it <http://kotaku.com/no-chinas-depressed-youth-do-not-keep-cabbages-as-pets-1571750423> transpired the teens were not walking cabbages because they were lonely; they were walking cabbages as part of an art event at a music festival by Chinese artist Han Bing (who has been walking cabbages as part of his art for over a decade). Did the quotes in this story come from CEN or from a Metro reporter?

10. Both the <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2973430/Elena-Lenina-paints-cat-pink-party-cat-later-DEAD-toxic-blood-poisoning.html> Daily Mail and <http://metro.co.uk/2015/03/01/cat-dies-after-being-dyed-by-pink-obsessed-owner-5084356/> Metro covered a story with CEN credits about a woman named Elena Lenina, who dyed her kitten pink – causing the animal’s death from blood poisoning. But as Gawker’s <http://antiviral.gawker.com/the-kitten-that-died-from-being-dyed-pink-is-alive-an-1689014402> Antiviral diagonal pointed out, the story was false. The kitten was not dead. Lenina was in fact posting pictures of it, very much alive, on social media. Are both outlets aware of this development?

Yours sincerely,

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Alan White
Breaking News Reporter, BuzzFeed UK

<https://twitter.com/aljwhite> @aljwhite

2nd Floor, 40 Argyll Street, London, W1F 7EB

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Alan White
Breaking News Reporter, BuzzFeed UK

<https://twitter.com/aljwhite> @aljwhite

2nd Floor, 40 Argyll Street, London, W1F 7EB