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Correspondence Between Roger J. Traynor, Reed J. Irvine, and Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Regarding Error on the Reporting of the Cambodian Bombing Financial Cost, 1973 May 12 - 1973 June 6

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The National News Council, Inc.

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May 29, 1973

Mr. Roger J. Traynor
National News Council
41 East 70th Street
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Traynor:

I trust that my letter of May 12 was delivered to you. I have been anxious to hear how you reacted to the complaint we filed with respect to the handling by the New York Times of the story on the cost of bombing in Cambodia. We have other complaints we would like to call to your attention, but before going to the trouble, I would like some indication that you are ready to receive and act upon complaints of this nature.

The Times did write to us to say that the error on the Cambodian bombing cost had been corrected in later editions. We have replied to the effect that errors made in early editions should be corrected in the same editions the following day. Virtually everyone in Washington who reads the Times sees only the City Edition. If an error made in the City edition is corrected only in subsequent editions the same day, the misinformation is not corrected for the regular readers of the City edition. I hope that you will support us in making this point. It is a responsibility that some editors recognize.

Please let me hear from you. Let us know whether you welcome our cooperation.

Sincerely yours,


Reed J. Irvine
Chairman

P.S.: We may write something about the National News Council in the next issue of the AIM REPORT. It would be helpful to us to have an indication from you of your willingness to cooperate in handling our complaints so that we might report it to our supporters throughout the country.

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June 6, 1973

Mr. Reed J. Irvine
Chairman
Accuracy in Media, Inc.
1232 Pennsylvania Building
425 - 13th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mr. Irvine:

At the close of a peripatetic month, I am now catching up with voluminous mail, including some that has been forwarded to me from New York, such as your two letters.

It would not be appropriate for me to make categorical response to your thoughtful letter of 29 May at this time, since the members of the National News Council have not yet had their first working meeting, and I cannot speak for them or the Executive Director who will be selected soon. I believe that as a newly organized group, they will be preoccupied for some time with delineating step by step the responsibilities they will carry out under the guidelines established by the Task Force. As they do so, they will be better able to evaluate than at the outset the direction and dimension of their own work in relation to the work of other groups who are preoccupied in one way or another with the boundless field of communications.

Sincerely yours,

Roger J. Traynor

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John E. Tilton/Dr. Frank Trager/General Lewis W. Walt, USMC (Ret.)

May 12, 1973

Mr. Roger J. Traynor
National News Council
41 E. 70th St.
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Traynor:

Congratulations on the inauguration of the National News Council. The oldest and most active ombudsman for the national news media, Accuracy in Media, wishes you lots of success. I hope that we shall be able to cooperate fully in our common objective of keeping the media accurate.

To get this cooperation started, we invite you to join us in asking the New York Times to correct the serious error to which we call attention in the enclosed letter to Mr. Arthur Ochs Sulzberger. We have several other cases that we would like to invite you to work on, but this one is very fresh, timely and clear-cut. We shall be interested to know how you react to it.

Sincerely yours


Reed J. Irvine
Chairman

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John E. Tilton/Dr. Frank Trager/General Lewis W. Walt, USMC (Ret.)

May 12, 1973

Mr. Arthur Ochs Sulzberger
President and Publisher
The New York Times

Dear Mr. Sulzberger:

A story by Sydney Schenberg on the bombing in Cambodia in The Times of May 11 stated that the Nixon Administration has refused "to divulge any figures on the cost of the current bombing." It adds that "estimates by Washington in the past indicate that it is costing \$7 million to \$10 million a day, which is over \$2 billion on an annual basis." (page 8, col. 7)

The Washington Star-News carried a story on May 10, which stated that deputy assistant secretary of defense, Dennis Doolin had revealed that the cost of the bombing in Cambodia from January 27 to April 30 was \$159,482,375. The Star-News stated that Mr. Doolin had given this information in congressional testimony earlier in the week and that further details had been supplied by the Pentagon on May 9.

These figures indicate that the daily cost of the bombing in Cambodia in this 93-day period was \$1.7 million, which comes to \$630 million on an annual basis.

I am sure that you will want to correct both the false statement that the administration had refused to divulge this information and your correspondent's erroneous estimates about the cost of the bombing.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Letters to the Editor Department, and I hope that you will join in urging that it be published promptly.

Sincerely yours,

Reed J. Irvine
Chairman

cc: A. M. Rosenthal
Kalman Beigel
Roger J. Traynor
Hanson Baldwin
Abraham H. Kalish
Orr Kelly, Washington Star-News