

Correcting the record

Fabrications mar reporter's work

Former USA TODAY reporter Jack Kelley wrote hundreds of stories during his 21-year career at the nation's largest newspaper. Substantial portions of some of his most memorable stories are untrue. Evidence uncovered by a group of journalists examining Kelley's work shows that Kelley fabricated stories. He lifted material from competing publications and passed it off as his own. He jeopardized the future of a Cuban woman who befriended him. And he engaged in elaborate efforts to mislead reporters and editors investigating his work. These are key findings at this stage of the investigation.

June 24, 2002, Ghulam Khan, Pakistan

Mileage, expenses and facts don't add up

By Kevin McCoy
USA TODAY

Jack Kelley's June 24, 2002, story from Ghulam Khan, Pakistan promised readers a firsthand look at suspected al-Qaeda terrorists playing a dangerous game of hide-and-seek with U.S. commandos.

His front-page account featured an Osama bin Laden supporter warning that "our work has just begun" — the sort of vivid detail that had made Kelley USA TODAY's star foreign correspondent. But the story was also emblematic of another side of Kelley's journalistic legacy.

It wasn't true. A USA TODAY investigation of the story, including interviews with the Pakistani man Kelley said enabled him to reach Ghulam Khan, show that Kelley could not have reached the tiny hamlet along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The investigation also found that Kelley's story contains descriptions and a quotation similar to those found in stories previously published elsewhere.

Kelley asked three editors leading USA TODAY's investigation of his work what was wrong with the story. But he raised no challenges to a point-by-point list Thursday.

Ghulam Khan is in Pakistan's North Waziristan area, where tribal leaders hold more power than the central government.

Travel to Ghulam Khan is virtually impossible for Western journalists unless they have permission from both the Pakistani government and local tribal leaders. They also need to hire armed tribesmen as protection in the virtually lawless region.

Officials from Pakistan's Information Ministry and office of Inter-Services Public Relations, the agency that coordinates military information, said in telephone interviews that they could find no record that Kelley sought permission for a visit. "I remember him being here (in Pakistan)," said Khalil Humayun, an Information Ministry official familiar with many of the Western journalists who reported from the country after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. "But we have no record of this" trip.

Kelley told USA TODAY reporter Chris Woodyard at the time that he had managed to reach Ghulam Khan without a government escort. In a July 31, 2002, e-mail to Woodyard, he explained, "I went with the Yusufzais."

That, too, is untrue, according to Rahimullah Yusufzai, a senior editor at *The News International* and an in-

fluent figure in Pakistan regularly interviewed by Kelley and other reporters. In telephone interviews, Yusufzai said he had spoken with Kelley several times but did not help him get to Ghulam Khan.

Yusufzai's nephew, Mustaq, a reporter who has worked as a translator for Western journalists, also said in a telephone interview that he had never worked with Kelley and had never been to Ghulam Khan.

Nonetheless, travel expense reports Kelley filed with USA TODAY list \$3,450 in payments to Mustaq Yusufzai for 23 days of assistance in June 2002, including the period when he wrote and filed the Ghulam Khan dispatch. Mustaq Yusufzai insisted that he had never received any payment from the former USA TODAY correspondent.

"That was not my signature," said the younger Yusufzai after he examined a faxed copy of the handwritten expense receipt Kelley filed with USA TODAY. "I want to file a case against the man."

Rahimullah Yusufzai said, "It has been almost impossible for any journalist" — Western or Pakistani — "to go to Ghulam Khan alone."

Yet Kelley recently told three outside editors chosen by USA TODAY to lead the newspaper's investigation that he had "spent three and a half days" in the border area near Ghulam Khan. "I went throughout the entire area just interviewing different people," he said.

The Islamabad Marriott Hotel served as Kelley's operations base during the reporting assignment, his travel records show. It would take about 8 1/2 hours on rough roads to reach the area near Ghulam Khan, according to Pakistani officials and a USA TODAY correspondent who has traveled in the area.

However, Kelley's hotel bill lists room-service meals charged to his room for all but one of the 11 days before the date he transmitted his story. That means he could not have spent 3 1/2 days near Ghulam Khan.

His story also included an interview with a shepherd who said he had seen U.S. commandos near Ghulam Khan. Pakistani officials forced the shepherd "to sign a statement saying the soldiers 'were on the Afghan side of the border.'"

Newsweek reported a nearly identical incident about a shepherd in a May 13, 2002, story. A copy of that *Newsweek* story was stored on Kelley's computer the day after he arrived in Pakistan, USA TODAY's investigation found.

Explosion, then arms and legs rain down

Suicide bomber kills at least 15 in Jerusalem, including an American

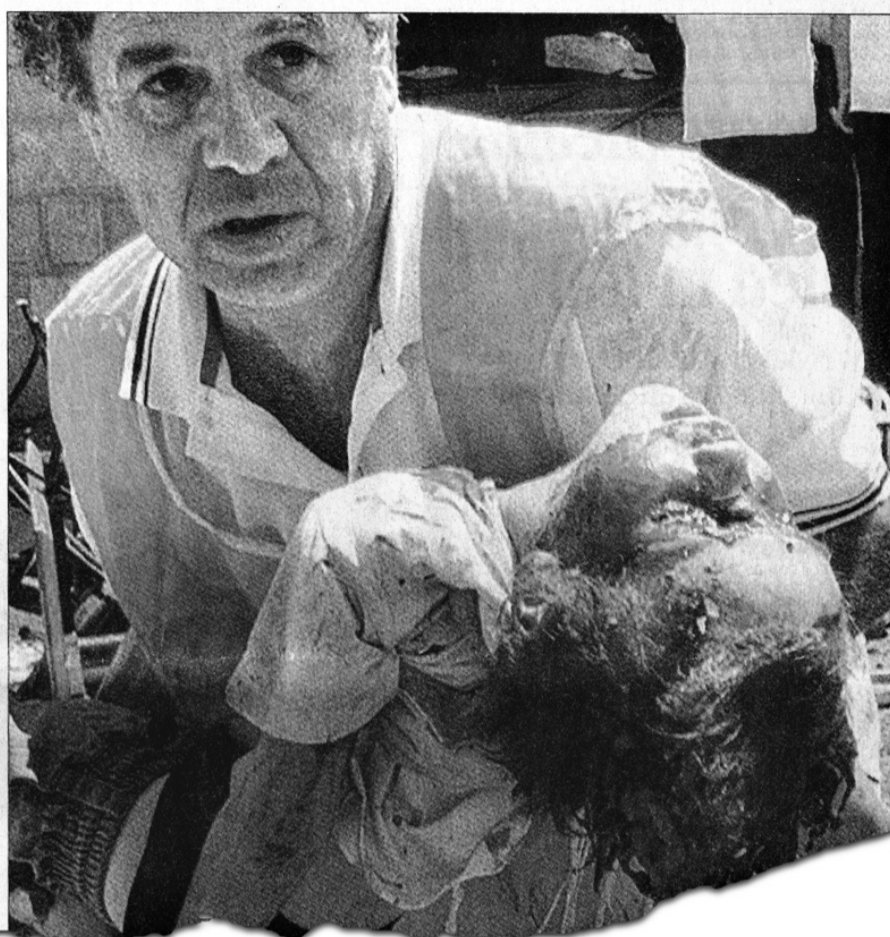
By Jack Kelley
USA TODAY

JERUSALEM — It was a scene out of a war movie. The blast was so powerful it blew out the front of the Sbarro pizza restaurant on Jaffa Street. It knocked down people up to 30 yards away and sent flesh onto 2nd-story balconies on the next block. Traumatized women, some with nails from the bomb embedded in their faces, arms and chests, fled on the street and cried. Men motionless in children, their heads turned, walked away. "Mom, where are

At the scene USA TODAY's Jack Kelley was with an Israeli official 30 yards away when the bomb detonated.

► Listen to Kelley's eyewitness account at usatoday.com

Cover story



Jerusalem, Aug. 9, 2001

Unbelievable timing, incredible account

By Julie Schmit and Blake Morrison
USA TODAY

Perhaps the most riveting story Jack Kelley wrote for USA TODAY involved a suicide bombing in Jerusalem on Aug. 9, 2001 — a bombing Kelley says he witnessed.

Afterward, Kelley spoke about the bombing often — first for USA TODAY.com, then on cable TV and in speeches.

Two witnesses contacted by USA TODAY put Kelley at the scene within minutes of the bombing.

On Thursday, Kelley stood behind his eyewitness account. "I know what I saw," he said.

But what really happened that day, based on police records and interviews with rescue workers and others at the scene, differs substantially from Kelley's Aug. 10 account.

► Kelley could not have seen three men decapitated. He wrote in his story: "Three men, who had been eating pizza inside, were catapulted out of the chairs they had been sitting on. When they hit the ground, their heads separated from their bodies and rolled down the street." In a first draft that Kelley submitted for publication, he wrote that some of the heads rolled "with their eyes still blinking."

How Kelley — by his own account 90 feet away and with his back to the pizzeria and having first been thrown to his knees by the blast — could have turned and seen the blinking eyes of victims is unclear.

Regardless, no adult victims were decapitated, say Israeli National Police spokesmen

Gil Kleiman and Zaka Rescue and Recovery, religious Jews who collect the bodies and body parts of terror victims. Kelley also wrote and talked about another man who lost his legs and died in front of Kelley moments later. By Kelley's count, four men — not counting the bomber — died in the blast. Three men died.

► Kelley wrote that he saw the suicide bomber, but the man he described could not have been the bomber. Kelley wrote that he saw "a young man, wearing a white T-shirt and dark sport jacket. A black pouch, similar to a small camera case, was attached to his waist." The man, he wrote, turned out to be the bomber. In a television interview on CNN five days later, Kelley said, "The suicide bomber was right in front of me. I said, 'excuse me,' and I continued to walk 30 yards down. And that's when the bomb exploded."

But police records in Israel show the bomber, Izzadin Masri, carried the bomb in a guitar, not a camera case. Kelley made no mention of a guitar. In his story, Kelley also wrote that "a policeman pointed to what he said was the top of the head of the suicide bomber, which was lying on the floor. The nose and mouth were missing. ... 'You've killed us all, you bastard,' the officer said, pointing to the head."

During his CNN interview, Kelley explained that he knew he had bumped into the bomber because "there was (the) gentleman's head laying on the floor, and I could recognize him as the gentleman who I had saw ..."

But Kleiman says the bomber's head and upper body flew up and got stuck in a vent

above the pizzeria's ovens. Kleiman allowed a USA TODAY reporter to review pictures of the remains of the bomber. The bomber's head remained with his torso, and his nose and mouth were intact and clearly distinguishable, contrary to what Kelley wrote he saw.

► There is no record of the rabbi Kelley wrote found the hand of a little girl "splattered against a white Subaru parked outside the restaurant." Kelley quoted "Rabbi Moshe Aaron" in the story as saying, "She was probably 5 or 6, the same age as my daughter." But Zaka spokesman Zelig Feiner in Jerusalem has no record of a rabbi named Moshe Aaron who helped collect body parts that day. A roster is kept for insurance purposes.

► Kelley was likely not with an Israeli intelligence officer, as he wrote. The newspaper talked with two reporters — one American, one Israeli — who put Kelley on the scene within minutes of the blast. But when the newspaper asked Kelley for the name of the person he wrote he was with when the explosion occurred, he suggested a reporter call a man he said was code-named "David."

Kelley said he and David were about to eat lunch that day when the explosion occurred.

In truth, David is a Jerusalem businessman. Interviewed Thursday in Jerusalem, the man told a USA TODAY reporter that he is not a member of the Israeli security force Shin Bet, as Kelley continued to insist Thursday.

The man would not answer other questions, including whether he was with Kelley at the bombing.

Material without attribution

By Rita Rubin/USA TODAY

Former USA TODAY reporter Jack Kelley insists he never used material from other publications without crediting them. "Completely off-limits," he said in interviews with three journalists monitoring the newspaper's examination of Kelley's work.

Since he resigned from USA TODAY in January, news reports have raised questions about two Kelley stories that contained passages similar to those published in *The Washington Post*. A review of his work shows dozens of other examples of Kelley using material from other news organizations or wire services without crediting them. Two of the stories were among those for which Kelley was named a 2001 Pulitzer Prize finalist.

Other publication

London Evening Standard, March 15, 1995

Chechen actor-turned-businessman Meirbek Magomadov, who has lived in Moscow for two years, puts on thick pink-rimmed spectacles when he goes out, to disguise his dark brows and lashes. "But it's still unbearable. They stop you all the time. They search you, they take your car apart, they insult you. And they only give your papers back if you put money in their paws."

The Jerusalem Post, Dec. 19, 1998

"The people are saying this isn't just a strike against Iraq, that it is a strike against all Arabs from the Strait (of Gibraltar) to the Gulf," added Abdel-Hadi Hmouz, an animal feed supplier.

Asiaweek, July 1, 1997

Between 1976 and 1994, oral-cancer rates skyrocketed from one per 100,000 to eight per 100,000 — and 88% of those diagnosed were regular chewers. ... Taiwan is going through an identity crisis. And the betel nut, in its own modest way, is either part of the solution or part of the problem.

Chicago Tribune, May 11, 1997:

Known until recently as the Las Vegas of southern China, this once peaceful enclave has now been dubbed the "Chicago of the Orient" by the local press as the killers become ever more brazen. ... Too small to compete with neighboring Hong Kong for a piece of Asia's heavyweight economic action, Macau had turned itself into the region's playground. Gambling lures 8 million visitors a year from Asia and an increasing number from China, where gambling is illegal.

Jack Kelley in USA TODAY

June 20, 1995

Chechen actor Meirbek Magomadov dons fake eyeglasses whenever walking Moscow's streets. Anything, he says, to avoid looking Chechen. "It's unbearable. The (police) stop you all the time," Magomadov says. "They search you. They take your car apart. They insult you. And they only give you your papers back if you put money in their paws."

Dec. 21, 1998

"The people are saying this isn't just a strike against Iraq, that it is a strike against all Arabs from the Strait (of Gibraltar) to the Gulf," said Abdel-Hadi Hmouz, an animal feed supplier.

July 18, 1997

Oral cancer rates in Taiwan skyrocketed from one per 100,000 in 1976 to eight per 100,000 in 1994. And 88% of those diagnosed were regular chewers. At a time when Taiwan is seeking a separate cultural identity from China, the betel nut could be part of the solution.

July 24, 1997

Now the peninsula and islands called Macau have been dubbed the "Chicago of the Orient" by the press, recalling an era when gangsters like Al Capone ruled the Windy City. Too small to compete with Hong Kong for a piece of Asia's economic action, Macau has turned itself into the region's playground. Gambling lures 8 million visitors a year from Asia and an increasing number from China, where gambling is illegal.

Other inconsistencies in Kelley's stories

Jack Kelley gave the newspaper names of people he said would authenticate his stories or resolve inconsistencies. Some of those people contradicted him.

Russia

Kelley wrote 12 stories in 1999 about an investigation of an alleged Russian money-laundering scandal. He reported that as much as \$15 billion was laundered through U.S. banks and that the money included at least \$10 billion in IMF loans. Those details conflicted with reports in other media at the time.

Kelley told three independent editors leading the USA TODAY investigation that his "main source" was a Russia specialist at Harvard University. He said the specialist was "directly in on" meetings with FBI and other probers and "would leak stuff to me." But the specialist said he told Kelley he "had no knowledge" of money laundering other than media reports and said he "never worked for the FBI" or other such agencies.

Iraqi general

Kelley reported on March 23, 2003, that U.S. intelligence had contacted Abdul Qassab, an Iraqi general, and urged

him to defect from Saddam Hussein's regime. He wrote that Qassab's daughter, Milad, told him her father "is ready to fight" and "will not give in to the CIA."

In an interview, Qassab said he retired from the military in 1991, was "never" contacted about defecting and was "never" ready to fight for Saddam. He said his family had no contact with any U.S. reporter before the Iraq invasion and does not have a daughter named Milad.

Egyptian terrorists

A Nov. 25, 1997, story featured what Kelley reported was a meeting with members of al-Gama'a al-Islamiya, an outlawed extremist group in Egypt.

In a diary Kelley provided to USA TODAY, he wrote that Scripps Howard News Service reporter Lance Gay had accompanied him to a mosque and a car dealership to set up the meeting. When USA TODAY called Gay last month, he said he was with Kelley in Egypt in 1993, not 1997. The next day, Kelley said his diary must be wrong.

In recent interviews, Kelley said that Egyptian journalist Nadia Abou El-Magd accompanied him to the mosque and car dealership. Magd, now an Associated Press reporter, said, "I clearly recall that

I wasn't involved in going to a mosque or car dealer or anything like that."

Kelley quoted Montasser al-Zayat, a Cairo attorney who has represented many of the extremists. Al-Zayat does not speak English. When an Arabic-speaking freelancer contacted him, al-Zayat said he does not recall talking to a USA TODAY reporter.

Islamic schools

Days after the Sept. 11 attacks, Kelley reported a visit to two Islamic schools in Pakistan. At Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania, he wrote, a student said he had attended a terrorist training camp. Hussain Zaeef read aloud from a training manual that called for bombing "vital" U.S. buildings, he wrote. And a student displayed a picture of the Sears Tower in Chicago and said, "This one is mine," he reported.

At another school, Kelley reported that a senior teacher, Abdullah Shah, said, "We are all Osama bin Ladens."

Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania records show no one named Hussain Zaeef ever enrolled. School officials said they did not see any student display a picture of the Sears Tower. And 2001 records at the second school show no teacher named Abdullah Shah.

How USA TODAY is conducting the investigation

A team of reporters spent seven weeks examining the work of former USA TODAY reporter Jack Kelley. The reporters read about 720 stories Kelley filed from 1993 through 2003. Each of the stories was read and discussed by at least two members of the team. Hundreds were relatively routine news reports. But about 150 stories stood out to the group for a variety of reasons.

At least 56 were based on exclusive, eyewitness reports, usually reported overseas. Dozens cited anonymous intelligence officials. Others were human-interest stories that offered poignant details about the suffering of war, illness and oppression. In at least 10 cases, Kelley wrote that he watched someone die.

To verify the stories, members of the team interviewed dozens of people; reviewed scores of Kelley's expense reports; traveled to Cuba, Israel and Jordan; scoured records from Kelley's hotel, mobile and office phones; reread transcripts of speeches Kelley gave; ran at least 150 stories through plagiarism-detection software; and

examined the contents of the laptop computer Kelley was issued by the company. Phone records were incomplete, and most of the documents on the laptop had been deleted before Kelley left the newspaper in January.

Three veteran journalists from outside the paper — Bill Hilliard, Bill Kovach and John Seigenthaler — monitored the process and spent about 25 hours interviewing Kelley about his stories and the newspaper culture at USA TODAY. The transcripts of those interviews were shared with the team. Seigenthaler is the founding editorial director of USA TODAY. Hilliard is former editor of *The Oregonian* in Portland, Ore. Kovach is chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists, a group devoted to discussing journalism's future.

Members of the team, which continues to examine Kelley's work, are: John Hillkirk, editor; Michael Hiestand, Kevin McCoy, Blake Morrison, Rita Rubin and Julie Schmit, reporters; Ruth Fogle and Tom Ankner, researchers.