2014 2015 \checkmark About this capture

13 Jul 2014 - 6 Mar 20 narcosphere

The Untold Story Behind Why I Am a Narco News Journalist Posted by Bill Conroy - July 1, 2014 at 10:11 pm

"Authenticity Is Not the Easiest Path ... But It's The Only Path That Leads Forward" — Al Giordano Narco News on July 9 will celebrate its fourteenth anniversary at a bash in the Big

Apple. For me, it also will be a tenth anniversary fiesta. I started reporting and writing for Narco News in 2004. Until now, though, I have never been able to tell fully the story of why I hooked up with

Al Giordano and Narco News in the first place, because I was employed by a company that I felt would not appreciate the story being told in real time, as it really happened. Recently, I stepped down from my position as editor-in-chief for one of the business

newspapers owned by that company, American City Business Journals, for reasons I outlined in a past story I penned for Narco News, which can be found here.

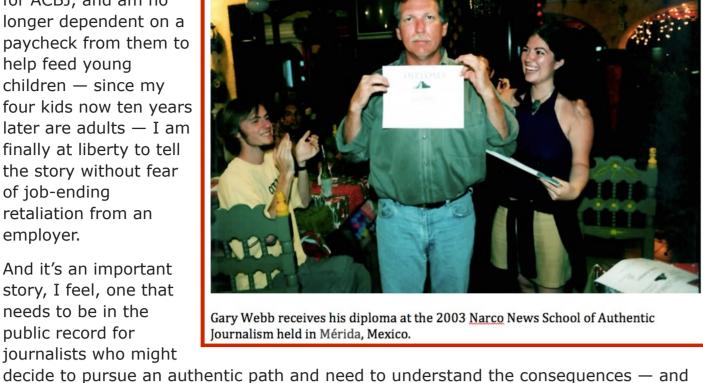
longer dependent on a paycheck from them to help feed young children — since my four kids now ten years later are adults — I am finally at liberty to tell the story without fear

Given I no longer work

for ACBJ, and am no

of job-ending retaliation from an employer. And it's an important

story, I feel, one that needs to be in the public record for journalists who might the far more substantial benefits.



It all started with a story about an FBI agent who went undercover, posing as a

"businessman" in a successful effort to infiltrate Chinese crime syndicates. Those criminal organizations, as it turns out, can be a path into the highest reaches of government power. In this case, they gave the FBI spy access to China's intelligence

apparatus, allowing him to gather intel and cultivate human assets for U.S. intelligence agencies. It was an extremely dangerous, deep-cover assignment for the FBI agent, named Lok Lau, who was required to exist inside the criminal underworld for years. Once Lau had completed his mission, however, the US government ignored his resulting Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD] and difficulty in re-entering normal society.

a lawsuit in federal court in California alleging wrongful termination and discrimination. From a declaration filed by Lau in his civil rights case:

Consequently, the FBI eventually fired Lau for poor performance, prompting him to file

The assignment was extraordinarily dangerous and stressful. I was cut off from my family and friends, and the [FBI] "handlers" did not remain constant. I later learned I was not treated as other undercover agents were treated and should have been provided support, emotional, financial and human to ease my stress and anxiety. I was literally on guard 24 hours a day, and I knew my death could

come at anytime. The outside world, including my family, knew nothing of what I did or how. In fact, even though I was an FBI Agent, my badge was kept at

involved in espionage activities, kidnappings, trading in human slavery, illegal immigration, murder, torture, kidnapping, extortion, hostage taking and any number of other criminal activities that involved crimes against humanity, then and now, in his undercover work. Lau "penetrated" the Chinese Triads, the Tong

and other Chinese Organized Crime Organizations that trade in all of these

the field office and I could not even see it or my FBI credentials.

... From a reading of the record, it is not difficult to discern that Lau was

From an amicus curiae brief filed in Lau's case:

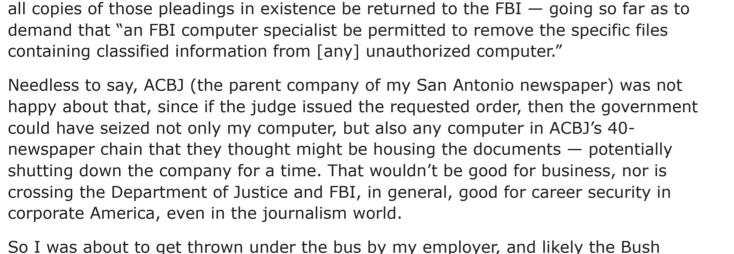
things as a way of life. There is no way that Lau could have performed his undercover so well that he received awards and other forms of recognition were that not so. As part of that lawsuit, Lau put into the public record in 2003 certain pleadings that the US government — then controlled by President George W. Bush and Attorney General John Ashcroft — deemed not fit for public consumption, because they revealed too much detail about Lau's spying mission on China, which remains to this day a highly classified operation.

Tinenemen Square already obtained and made public the details of Lau's court pleadings in a newspaper article for the San Antonio Business

Lot Law at

Journal. The US government attorneys handling Lau's lawsuit found out about my story, and what I knew, because I did the proper journalistic thing and called them for comment. And so, on the Friday that my Texas-based newspaper was published (after going to press two days earlier, on Wednesday), the Assistant US Attorney defending the Department of Justice against Lau's charges of discrimination and wrongful termination filed pleadings with a federal court in California asking the judge in the case to retroactively classify portions of Lau's pleadings. The government attorney in her motion also asked the judge to order that

Unfortunately for me, I had



So I turned to two people I respected to help me out: Gary Webb, author of the Dark Alliance newspaper series that exposed US-sponsored drug-trafficking; and Al Giordano, whose Narco News online

administration, as I saw it, and the lawyering around the matter behind the scenes led

more than three years old, had exposed the executive of a major bank as a drug trafficker — and emerged victorious in the resulting legal challenge waged by his bank to suppress that information. I figured these two authentic journalists whom I had only to that point corresponded with via email (and an occasional phone call in Webb's case) would have a trick or two up their sleeves when confronted with a challenge from corrupt power.

investigative publication, then only a bit

me to believe that would be the result as well.

ruled on the DOJ attorney's motion to classify and purge Lok Lau's pleadings. I complied with Webb and Giordano's requests, and within hours of me sending them the court documents via email, the pleadings were spread around the world via the

in the Business Journal on the Lok Lau case:

Each asked me to email to them the court pleadings the US government attorneys

And they did.

Internet.

Journal.

As a result, the judge in the case, in an Oct. 15, 2003, ruling, determined that he did not have the power to seize all copies of Lok Lau's pleadings existing outside of the "court's possession" (which included the copies on my computers, and now thousands of computers worldwide). In other words, the judge knew, to paraphrase an old nursery

rhyme, that "Humpty Dumpty had a great fall", via the Internet, and his court did not

have the power to put "Humpty Dumpty back together again."

and FBI were seeking to classify and remove from my computer. At that point, the documents were still technically in the public record because the judge had not yet

So, in the end, authentic journalism won - well, sort of that is. After the dust had settled, I received word through my boss that ACBJ's corporate brass

wanted me to cease and desist all investigative reporting at the San Antonio Business

Following is an excerpt from an email I sent to Webb and Giordano in early December 2003 — a few weeks after publishing what turned out to be the final investigative story

My corporate office in Charlotte came calling. They've shut me down — from the highest level of the company.

I'm to do no more investigative reporting on the feds. I can only speculate on the real reason, but the one put forward is that the stories aren't business reporting, in essence. (This is curious as I've been writing these stories — Customs, FBI, DEA, Homeland Security — for 4 years now and have won numerous "that 'a boy" awards, including two from my own company.)

... I suspect the recent Lau FBI spy stuff, and the threat to take our computers, put the corporate blue bloods over the top. ... I expect I'll be down for a bit, but will resurface somehow, somewhere. So keep in touch.

reporting days for the San Antonio Business Journal were done — if I wanted to keep my job and feed my four kids, still all in grade school or high school at that point. In response to my email, Webb wrote the following:

Fuck. I'm sorry. Wish I could say this is unheard of, but you and I both know it's not. It's sad that investigative journalism is the only field whose practitioners are routinely punished for doing their jobs too well. You, obviously, were doing it

As it turned out, I did find a loophole. I still had the option of pursuing stories on a

freelance basis, something allowed for in company policy. But my investigative-

exceptionally well to draw the attentions of the pinheads in chief.

... Believe me, I know this doesn't help much when something like this happens but there is a certain honor in being ordered not to write about something. It's like a dueling scar or a Purple Heart. You've been wounded in combat. Many reporters go through an entire career without getting near enough to the power

way, let me know. Ya done good.

never would have gone down before. Happened to me.

investigative reporting on the drug war, pro bono, for Narco News.

order, which I'm putting online for the first time for everyone to see.

structure to get a scratch. (Plus, you got away with punching the feds in the eye for four years.) ... So you can't write about this topic any longer (at least not while you're at your current esteemed organ). Any orders against freelancing future fed whistleblower stories?

... It's not the end of the world. Who knows, this might set you off on a trail you

Giordano, in an email response to me at the time, wrote the following:

Welcome to the club. You can wear that shutdown like a badge of pride... Like Jim Morrison who, after singing censored lyrics was told "You'll never do the Ed

Sullivan show again," replied: "Man, I just DID the Ed Sullivan show!" Authenticity is not the easiest path, Bill... but it's the only path that leads forward. If I can help you in any way, and I'm sure Gary [Webb] feels the same

And so, that's how I came to Narco News. Giordano opened that door for me some 10 years ago, and I continued to live a double life since that time — serving as editor of a conservative, even stuffy, business weekly during the day; and by night pursuing

That double life ended this past May, when I stepped down from my editor position at the Business Journal. With this story, comes the proof, including the US government's motion and judge's

Enjoy the reading, and if you're in the neighborhood next week, make sure to stop by Narco News' fourteenth anniversary celebration at MV Studios in Long Island City, Queens, on Wednesday, July 9, starting at 7 pm. Directions and other details can be found at this link to the Facebook page for the event.

picture Killing the Messenger, played by Jeremy Renner this October, sadly, isn't alive to attend. But Giordano will be there, I'll be there, and more than a few of the younger journalists who have come out of the School of Authentic Journalism's eleven sessions since 2003 will also be there. We all hope to meet you there, too.

Proof of Authenticity

Gary Webb (1953-2004), who's David vs. Goliath story will be told in the major motion

 The US government's motion that called for seizing Lau's pleadings, which was broad enough to include my computer

- The judge's ruling in response to the government's motion • FBI agent Lok Lau's uncensored pleadings
- My San Antonio Business Journal series on Lok Lau
- Lawyers, civil rights group claim government turning up the heat in Lau spy case Media's computers are on FBI's radar screen in Lau spy case

Email This Page

agent Former federal agents' spy story opens Pandora's box for FBI

• An investigative story advancing the Lok Lau saga further, written for the Asian Times

Judge orders previously public court records sealed in case of former FBI

by Gary Webb The spy who was left out in the cold

Bill Conroy's Blog

Biography: Narcosphere@aol.com

About Bill Conroy

Latest Notebook Entries

View full user profile

Personal Website:

The Untold Story Behind Why I Am a Narco News Journalist

US Guns Still Flowing Into Mexico on Peña Nieto's Watch Second Informant Surfaces in ICE's

Mayan Jaguar Cocaine-Plane Op Official US Cover-Up Still Obscures

Motive for Juarez Consulate

Murders Zambada Niebla's Plea Deal, Chapo

Guzman's Capture May Be Key To

An Unfolding Mexican Purge

War of Words Between Sen. Dianne Feinstein and CIA Is Empty Rhetoric Narco-Villain "El Chapo's" Arrest Packaged for Media Consumption

TIME Magazine's Pay-to-Play Puff Piece on Mexican President Provokes Widespread Ridicule in TIME Magazine's Pay-to-Play Puff

Piece on Mexican President Provokes Widespread Ridicule in Mexico **US-Sponsored Drug-Plane** Operation Had Global Reach

more

Username: * Password: *

Log in

User login

Navigation

Al Giordano Reports On The United States

THE FIELD

Reporters' Notebooks name) { \$notebooks[] = (\$row->name, 'blog/' . \$row->uid); } } print
theme('item_list',
\$notebooks); ?>

Biography

About Bill Conrov

Search