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Missouri's Obama Truth Squads (updated Governor's statement)

Lee Cary

Last Tuesday, *CBS* affiliate Channel 4 TV News in St. Louis [reported](#) that some Missouri sheriffs and prosecutors have formed a truth squad to target anyone who engages in misleading ad or statements about Senator Obama.

Here's the transcript of the lede on the *CBS* story:

"Senator Barack Obama's presidential campaign is asking Missouri law enforcement to target anyone who lies or runs a misleading television ad during the presidential campaign."

The implied threat in the Channel 4 report is that prosecutors and sheriffs across Missouri will enforce "Missouri ethics laws" and conduct criminal investigations of "anyone who lies or runs a misleading television ad" against Barack Obama. Although the report did not directly state that intent, that implied message was clearly conveyed.

Two high-profile officers of the court spoke on camera: Jennifer Joyce, St. Louis Circuit Attorney, and Robert P. McCullough, St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney. No one was available at either of their offices on Friday to comment on the story.

Channel 4 mentions the expected support of Jefferson County Sheriff Glen Boyer in the truth squad efforts. Captain Ralph Brown, in charge of press relations for the Sheriff's Department, could not be reached for comment on Friday.

Scott Holste, speaking Friday on behalf of the Missouri Attorney General's office, *was* available for comment. He said he had already been contacted about the Channel 4 report, that the Attorney General's office was not involved in any way with truth squads, and that he found the *CBS* news item to be "a mangled story."

Also on Friday, Joe Carroll, Director of Campaign Financing, Missouri Ethics Commission, said that he is "not familiar with any campaign law that applies."

John Mills, the Channel 4 reporter, was unavailable for comment Friday.

Was the St. Louis *CBS* affiliate complicit in the attempt, by some elected Democrat court officials in the St. Louis area, to stifle free political speech in Missouri on Senator Obama's behalf?

Update: Steve Gilbert of *Sweetness & Light* has [posted](#) the response of Missouri's Governor Matt Blunt:

JEFFERSON CITY - Gov. Matt Blunt today issued the following statement on news reports that have exposed plans by U.S. Senator Barack Obama to use Missouri law enforcement to threaten and intimidate his critics.

“St. Louis County Circuit Attorney Bob McCulloch, St. Louis City Circuit Attorney Jennifer Joyce, Jefferson County Sheriff Glenn Boyer, and Obama and the leader of his Missouri campaign Senator Claire McCaskill have attached the stench of police state tactics to the Obama-Biden campaign.

“What Senator Obama and his helpers are doing is scandalous beyond words, the party that claims to be the party of Thomas Jefferson is abusing the justice system and offices of public trust to silence political criticism with threats of prosecution and criminal punishment.

“This abuse of the law for intimidation insults the most sacred principles and ideals of Jefferson. I can think of nothing more offensive to Jefferson’s thinking than using the power of the state to deprive Americans of their civil rights. The only conceivable purpose of Messrs. McCulloch, Obama and the others is to frighten people away from expressing themselves, to chill free and open debate, to suppress support and donations to conservative organizations targeted by this anti-civil rights, to strangle criticism of Mr. Obama, to suppress ads about his support of higher taxes, and to choke out criticism on television, radio, the Internet, blogs, e-mail and daily conversation about the election.

“Barack Obama needs to grow up. Leftist blogs and others in the press constantly say false things about me and my family. Usually, we ignore false and scurrilous accusations because the purveyors have no credibility. When necessary, we refute them. Enlisting Missouri law enforcement to intimidate people and kill free debate is reminiscent of the Sedition Acts - not a free society.”

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