

Fact vs Fiction

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Breaking News: According to experts, there have been recent UFO (unidentified foreign objects) sightings in and around Bangladesh. Unprecedented satellite images have shown large objects resembling spaceships positioned over Sylhet and Chittagong. Correspondent Joseph Bloggs has reported that it was "like a scene from a science fiction movie. Although unperceivable to the naked eye, these ships are visible with a high resolution telescope". It appears the Bangladesh government is keeping this under wraps so as not to cause widespread panic.

I am sure you have realised that the above statement is utter nonsense. But what if I had continued with the story and given time, dates, eye witness statements or you had heard this on a news channel? You might have believed that there was some truth to these so called 'facts'.

It would be perfectly reasonable to think that the news you read in the papers or hear on television is based on fact and not something unsubstantiated or what's the word, oh yes 'untrue'. However, it appears that there are news channels (I use the term loosely) that do not feel the need to corroborate or do some background research before they air erroneous stories or have 'experts' broadcasting statements that are total fabrication. Fox News has stolen the limelight recently for coming out with one blunder after the other.

A few weeks ago United States terrorism expert Steve Emerson made a jaw dropping statement on Fox News that the city of Birmingham in the UK was a "no go zone" and only Muslims were allowed in. Accord-

ing to him "In Britain, it's not just no-go zones, there are actual cities like Birmingham that are totally Muslim where non-Muslims just simply don't go in". Obviously no one had bothered to inform the 78.2 percent (2011 Census) of the non-Muslims living in Birmingham of this fact. Poor souls are unaware of the inherent danger they are in of being 'radicalised' or 'Islamified'. Like many parts of the world the most

you can say here is that some areas of some towns or cities have a higher concentration of a particular ethnic community and there may be the odd isolated incident.

He then went on to add that in "Parts of London, there are actually Muslim religious police that actually beat and actually wound seriously anyone who doesn't dress according to Muslim, religious Muslim attire". Like most other people living in London I am obviously just as unobservant as I have never spotted these religious police in all the years that I have been living here.

Even the British Prime Minister David Cameron was taken aback by these claims and said on National television that, "When I heard this, frankly, I choked on my porridge and I thought it must be April Fools' Day,"

He then went on to say what was probably on everyone else's mind, "This guy's clearly a complete idiot."

I must add that Steve Emerson has subsequently apologised for his comments but sadly for him not before countless residents of Birmingham including Muslims and non-Muslims alike and thousands of others took to Twitter and lampooned him mostly

humorously for his remarks and Fox News for their monumental faux pas. Many of the tweets or comments were rather funny and one of my favourites has to be "Birmingham is now called Birming because Ham isn't halal"!

At this point one would think that Fox News would verify their facts before bringing on another expert, this time self-declared radical Islam expert Nolan Peterson who then compared areas in Paris to war zones in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to him many parts of Paris are under Sharia law where French police will not enter.

He sounded very convincing when he stated, "It was pretty scary. I've been to Afghanistan, Iraq, Kashmir, India, and at times it felt like those places in the no-go zones". This was followed by the statement,

A popular television show broadcast in France called "Le Petit Journal" decided to send their correspondents to these "no go zones" in Paris and interview random passers-by and residents to see if they felt if their streets were comparable to those in Iraq or Afghanistan or if they ever saw someone wear bin Laden T-shirts. Unsurprisingly the questions were thought to be absurd by the people interviewed and met with incredulity.

Following in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo Attack Peterson's comments were not well received by the Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo. She told CNN that Fox News would face legal action for harming Paris' reputation. During an interview with CNN she said, "Its message is shocking and stupid—this is not how you solve these kinds of problems...The broadcasts



Steve Emerson a terrorism 'expert' claimed on Fox News that Birmingham was a 'no go zone for non Muslims.

"You see young men wearing Osama bin Laden T-shirts. In a hookah shop, I saw a speech by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was leading an insurgency against American troops in Iraq at the time. It just, it seemed very mainstream and very accepted."

To add fuel to the fire Nigel Farage the leader of the right wing political party came on Fox News and tried to give credence to these made up facts and claimed that various governments had turned a blind eye to the build up of "big ghettos" around Europe. This and other comments made by him have been widely criticised as a publicity stunt and would be laughable if he were not standing in the up-coming General elections with the possibility of gaining seats in Parliament.

have tarnished the image and the reputation of my city."

It is quite worrying when you tune into your news channel for your daily dose of comedy. We may acknowledge that the media and the news may put a spin on a certain issue or are aware of the use of propaganda but what we do expect is a certain degree of integrity in reporting. Something Fox News could take into account. Rather than being perceived as a serious news channel, recently it has become a universal laughing stock thanks to the social media. It is nice change when the World laughs with the Muslim community.