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Mitchell Flays Reporting of Panther Claim

Attorney General Hits 'False' Story Of 28 Killings

Dallas — (UPI) — Attorney General John N. Mitchell criticized some of the press yesterday for "shocking contempt for truth and a cheap surrender to instinct."

In a Law Day speech at Southern Methodist University, Mitchell said the nation is "inviting grave danger" because of "a sharp erosion of professionalism among many who have the public's ear."

The attorney general said that in December, 1969, the attorney for the Black Panthers, Charles R. Garry, "stated publicly that police across the nation had murdered 28 Panthers...."

"Soon the 28 murders were reported as fact, not as an allegation, by the New York Times, the Washington Post and many other news media," Mitchell said.

Garry never backed up his

charges.

Mitchell said two journalists tried to compile a list of the 28 Panthers allegedly slain, but could come up with only 19 names and upon checking them learned that only eight had been killed by police. And only two of the eight were killed in police raids, he added.

"One had been killed by a storekeeper in resisting a robbery, not by police. One was shot in an argument with friends, not by police. One was shot by his wife, not by police," Mitchell said. "Another was executed by other Black Panthers, not by police. Four were killed in a shootout with members of a rival black militant organization, not by police."

"One was shot in an unsolved case, by a pistol later found in a raid on a Black Panther headquarters. There were eight other cases which involved crimes or street shootouts, in which the police believed they were dealing with criminals as such and had no reason to think they were encountering Black Panthers. Six of these panthers were shot by policemen who were already seriously wounded and were fighting for their lives," Mitchell said.

"Thus, no deaths can be attributed to what the panther called a 'national scheme' of 'genocide.'"