



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on February 15, 2021

## Times “Updates” Sicknick Stories. Backs Off Fire Extinguisher Claim.

It appears the *New York Times* is having second thoughts about its account of Capitol Hill policeman Brian Sicknick’s death. But the newspaper updated stories only after Democrats used that account in their hoked-up and failed impeachment of President Trump.

Now, the *Times* says, it isn’t so sure that Sicknick died because one of the protestors who stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6 brained him with a fire extinguisher.

As [The New American reported](#) last week, citing *Revolver.com* and other news accounts, the *Times*’s claim was false and had been falling apart for some time.



Ajay Suresh/Wikimedia Commons

The newspaper’s editors and reporters could and should have known that since January 8, the day they published those stories. Yet more than a month elapsed before they adjusted their account.

### The Original Claim

The *Times* published two reports about Sicknick’s death on January 8. A “pro-Trump rioter,” the newspaper claimed, smashed Sicknick in the head with a fire extinguisher. The injury led to his death the following night.

More than a month later, the *Times* isn’t so sure. It appended a note to the two sensational stories and clarified the matter in a third.

The *Times* did not call its note and adjustment a retraction:

UPDATE: New information has emerged regarding the death of the Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick that questions the initial cause of his death provided by officials close to the Capitol Police.

The *Times* [changed its account](#) — “He Dreamed of Being a Police Officer, Then Was Killed by a Pro-Trump Mob” — with this:

Law enforcement officials initially said Mr. Sicknick was struck with a fire extinguisher, but weeks later, police sources and investigators were at odds over whether he was hit. Medical experts have said he did not die of blunt force trauma, according to one law enforcement official.

Instead, investigators increasingly believe that a factor may have been an irritant such as mace or bear spray that was sprayed in the face of Mr. Sicknick, the law enforcement official said. The Capitol Police said in a statement that Officer Sicknick died from injuries



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sustained “while physically engaging with protesters.”

[Another installment](#) in the narrative, “Capitol Police Officer Dies From Injuries in Pro-Trump Rampage,” adjusted the fire-extinguisher claim in the same language. It also removed this falsehood, as [Julie Kelly wrote](#) for *American Greatness*:

Mr. Sicknick, 42, an officer for the Capitol Police, died on Thursday from brain injuries he sustained after Trump loyalists who overtook the complex struck him in the head with a fire extinguisher, according to two law enforcement officials.

On Thursday, Kelly noted, [Times offered](#) this in a new story:

Though law enforcement officials initially said Officer Sicknick was struck with a fire extinguisher, police sources and investigators are at odds over whether he was hit. Medical experts have said he did not die of blunt force trauma, according to one law enforcement official.

Investigators have found little evidence to back up the attack with the fire extinguisher as the cause of death, the official said. Instead, they increasingly suspect that a factor was Officer Sicknick being sprayed in the face by some sort of irritant, like mace or bear spray, the law enforcement official said.

Though the police consider irritants to be nonlethal deterrents for crowd control, they can cause physical reactions and disorientation that can lead to injury.

The development, reported earlier by CNN, has complicated efforts to arrest suspects in Officer Sicknick’s death, as both the police and rioters used spray in the siege. It is difficult to prove who sprayed irritant on Officer Sicknick.

### **Truth Surfaced Weeks Ago, False Claim Used in Impeachment**

The *Times* was mighty slow in fessing up about the false narrative. It could have done so long ago.

[ProPublica reported](#) on January 8 that Sicknick told his brother that he was pepper-sprayed twice, but that he was otherwise in “good shape.”

The [CNN report](#) to which the *Times* referred appeared 13 days ago. It said “authorities have reviewed video and photographs that show Sicknick engaging with rioters amid the siege but have yet to identify a moment in which he suffered his fatal injuries, law enforcement officials familiar with the matter said.”

As well, the hate-Trump network reported:

According to one law enforcement official, medical examiners did not find signs that the officer sustained any blunt force trauma, so investigators believe that early reports that he was fatally struck by a fire extinguisher are not true.

In other words, the *Times* should have known since January that the fire-extinguisher claim was suspect, and should have corrected their stories weeks ago. Yet the newspaper remained silent and



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allowed the false, incendiary claim to stand.

Thus did U.S. House impeachment managers use it in their impeachment memorandum to the Senate for President Trump's trial. The memo was dated February 2 — the day of CNN's report.

"Insurrectionists killed a Capitol Police officer by striking him in the head with a fire extinguisher," the [memo claimed](#) with a footnote that cited the erroneous "pro-Trump rampage" story.

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The *Times* "updated" its false claims on Thursday and Friday, which might explain why Democrats decided against calling witnesses in their losing case against Trump, [Kelly observed](#):

Any arrangement to compel testimony would have provided Trump's legal team with an opportunity to expose yet another myth in the Democrats' "incitement" case against the former president.



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