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NATIONAL

Need a cover-up? Alibi Network is there for you

Tuesday, November 28, 2006

By ABIGAIL GOLDMAN

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Mary is married, and Mary is having an affair. The Chicago wife told her husband she was sightseeing in Los Angeles last August, but that was a lie. Mary and her boyfriend were vacationing in Las Vegas, and Mary paid a professional cover-up company \$350 to ensure that her husband would never find out.

He didn't. The Alibi Network, an Illinois company that specializes in its namesake -- alibis -- armed Mary with a fake airplane itinerary, fake hotel reservations and a fake hotel answering service; when her husband phoned Mary's fake room in Los Angeles, the call was routed to her real cell phone in Las Vegas. Three months later, Mary is planning to use the Alibi Network again.

Michael DeMarco, the Alibi Network's vice president of marketing, says Las Vegas is a top destination for the company's clientele. It's only natural, DeMarco says, in a city where what happens, stays.

Costs for cover-ups range anywhere from \$75 for a temporary untraceable phone number to \$1,500 for a "full-blown alibi," DeMarco says.

The Alibi Network doesn't give out figures, but DeMarco estimates that 20 percent of the clientele who hire the company do so to stage their attendance at fake work seminars -- complete with fake seminar schedules, fake seminar registrations and optional fake certificates of seminar completion.

Most of the people who want to hide vacations in Las Vegas, however, tend to roll into town with a different tide: the professional sports season. When there's a big tournament, or an important playoff, the company is flooded with clients who sneak off to Las Vegas so they can loaf at the sports book in secret and play cards in privacy.

Business always picks up around the holidays, he says, when clients call the company screaming "in-laws, in-laws, in-laws." For these sorts of situations, the company offers a "Rescue Call" service, an "Escape-a-Date" service and a "Call In Sick" service -- three variations of the same thing: a fake phone call the client accepts and then

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uses as an excuse to escape.

DeMarco can't think of a time
his clients have been caught.

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