



Jeff Bezos [Follow](#)

Feb 7 · 9 min read

No thank you, Mr. Pecker

Something unusual happened to me yesterday. Actually, for me it wasn't just unusual—it was a first. I was made an offer I couldn't refuse. Or at least that's what the top people at the National Enquirer thought. I'm glad they thought that, because it emboldened them to put it all in writing. Rather than capitulate to extortion and blackmail, I've decided to publish exactly what they sent me, despite the personal cost and embarrassment they threaten.

AMI, the owner of the National Enquirer, led by David Pecker, recently entered into an immunity deal with the Department of Justice related to their role in the so-called "Catch and Kill" process on behalf of President Trump and his election campaign. Mr. Pecker and his company have also been investigated for various actions they've taken on behalf of the Saudi Government.

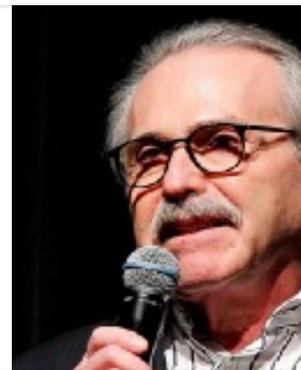
And sometimes Mr. Pecker mixes it all together:

"After Mr. Trump became president, he rewarded Mr. Pecker's loyalty with a White House dinner to which the media executive brought a guest with important ties to the royals in Saudi Arabia. At the time, Mr. Pecker was pursuing business there while also hunting for financing for acquisitions..."

David Pecker, Chief of National Enquirer's Publisher, Is Said to Get Immunity in Trump...

Federal prosecutors reached an immunity deal with the tabloid executive David J. Pecker, a key...

www.nytimes.com



Federal investigators and legitimate media have of course suspected and proved that Mr. Pecker has used the Enquirer and AMI for political reasons. And yet AMI keeps claiming otherwise:

“American Media emphatically rejects any assertion that its reporting was instigated, dictated or influenced in any manner by external forces, political or otherwise.”

Of course, legitimate media have been challenging that assertion for a long time:

Mystery Grows Over Pro-Saudi Tabloid: Embassy Got Sneak Peek

Mystery grows over pro-Saudi tabloid: Embassy got sneak peek

WASHINGTON (AP) - It landed with a thud on newsstands at Walmart and rural supermarkets...

www.apnews.com



I didn't know much about most of that a few weeks ago when intimate texts messages from me were published in the National Enquirer. I engaged investigators to learn how those texts were obtained, and to determine the motives for the many unusual actions taken by the Enquirer. As it turns out, there are now several independent investigations looking into this matter.

To lead my investigation, I retained Gavin de Becker. I've known Mr. de Becker for twenty years, his expertise in this arena is excellent, and he's one of the smartest and most capable leaders I know. I asked him to prioritize protecting my time since I have other things I prefer to work on and to proceed with whatever budget he needed to pursue the facts in this matter.

Here's a piece of context: My ownership of the Washington Post is a complexifier for me. It's unavoidable that certain powerful people who experience Washington Post news coverage will wrongly conclude I am their enemy.

President Trump is one of those people, obvious by his many tweets. Also, The Post's essential and unrelenting coverage of the murder of its columnist Jamal Khashoggi is undoubtedly unpopular in certain circles.

(Even though The Post is a complexifier for me, I do not at all regret my investment. The Post is a critical institution with a critical mission. My stewardship of The Post and my support of its mission, which will remain unswerving, is something I will be most proud of when I'm 90 and reviewing my life, if I'm lucky enough to live that long, regardless of any complexities it creates for me.)

Back to the story: Several days ago, an AMI leader advised us that Mr. Pecker is “apoplectic” about our investigation. For reasons still to be better understood, the Saudi angle seems to hit a particularly sensitive nerve.

A few days after hearing about Mr. Pecker's apoplexy, we were approached, verbally at first, with an offer. They said they had more of my text messages and photos that they would publish if we didn't stop our investigation.

My lawyers argued that AMI has no right to publish photos since any person holds the copyright to their own photos, and since the photos in themselves don't add anything newsworthy.

AMI's claim of newsworthiness is that the photos are necessary to show Amazon shareholders that my business judgment is terrible. I founded Amazon in my garage 24 years ago, and drove all the packages to the post office myself. Today, Amazon employs more than 600,000 people, just finished its most profitable year ever, even while investing heavily in new initiatives, and it's usually somewhere between the #1 and #5 most valuable company in the world. I will let those results speak for themselves.

OK, back to their threat to publish intimate photos of me. I guess we (me, my lawyers, and Gavin de Becker) didn't react to the generalized threat with enough fear, so they sent this:

From: Howard, Dylan [dhoward@amilink.com] (Chief Content Officer, AMI)

Sent: Tuesday, February 5, 2019 3:33 PM

To: Martin Singer (litigation counsel for Mr. de Becker)

Subject: Jeff Bezos & Ms. Lauren Sanchez Photos

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Marty:

I am leaving the office for the night. I will be available on my cell—917 XXX-XXXX.

However, in the interests of expediting this situation, and with The Washington Post poised to publish unsubstantiated rumors of The National Enquirer's initial report, I wanted to describe to you the photos obtained during our newsgathering.

*In addition to the “below the belt selfie—otherwise colloquially known as a ‘d*ck pick”—The Enquirer obtained a further nine images. These include:*

- Mr. Bezos face selfie at what appears to be a business meeting.*
- Ms. Sanchez response—a photograph of her smoking a cigar in what appears to be a simulated oral sex scene.*
- A shirtless Mr. Bezos holding his phone in his left hand—while wearing his wedding ring. He's wearing either tight black cargo pants or shorts—and his semi-erect manhood is penetrating the zipper of said garment.*
- A full-length body selfie of Mr. Bezos wearing just a pair of tight black boxer-briefs or trunks, with his phone in his left hand—while wearing his wedding ring.*
- A selfie of Mr. Bezos fully clothed.*
- A full-length scantily-clad body shot with short trunks.*
- A naked selfie in a bathroom—while wearing his wedding ring. Mr. Bezos is wearing nothing but a white towel—and the top of his pubic region can be seen.*
- Ms. Sanchez wearing a plunging red neckline dress revealing her cleavage and a glimpse of her nether region.*
- Ms. Sanchez wearing a two-piece red bikini with gold detail dress revealing her cleavage.*

It would give no editor pleasure to send this email. I hope common sense can prevail—and quickly.

Dylan.

Well, that got my attention. But not in the way they likely hoped. Any personal embarrassment AMI could cause me takes a back seat because there's a much more important matter involved here. If in my position I can't stand up to this kind of extortion, how many people can? (On that point, numerous people have contacted our investigation team about their similar experiences with AMI, and how they needed to capitulate because, for example, their livelihoods were at stake.)

In the AMI letters I'm making public, you will see the precise details of their extortionate proposal: They will publish the personal photos unless Gavin de Becker and I make the specific false public statement to the press that we "have no knowledge or basis for suggesting that AMI's coverage was politically motivated or influenced by political forces."

If we do not agree to affirmatively publicize that specific lie, they say they'll publish the photos, and quickly. And there's an associated threat: They'll keep the photos on hand and publish them in the future if we ever deviate from that lie.

Be assured, no real journalists ever propose anything like what is happening here: *I will not report embarrassing information about you if you do X for me. And if you don't do X quickly, I will report the embarrassing information.*

Nothing I might write here could tell the National Enquirer story as eloquently as their own words below.

These communications cement AMI's long-earned reputation for weaponizing journalistic privileges, hiding behind important protections, and ignoring the tenets and purpose of true journalism. Of course I don't want personal photos published, but I also won't participate in their well-known practice of blackmail, political favors, political attacks, and corruption. I prefer to stand up, roll this log over, and see what crawls out.

Sincerely,

Jeff Bezos

From: Fine, Jon [jfine@amilink.com] (Deputy General Counsel, AMI)

Sent: Wednesday, February 6, 2019 5:57 PM

To: Martin Singer (Mr de Becker's attorney)

Subject: Re: EXTERNAL* RE: Bezos et al / American Media et al

Marty -

Here are our proposed terms:

1. A full and complete mutual release of all claims that American Media, on the one hand, and Jeff Bezos and Gavin de Becker (the "Bezos Parties"), on the other, may have against each other.
2. A public, mutually-agreed upon acknowledgment from the Bezos Parties, released through a mutually-agreeable news outlet, affirming that they have no knowledge or basis for suggesting that AM's coverage was politically motivated or influenced by political forces, and an agreement that they will cease referring to such a possibility.
3. AM agrees not to publish, distribute, share, or describe unpublished texts and photos (the "Unpublished Materials").
4. AM affirms that it undertook no electronic eavesdropping in connection with its reporting and has no knowledge of such conduct.
5. The agreement is completely confidential.
6. In the case of a breach of the agreement by one or more of the Bezos Parties, AM is released from its obligations under the agreement, and may publish the Unpublished Materials.
7. Any other disputes arising out of this agreement shall first be submitted to JAMS mediation in California

Thank you,

Jon

Deputy General Counsel, Media

American Media, LLC

Jon P. Fine

Deputy General Counsel, Media

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jfine@amilink.com

February 5, 2019

Via email:

mdsinger@lavelysinger.com

Martin D. Singer

Laveley & Singer

Re: Jeff Bezos / American Media, LLC, et al.

Dear Mr. Singer:

I write in response to your February 4, 2019, letter to Dylan Howard, and to address serious concerns we have regarding the continuing defamatory activities of your client and his representatives regarding American Media's motivations in its recent reporting about your client.

As a primary matter, please be advised that our newsgathering and reporting on matters involving your client, including any use of your client's "private photographs," has been, and will continue to be, consistent with applicable laws. As you know, "the fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies . . . for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting . . . is not an infringement of copyright." 17 USC Sec. 107. With millions of Americans having a vested interest in the success of Amazon, of which your client remains founder, chairman, CEO, and president, an exploration of Mr. Bezos' judgment as reflected by his texts and photos is indeed newsworthy and in the public interest.

Beyond the copyright issues you raise, we also find it necessary to address various unsubstantiated defamatory statements and scurrilous rumors attributed to your client's representatives in the press suggesting that "strong leads point to political motives"¹ in the publication of The National Enquirer story. Indeed, you yourself declared the "politically motivated underpinnings" of our reporting to be "self-evident" in your correspondence on Mr. de Becker's behalf to Mr. Howard dated January 31, 2019.

*Once again, as I advised you in my February 1 response to your January 31 correspondence, **American Media emphatically rejects any assertion that its reporting was instigated, dictated or influenced in any manner by external forces, political or otherwise.** Simply put, this was and is a news story.*

Yet, it is our understanding that your client's representatives, including the Washington Post, continue to pursue and to disseminate these false and spurious allegations in a manner that is injurious to American Media and its executives.

***Accordingly, we hereby demand that you cease and desist such defamatory conduct immediately. Any further dissemination of these false, vicious, speculative and unsubstantiated statements is done at your client's peril.** Absent the immediate cessation of the defamatory conduct, we will have no choice but to pursue all remedies available under applicable law.*

As I advised previously, we stand by the legality of our newsgathering and reporting on this matter of public interest and concern. Moreover, American Media is undeterred from continuing its reporting on a story that is unambiguously in the public interest—a position Mr. Bezos clearly appreciates as reflected in Boies Schiller January 9 letter to American Media stating that your client "does not intend to discourage reporting about him" and "supports journalistic efforts."

That said, if your client agrees to cease and desist such defamatory behavior, we are willing to engage in constructive conversations regarding the texts and photos which we have in our possession. Dylan Howard stands ready to discuss the matter at your convenience.

All other rights, claims, counterclaims and defenses are specifically reserved and not waived.

Sincerely,

1 <https://www.thedailybeast.com/bezos-investigators-question-the-brother-of-his-mistress-lauren-sanchez-in-national-enquirer-leak-probe> (Attributed to your client Gavin de Becker)