

Lawyer denies tabloid blackmailed Amazon boss Bezos

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The National Enquirer's parent company insists it did not try to extort and blackmail Jeff Bezos with compromising pictures

A lawyer denied Sunday allegations by Jeff Bezos that the National Enquirer tabloid had tried to extort and blackmail him, insisting that

embarrassing photographs were obtained from a "reliable" source.

"It absolutely is not extortion and not blackmail," Elkan Abramowitz, who represents National Enquirer parent company American Media Inc (AMI)'s chief executive David Pecker, told ABC television's "This Week."

"What happened was the [story](#) was given to the National Enquirer by a reliable source that had been given information to the National Enquirer for seven years prior to the story. It was a source that was well known to both Mr Bezos and Miss (Lauren) Sanchez."

Last month, the supermarket tabloid reported that Bezos, 55, had an extramarital affair with a former news anchor, publishing a trove of private text messages. The report appeared days after Bezos and his wife MacKenzie announced their divorce.

When asked if the Enquirer's source was Sanchez's brother Michael, as reported by some [media outlets](#), Abramowitz declined to confirm.

"It was a person that was known to both Bezos and Ms Sanchez," he said.

"I can tell you it's not Saudi Arabia, it's not President Trump, it's not Roger Stone. But I cannot tell you who the source is."

The attorney was responding to Bezos's stunning claims published on online platform Medium on Thursday.

Bezos hinted he may have been targeted by pro-Trump forces in part because of coverage by The Washington Post, which he owns, of the murder of its contributor Jamal Khashoggi, strangled and dismembered by Saudi agents in the kingdom's Istanbul consulate in October.

But Abramowitz insisted that the Enquirer's exchanges with Bezos, which the billionaire released in his online post, were simply journalistic negotiating practices rather than extortion.

"The story was already published... it was part of a legitimate negotiation," the lawyer said.

"I think both Bezos and AMI had interests in resolving their differences. Bezos didn't want another story written about him or those pictures published, AMI did not want to have the libel against them that this was inspired by the White House, inspired by Saudi Arabia or inspired by The Washington Post."

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