

Stephen P. Payne

Steve Payne, the President of Worldwide Strategic Partners, offered the following remarks regarding a news report in the Sunday Times of London:

It came to my attention this morning after being contacted by two reporters from the Sunday Times of London and being asked about a July 7 meeting with Yerzhan Dosmukhamedov (AKA Eric Dos) and his associate that I have been a victim of a confidence game sponsored by the paper. The paper and its employees, not content with merely reporting news, have instead opted to manufacture the news in this worst-case example of "Gotcha Journalism".

During a one-hour conversation, which I learned today was videotaped without my permission or consent, Dos and Daniel Foggo of The Times tried to solicit me, and my company's assistance in representing Former Kyrgyzstan President Akayev to make illegal political campaign contributions in the USA.

Daniel Foggo of the Sunday Times of London never identified himself as a reporter, and in fact was introduced to me as an associate of Mr. Eric Dos also working with President Akayev. We met in the Lanesborough hotel's bar. I presented a DRAFT company profile, and made it crystal clear to Mr. Dos that this company profile was a DRAFT. Some of the people reflected in this profile had no knowledge of or had yet to consent to work on these projects. I explained to Mr. Dos that he needed to "hold" the DRAFT booklet until we had finalized elements of its' content and that this draft company profile was to remain confidential. This request of business confidentiality was ignored.

I was questioned about doing work for Former President Akayev in trying to improve his image within the U.S. media and with government officials. This type of legitimate public relations work is among the service my company offers. Dos insisted that they also wanted to make a donation to the Republican Party on their behalf -- I made it clear in this conversation and in subsequent e-mails that this was NOT possible and that I would not facilitate any such transaction in any way. However, I did mention that they might be able to make donations to think tanks, foundations, and/ or President Bush's library because the first President Bush accepted foreign donations -- but I was clear that much ground work would have to be done to make an Akayev donation acceptable to the library foundation. Indeed, I noted that to the best of my knowledge, the decision even to accept any foreign contributions for the library was still unknown. I was also very clear to both Dos and Foggo in this conversation and in subsequent e-mails that any donations would need to be completely transparent and open to public scrutiny.

Over the course of an hour-long conversation in a social setting, isolated comments can be taken out of context. Nevertheless, despite repeated bizarre leading questions and strange hypothetical comments from Dos and his colleague, I made it clear that propriety and law would impose substantial limitations on any contribution strategy in the U.S.

In contrast to the surreptitiously taped conversation, the emails attached reflect the basis of the more formal discussion and reflect the inquires made by Mr. Dos to establish a quid pro quo and my consistent responses that there could be no quid pro quo. The Sunday Times of London has done an injustice in undertaking a false and malicious expedition to discredit my company and me. They know other than the barroom discussion and follow-up emails, the issue never amounted to a formal negotiations. We were never engaged, paid, or performed any services on behalf of the former President, Mr. Dos or his associates.

Further, after actually reading the Times article I made it clear to the Times that neither I, WSP, nor any other entity that I am associated with have ever worked for any entity in Kazakhstan. They failed to print the complete denial, and instead advanced a fanciful theory based on innuendo. In short, they have failed to disclose 95 percent of the video in their possession and failed to offer their readers the exculpatory evidence with which they are familiar.

In the follow-up conversations today I answered the questions truthfully when presented to me by the Times reporters. It was quite obvious by their questions that they had made up their mind and were prepared to do this story in a misleading attempt to discredit my professional career and official of the U.S. government. By reviewing the emails sent to Mr. Dos and received from Mr. Dos, it is clear that the Times attempted to entrap me into alleging that an illegal relationship could be established. I consistently said that no illegal relationship could be established through me or my company.