

## AMI's Alleged Extortion of Amazon's Jeff Bezos

By: Kelsey Miller, J.D. Candidate 2021 | February 8, 2019

On January 9, Jeff and MacKenzie Bezos [announced their divorce](#) on Twitter. The next day, the *National Enquirer* published a story detailing the Amazon CEO's extramarital affair with Lauren Sánchez. On February 6, the *National Enquirer* then sent an email to Mr. Bezos, [allegedly extorting him](#) by threatening to publish several private photographs they had acquired if Mr. Bezos did not publicly state that he had "no knowledge or basis for suggesting that AMI's coverage was politically motivated or influenced by political forces." In an astonishing move, Mr. Bezos then revealed both the existence of the photos and the alleged extortion in a [personal blog post](#), discrediting AMI's value proposition that investors would question Bezos' judgment as a result of the photos' existence.

Prosecutors are [currently investigating](#) the alleged extortion, which complicates matters for American Media, Inc., which owns the *National Enquirer* and is owned by David Pecker. During the 2016 election cycle, Pecker became infamous for using "catch and kill" techniques to buy and bury stories alleging everything from sexual misconduct to illicit affairs between President Trump and a number of women, at least once at the direction of Michael Cohen.

After determining that such payments by AMI violated campaign finance regulations, Federal Prosecutors for the Southern District of New York and AMI [reached a non-prosecution agreement](#) this past September, which required AMI to admit that it had made the payments to "influence the election" in exchange for non-prosecution so long as AMI committed "no crimes whatsoever" for three years.

The question now is whether the Federal Prosecutors for the Southern District of New York require ongoing cooperation from AMI, or if they have enough already that they are willing to pursue prosecution. If so, instead of Jeff Bezos and Amazon, it may be David Pecker and the *Enquirer* who have to answer to investors for poor judgment.

