
From: Svetlana Skarbo [svetlana.skarbo@gmail.com]
Sent: 11/12/2015 7:16:39 PM
To: Alan White [alan.white@buzzfeed.com]
Subject: Re: seeking co-operation over CEN agency's cheating

yes exactly

On 13 November 2015 at 07:12, Alan White <alan.white@buzzfeed.com> wrote:

Amazing. And they were selling on pictures taken by your photographers along with your copy?

On Fri, Nov 13, 2015 at 12:09 AM, Svetlana Skarbo <svetlana.skarbo@gmail.com> wrote:

I haven't no... thank you for sending.

Wonder if Mike and his team are actually high on something (pretty much non-stop) to be making things up like this.

This is what he emailed me after the chatted. Where he says that "they are not taking stories from us" - yes sure, and I am Prince Charles.

Anyway, I am not intending to answer him now, instead we'll start putting the evidence together.

Great luck with your new arrival, see you whenever possible in December or perhaps early January.

Best,
SVetlana

Michael Leidig <editor@cen.at>

00:00 (6 hours ago)

<<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/images/cleardot.gif>>
<<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/images/cleardot.gif>>
<<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/images/cleardot.gif>>

to legal, editor, me, online
<<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/images/cleardot.gif>>

Dear Svetlana,

Following on from the not so constructive conversation earlier, for years now we have been getting messages from the Siberian Times along the same lines.

It really is time now to either go to court as you keep threatening, or to simply leave the matter.

If it is any consolation to you, we are not taking stories from the Siberian Times. It must also be obvious that we have Russian journalists on our team.

In fact, our bureau chief is from Moscow.

No publication has the right to exclusively cover a patch and I don't understand what your problem is given that we at the moment don't produce an online newspaper. It would be easy to create a Siberian English language newspaper online, we could use the content we do now, but it's not our business plan.

And as far as I know it's not your business plan to sell your stories worldwide, and it certainly is not a lucrative business. I can only assume that you want me to include a mention that you cover the story, but if we haven't even seen that you covered the story why would we say reports the Siberian Times?

What is the role of your partner Will Stuart in this, do the two of you think that our work somehow damages your work together?

I don't know much about your working relationship other than that there is one, but I don't think that a legal battle between you, me and the Siberian Times partner Will Stuart is in anyone's interest but I'm perfectly happy to go there if you want.

However, I feel it is always much better to try and come to an amicable solution. At the end of the day we're not competition, we only occasionally overlap on the odd story and on some occasions as far as I can see we have stories before you do from our staff. Is it one story a month? Or 2?

If you let me know more about what exactly your problem is, then I'm sure we can come to an accommodation, or alternatively you can pursue your current course of action.

Will is also welcome to call me at any time to discuss. To be honest I don't mind talking to you either, but I don't want to the conversation to start: "When you going to stop stealing our stories" because it really isn't the case.

Look forward to hearing from you until then,

Yours sincerely,

Mike.

On 13 November 2015 at 06:42, Alan White <alan.white@buzzfeed.com> wrote:

Wow. That is quite the conversation.

Yes, let's meet next month. If I'm not in touch early in Dec then give me a nudge. I have plenty to tell you.

Have you seen this by the way?

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/alanwhite/how-a-fake-story-ruined-three-peoples-lives>

On Thu, Nov 12, 2015 at 10:56 PM, Svetlana Skarbo <svetlana.skarbo@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Alan,

many thanks for such a prompt reply and congratulations to your family.

I am likely to be around at the beginning of December, it would be good to meet; FYI the chat with Mike is attached.

Best,
Svetlana

On 13 November 2015 at 05:12, Alan White <alan.white@buzzfeed.com> wrote:

Hi Svetlana,

I'd be very happy to meet you for a coffee. I think we have plenty to discuss!

However, I'm about to go on paternity leave for a couple of weeks and won't be back in London till it's over. Will you be around end of month / start of December? Do keep that recording safe.

Best,

Alan

On Thu, Nov 12, 2015 at 9:03 PM, Svetlana Skarbo <svetlana.skarbo@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Alan,

my name is Svetlana Skarbo, I am the editor of The Siberian Times (siberiantimes.com), online English-language newspaper about Siberia.

We have a team of journalists and photographers in Siberia; over the past months we have been suffering from actions of the CEN 'news' agency which tends to steal our quotes, cut pictures to remove logos and sells them to UK and US (usually to papers like The Daily Mail, The Daily Express, The Mirror, The Metro in UK and NY Post in US, but I am sure there are more).

I've been emailing them, asking to stop this unlawful practice; we warned most of UK papers about CEN cheating. Finally today after they stole and sold one of our stories I tried to resolve the issue over the phone with the agency's editor Michael Leidig.

I received an F-word tirade back; the chat is recorded and I can share it with you. I went to check if we were the only ones who had issues with the guys, and found your, Tom and Craig's article <http://www.buzzfeed.com/alanwhite/central-european-news#.bwdb1b9LA> <<http://www.buzzfeed.com/alanwhite/central-european-news#.bwdb1b9LA>>

I've no idea who are the 'lawyers' they deploy - but the statement below is false. Take the bear and Justin Biber story. There was nothing written in Russian to say that it was Justin Biber on the guy's ringtone (we spoke to him later and he confirmed it was rubbish), so they had nowhere to translate it from. They made it up, as they did with many other stories. I know this is the point you make in the story, but I am saying it because we verified it separately.

In a letter to BuzzFeed News <<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2065370-cen-pdf-letter-to-alan-white-buzzfeed-22-4-15-1.html>>, CEN's legal representatives said the firm "denies absolutely that it makes up false stories or fabricates quotes". They claimed that the firm "relies on trusted contributors to source content", that there is "no evidence of a 'pattern' of behavior of fabricating stories", and that the fact that "a tiny minority" of its stories "might raise questions is not indicative" of such.

I don't know if you might be interested in pursuing this, but if you do please count us at The Siberian Times in, because... well, because we are fed up and want to stop their lies.

Please see the example of our by now typical correspondence with UK papers, the one below is with The Daily Express. Each time the papers' response is 'sorry!' and 'yes of course we'll correct the copyright' (and they always do), but then CEN just files the next story and it all continues.

I am currently in London, doing MA in Financial Journalism at City University London; if you want to chat, please give me a call on 07482 901387.

Best,
Svetlana

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'The Siberian Times',
Russia +7 985 727 68 23 <tel:%2B7%20985%20727%2068%2023>
www.siberiantimes.com <http://www.siberiantimes.com/>

Dear Nichola, Adrian,

Svetlana from The Siberian Times here; please can I ask to correct captions to the mammoth skin story to NEFU/The Siberian Times: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/science/611035/Scientists-bring-woolly-mammoth-back-LIFE-discovery> <<http://www.express.co.uk/news/science/611035/Scientists-bring-woolly-mammoth-back-LIFE-discovery>>

Images of the mammoth skin on the floor, mammoth carcass and blood are exclusively ours, provided by the Northern Federal University; quotes were taken by our staff journalists, who spoke to scientists in Yakutia several days ago. This is the original story, published 8 October 2015:
<http://siberiantimes.com/science/casestudy/news/n0439-woolly-mammoth-skin-found-well-preserved-in-permafrost-gives-new-hope-for-cloning/> <<http://siberiantimes.com/science/casestudy/news/n0439-woolly-mammoth-skin-found-well-preserved-in-permafrost-gives-new-hope-for-cloning/>>

This is sadly not the first time when we have issues with CEN, whose job seem to be to copy pictures from our website, crop or photoshop them to remove logos, resize them and sell. They never buy pictures in Russia, they have no photographers or journalists in the area and no sources, except for the web.

We will be issuing a warning to other major UK national papers about the agency's unlawful practices.

Grateful for the copyright's correction, and as ever more than happy to continue supplying The Daily Express, print and online, with our stories. We have a team of journalists in Siberia, and can answer for everything we publish, be it quotes or pictures.

I am currently in London, any queries please call 07482 901387.

All the best,
Svetlana

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Alan White
News Reporter, BuzzFeed UK

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