

After receiving a tip I'd sent to them through a colleague, the Washington Post today ran an online piece regarding an article about my case that appeared last year in Rolling Stone. As the Post noted, the author began and ended that piece with a scene in which my lawyer meets with me at the Mansfield Law Enforcement Center where I was being held at the time - a scene in which I hand him a handwritten copy of my latest article with instructions to send it to the Guardian, where I've been a contributor for several years. The Post correctly notes that the author was not actually present at the scene, but instead had my lawyer describe it to him afterwards. The Post also quotes the author to the effect that the scene nonetheless happened as he described it, that the quotes he uses are all real, and that the manner in which all of this was executed in print was done with my understanding and permission. Unfortunately, this is entirely false.

I did not hand my lawyer any articles at that meeting, or any other meeting; at the time, I always sent my handwritten work to my mother to be typed up and then e-mailed to my lawyers for approval before publication. Obviously, then, I did not say "Penned it out" to my lawyer while "triumphantly" handing him the article, since, again, there was no article to hand to him. And thus it is likewise impossible that, as claimed in the end of the Rolling Stone article, I pointed to my handwritten column and declared that "This is what's important" or whatever I am supposed to have said. Likewise, I was not wearing a jumpsuit to the meeting; as anyone may confirm with a quick phone call, inmates at the federal detention facility in Mansfield do not wear jumpsuits. And I'm assuming the author has me "shuffle" in to the room based on a description he read in an earlier article describing a hearing in which I walked in to the court room - wearing leg irons.

These are minor details in the grand scheme of things, especially when put up against the crucial issues of press freedom and the accuracy of public information that form the background to my case, my work, and my life thus far. It's a shame, then, that the editors of Rolling Stone were clearly more concerned with being able to work in these kinds of details, even if false, than they were about the accuracy of the article as a whole, which includes several fundamental errors of fact that could have easily been caught via better journalism or even basic fact-checking. For instance, it is claimed, falsely, that I was the one who discovered the Team Themis conspiracy against Wikileaks and various journalists and activist groups, which in fact was dug up more or less simultaneously by several parties in the press and the Anonymous collective. It also claimed, just as falsely, that I discovered the Trapwire capability, which I supposedly thought to be the most important revelation to be found among the millions of e-mails taken from the corrupt intelligence contracting firm Stratfor. Actually, Trapwire was discovered by Wikileaks, and the author entirely misrepresents my take on what Trapwire was and to what extent it should have been a source of concern.

As I'm to be sentenced next Tuesday on charges related to these matters, I can't go into further detail yet about everything the author of this piece and his editors got wrong despite having had nearly unlimited access to my lawyers and colleagues. Next week, though, a long piece by the journalist Jan Ludwig will be appearing in the German press that will address this matter further, in addition to revealing other rather extraordinary aspects of this case. I imagine that translations will be forthcoming immediately afterwards. In the meantime, though, I hope this clears things up.

- Barrett Brown, Seagoville Federal Correctional Institution.