

Transcript of Conversation  
Scott Thomas Beauchamp and The New Republic, 061945SEP07

Attendees: **Pvt Scott Thomas Beauchamp**, A/1-18 IN; **Frank Foer**, Editor The New Republic, **Peter Scoblic**, Executive Editor, The New Republic, **SSG Preiszler**, squad leader, Spc. **Ben Washburn**, 4<sup>th</sup> IBCT Public Affairs, and **“Gene”** Lawyer for Scott Beauchamp, provided by The New Republic

Pvt Scott Thomas Beauchamp: Uh, hey- this is Scott Beauchamp.

Frank Foer: How are you doing?

Beauchamp: Good.

Foer: I'm here with Peter Scoblic.

Beauchamp: Okay.

Peter Scoblic: I'm Peter Scoblic, I'm the executive editor.

Beauchamp: Okay.

Foer: Before we start this conversation, I just wanted to ask, Are you in the room with anyone?

Beauchamp: Yeah- I'm on speakerphone.

Foer: Okay. Who are you in the room with?

Beauchamp: My squad leader, um, and a (background voice) specialist

Foer: Okay. Are there any sorts of restrictions on what you can discuss?

Beauchamp: (muffled talk in the background) Other than OPSEC violations, I can talk about anything I want.

Foer: Okay. Ah. Did...did...It's been a long time since we've been able to talk to one another. Um, there have been (unintelligible) there have been a lot of various very serious questions raised about the accuracy of your 'Diarist.' And we felt like, we couldn't pass any judgment...any final judgment of the 'Diarist' until we were able to talk with you and give you a chance to answer a lot of the questions that have been raised. And so, Peter Scoblic has been going through the various diaries and he's reviewed the entire record. And I think that he's got some questions that he'd like to ask you.

Scoblic: Scott, I don't know if you're aware of this, but I was not around the office when the 'Diarist' was published. I've worked for The New Republic for a number of years,

but I was actually on leave and thus was not involved with the editing of the piece or the publication of the piece. I just came back to TNR a month ago just as sort of the questions were being raised by the Weekly Standard and in the press and I've reviewed the pieces, I've reviewed the reporting that Frank and Ryan did, and I've got to tell you- I understand why there are questions being raised about the piece. And, the one factual error that we have in the piece is fairly disturbing. And that's the first anecdote that you recounted about the disfigured woman took place in Kuwait and not in Iraq. And I wanted to ask you how you got that wrong? Because I was listening to an NPR show the other day or the other week I guess it was and the way they put it is, "How do you forget a country?" Let's start there. How did it become Kuwait or rather, how did it become Iraq, rather than Kuwait?

Beauchamp: Um I, I really should probably have said this before you began asking questions. I sorta had an idea of things I wanted to say first. And one was- the whole reason I decided to like formally take the interviews you know, let the media know that the Army wasn't censoring me. That I could have interviews. But at the same time, this whole thing, it's...it's...spun out of control and mutated into something that's it's just like...it's not something that...it's just insane. And really ridiculous. So, I sort of decided personally that I'm not really going to discuss with any media outlet at all my military experiences past, present or future. And like, that would include anything I've written. I'm basically saying, like, I basically want it to end. I'm not going to talk to anyone about anything really. I just really...I know that...

Scoblic: (unintelligible) Are you standing by your story then?

Beauchamp: I'm not talking about it all. I'm not commenting on it at all anymore. On any of my military experiences.

Scoblic: Look, Scott- I need... We are not another media outlet. You can't look at the New Republic which, you know, published these stories as "just another set of reporters" that's beating down your door. The editor has placed a great deal of trust in you. You know, I've watched this over the last month...I've been part of it myself to some extent. They've displayed a considerable integrity in standing by you and supporting you publicly. I know that things have been insane there, certainly with regard to this. They've been pretty insane here, too. And, among other things, you know, Frank has been... Frank and his reputation have been dragged through the mud. In a lot of ways, the magazine's reputation has been dragged through the mud. And, all through that, we have sort of... we have said: We are not going to throw an author overboard just because someone has raised questions. I mean, we have... we have defended you. And, all we want out of this, and the only way that it is going to end is if we have the truth. And if it's... if it's certain parts of the story are bullshit, then we'll end it that way. If it's proven to be true it will end that way. But it's only going to end with the truth. And so there are two things at work here, I'm saying: the one is that I think that just from the standpoint of personal responsibility and, and... you know, respect for the respect we have shown to you, we need you to answer a few more questions. And also from the standpoint of your self

interest, if you want this to end, the way it ends is, you know, is with us at one point saying: this is what we've discovered one way or another.

Beauchamp: Well, I mean I... appreciate that you've defended me and, and I know that you guys have been through a lot too and I've been through a lot, but at the same time, I'm still going to... I don't want any part of discussing anything with anyone anymore, really. I'm sorry if it's disappointing on a personal level, but it's not something I want to do. I don't want to discuss anything with anyone. And, um- that's basically what I'm going to be putting out. I'm not talking about it all anymore. I'm concentrating purely on my job over here. Uh... and... that's it. That's basically going to be it.

Foer: Okay- we're going to have to discuss the implications of this of this last column. But (unintelligible) I think this raises the possibility that if you're not able to talk about this and able to stand by your story, I'm not sure we'll be able to stand by it. So...

Scoblic: I think Scott, what this is, you know, is that we're going to have to come out to say that... because you know, you're not going to talk to us anymore about the piece we just can't, in good conscience, continue to defend it. And so the way it ends is that there's going to be another round of stories and the story is going to be that an author lied to his editors. And they decided that they can't trust him anymore.

Beauchamp: Well... I mean, I understand it could be spun that way, but it could be interpreted in any way, and it's going to be interpreted in any way that it was going to be interpreted... I mean, that's... that's...

Scoblic: It's not going to be, Scott. It's going to be interpreted (unintelligible)

Foer: Most people think (unintelligible)... most people have an assumption that goes against you. And the few people that... there are a few people view to the extent that I view only do so because of the decency to stand by you. So, if we're not able to stand by you because you aren't able to answer our questions, um I think it kind of... you wouldn't have much credibility left in the public eye.

Beauchamp: I really... I mean, at this point I really don't care what the public thinks. I just want to not think about this anymore and just basically do my job. And that's all I really want to do.

Scoblic: What are you going to do after this job? Are you staying in the Army?

Beauchamp: Um, I don't know what I want to do. Um I haven't made up my mind yet what I want to do.

Scoblic: Ah... you're not going to be able to write anymore after this... you know that, right?

Beauchamp: I...I mean, I don't really care at this point. That's not...that's not...basically what I'm saying is that's not what is important to me...

Foer: (unintelligible)

Beauchamp: What's important to me...

Foer: (Unintelligible) You could have told us this a month ago and ah...you know- saved us...basically a lot of heartache and pain.

Scoblic: I mean...that's how we could've ended this, Scott is... I mean, what you're saying basically is that you've been hiding from us for the last month, right?

Beauchamp: No. No.

Scoblic: (Unintelligible) We've been told that...

Beauchamp: Whenever I talk to a public outlet it has to be officially approved.

Scoblic: (Unintelligible)

Beauchamp: I didn't know that beforehand. And so that's basically why...

Scoblic: Say again?

Beauchamp: Whenever I discuss anything with a media outlet, it has to be officially approved and go through the proper channels, and I wasn't aware of that before. And so I wasn't hiding out, I was just basically following regulations and I mean...

Scoblic: You (unintelligible) ...our conversation. You had been able to.

Beauchamp: What?

Foer: You said at the beginning of the conversation that the Army wasn't censoring you.

Beauchamp: No, they're not censoring me. It's just that you have to go through the proper channels...it has to be done correctly so that it's everything's documented. It has to be set up.

Foer: (Unintelligible) speak through official channels?

Beauchamp: What's that?

Foer: When did you get a request to speak to me through official channels?

Beauchamp: The first time that I knew it was going to be set up, or I got the option to set it up officially was a few days ago. I heard about it that I could do interviews and they could be set up once I was contacted probably like a week or so before that even. But I didn't know who wanted official interviews until a few days ago.

Scoblic: Scott, have you been trying to get the statements for us?

Beauchamp: Um...actually, I haven't been trying to do anything except my job...basically my job over here.

Scoblic: You told Ellie (TNR staff member Elspeth Reeve and Beauchamp's wife) that you were trying to get the statements.

Beauchamp: I was going to and I talked to...I did talk to my lawyer. And I can still get those. I'm working on getting those. And I have one statement. Um...it's basically a counseling statement from my colonel. And that's what I have so far. Um...but I...

Foer: (unintelligible)

Beauchamp: I can get copies of any legal documents that pertain to me. I can get copies for me.

Scoblic: And can you share those with us?

Beauchamp: Um...probably.

SSG Preiszler: Yes, you can share it with them.

Beauchamp: Yeah, I can.

Scoblic: Scott, I mean we've been asking for those statements for weeks. And you told us you were trying to get them and you told your lawyer you were trying to get them. You told Ellie that you were trying to get them. And, now you're saying that you haven't tried to get them.

Beauchamp: No, I...I was trying to get them, but it's really hard to try and get them when you're working 20 hours a day. Um...it's, it's...trying to get something done...time here is different from time where you are. So when I say I'm trying to get something, it could take months to get something. It's not a matter of hours or days. And...

Scoblic: Can you tell us what was in those statements?

Beauchamp: The...there were two sworn statements and um...since you...since you're the magazine I was published in, I will try to get you copies of those. Um...

Foer: Okay. I (unintelligible) Basically, we need some sort of sign in good faith on your part and that would be the bare minimum at this point to prevent us from fully retracting.

Scoblic: I mean, let me ask you Scott- do you care if we fully retract not only this piece, but the previous ones?

Beauchamp: Right now, like I said before all I really care about is the job I'm doing here. I really don't care about the media at all at this point. I'm sorry. I know it may sound insane from your point of view, but all I care about right now and I realize that's the one thing I've learned from all of this is basically I mean, I...what's important to me right now is taking care of the people to the left and right of me. I mean, I can try to get you sworn statements. I can do that and help you guys out as much as I can, but like I said the timeline is going to be probably not what you want and ah (sips water).

Scoblic: Scott, if you don't care about the media as you say, then why are you setting up interviews?

Beauchamp: Um...

Scoblic: We were told you are setting up interviews with the Times and the Post?

Beauchamp: With the Newsweek and the Washington Post and it's basically to let the media know that I'm not being censored. I can talk to the media, but I don't want to.

Scoblic: Scott, all that does is trigger another round of stories. I mean, (unintelligible)

Foer: (Unintelligible) You owe it to us ah to just ah...you owe it to us to basically kind of report on ourselves and be able to put out whatever next thing...I think you ought to basically talk to us, and let us control the way this story proceeds. I think that's the least you could do for us. I think it would be further evidence, further sign to us that you're just sticking it to us if you went and talked to these other guys before we could put anything out further.

Beauchamp: So, um...so what are you saying?

Foer: I'm saying that I'd rather you not talk to the Washington Post, Newsweek or whoever else until we put out our final judgment on your pieces.

(Silence)

Preisler: You want my opinion on that?

Beauchamp: Yes.

Preisler: That sounds perfectly fair to me. They're the newspaper whose reputation is on the line. This is just my opinion...and basically in my opinion, those are the people who have a real say on this so..that's my opinion.

Beauchamp: Yeah...

Scoblic: Who's talking right now?

Beauchamp: Yeah...I was just talking to someone (squad leader). Yeah- I agree. I agree with that.

Foer: Okay. I don't think we have anything else to say. But if you could get us the sworn statements, that would be the one thing that could ah...delay us passing any judgment, but otherwise I think we have to publish that we can't stand by your story.

Beauchamp: As long as you include that, um...I mean- I'm not , I don't want...Basically I'm not saying anything about the stories to anyone anymore. And that um...I have nothing but you know the utmost respect and love for the people I'm serving with and this is really...there's been a lot of heartache for them.

Foer: Ellie sent me an email to tell you that it's the most important thing in the world for her that you say that you didn't recant.

Beauchamp: To say what?

Foer: I think, I don't wanna... You're obviously in a very uncomfortable position in that your wife is involved in this, and I wish she wasn't involved because I, I... trust her, I care for her, I don't want her to get hurt in all of this. But she just, she sent me a note to tell you that it's the most important thing to her that you say that you didn't recant. And I don't...I feel that (unintelligible) in saying that to you because it puts me in an awkward position, but it's what she wanted me to convey to you.

Beauchamp: Well, I can tell you that an official Army investigation was done. I cannot be the one to talk to about that, or contact about that. I can get you copies of my sworn statements. And...

Scoblic: When?

Beauchamp: I don't know when. Um...

Scoblic: Who's there with you? Are they able to get us the statements?

Beauchamp: No. I would have to talk to JAG or legal...legal people.

Scoblic: I mean, we got you a lawyer, Scott.