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From: Joe Pompeo - POLITICO Media
Sent: Fri 6/16/2017 10:03:57 AM
Subject: Morning Media: Megyn Kelly-Alex Jones drama heats up — NYT's editorial correction — DOJ's vague media prod

By Hadas Gold | 06/16/2017 06:01 AM EDT

With Alex Weprin and Joe Pompeo

THE MEGYN KELLY/ALEX JONES SHOW -- The Megyn Kelly and Alex Jones drama heated up considerably on Thursday night. The show is still set to air on Sunday night and whether or not you agree or disagree that Kelly should have interviewed Jones in the first place, the entire drama surrounding it is turning into a full blown issue for NBC. Not only are there grieving families of innocent young children on one side of Kelly and the network, there's a conniving conspiracy-theorist adept at manipulating the media on the other.

Case in point: Overnight, Jones released some [audio](#) of a pre-interview Kelly conducted with him (interspersed with Jones' commentary).

"It's not going to be a contentious, sort of gotcha exchange," she says explaining further that the show is not about such moments, just profiles on interesting people, but that she will be asking him about his more controversial views.

Immediately after playing that clip of Kelly, Jones, sitting in his studio, talks about his conspiracy theories that Sandy Hook was not real but that in "hindsight, it probably did happen." Jones says that once Kelly arrived for the interview, she "attacked me" about his conspiracy theories.

"It really will be about 'who is this guy?' ... I'm not looking to portray you as some boogeyman or just any sort of gotcha moment. I just want to talk about you," Kelly says in further clips. "The craziest thing of all would be if some of the people who just have this insane version of you in their head walk away saying, 'you know what, I see the dad in him.'"

On the other side are the families. POLITICO has obtained a letter sent by a law firm representing several of the families who lost loved ones in the 2012, suggesting that NBC faces ramifications should the interview air. The letter is addressed to NBC President Andy Lack, Megyn Kelly's executive producer David Corvo and NBC's General Counsel Kimberly Harris. In the letter, the families say that while "**NBC is not responsible for the harassment and abuse Alex Jones has cruelly visited on our clients,**" by choosing to air the interview (on Father's Day no less), NBC has helped legitimize Jones' view. By airing the interview, NBC "implicitly endorses" the notion that Jones' conspiracy theories and lies are "worthy of serious debate."

"We urge you to consider the ethical and legal ramifications of broadcasting this interview to millions of Americans. By now, it should be clear to NBC that airing the interview will cause serious emotional distress to dozens of Sandy Hook families. NBC - and NBC alone - has the

power to prevent that harm."

-- An NBC spokesperson had no comment Thursday night on either the Jones' recordings or the letter from the families.

MEANWHILE, NBC REPORTEDLY 'OVERHAULED' SUNDAY'S SHOW Page Six reported, as Kelly and NBC are now said to be including families of the Sandy Hook children, and are "editing her interview with Jones to be tougher on him." That being said - NBC and many in television news would say pieces are often edited and changed up until the last minute.

HADAS GOLD HERE, minding the store while Joe's on deadline wrapping up a piece (and kicking in a few items on the side). Send me tips and comments: hgold@politico.com. **Morning Media** is edited by **Alex Weprin** (@alexweprin / aweprin@politico.com) and produced with writing/reporting help from **Cristiano Lima**, who's on vacation this week. (clima@politico.com / @ludacristiano). Archives. Subscribe.

TOP DOJ OFFICIAL PRODS MEDIA WITH UNUSUAL STATEMENT: Late Thursday a strange and vague statement landed from Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. In it, Rosenstein casts doubt on a series of recent reports around Special Counsel Robert Mueller's probe into the Trump campaign.

"Americans should exercise caution before accepting as true any stories attributed to anonymous 'officials,' particularly when they do not identify the country - let alone the branch or agency of government - with which the alleged sources supposedly are affiliated," Rosenstein said.

"Americans should be skeptical about anonymous allegations. The Department of Justice has a long-established policy to neither confirm nor deny such allegations."

As our colleague Darren Samuelsohn points out, "Rosenstein's statement caught many in Washington off guard, in part because it was so generic and didn't actually specify which news reports it was addressing. It's also notable because of who issued it: With Attorney General Jeff Sessions recused from all things related to the Russia probe, Rosenstein as the No. 2 DOJ official has the reins over the Mueller probe. He'll get Mueller's budget and he also has the power to block major investigative steps - with the caveat he must report to Congress if that happens."

Washington Post subtweets, via Josh Barro: "The Washington Post has updated the Kushner story to reflect the officials cited are indeed US officials."

FWIW - A former Wall Street Journal employee emails: "It's not going unnoticed in WSJ circles that Barrett and Entous, recently departed from WSJ to WaPO, are now running circles around their ex-colleagues." Devlin Barrett and Adam Entous were the two lead bylines on Wednesday's Washington Post bombshell: "Special counsel is investigating Trump for possible obstruction of justice, officials say"

AN NYT "MISTAKE" -- The New York Times editorial board issued a correction on an editorial that riled up many on the left and right. The editorial, titled "America's Lethal Politics" about the shooting at a GOP congressional baseball practice, claimed a clear link between Sarah

Palin putting certain Democratic districts in "crosshairs" in a 2010 ad and the 2011 shooting of former Rep. Gabby Giffords. A correction added on Thursday morning (and updated after further errors were pointed out) reads "An editorial on Thursday about the shooting of Representative Steve Scalise incorrectly stated that a link existed between political rhetoric and the 2011 shooting of Representative Gabby Giffords. In fact, no such link was established. The editorial also incorrectly described a map distributed by a political action committee before that shooting. It depicted electoral districts, not individual Democratic lawmakers, beneath stylized cross hairs."

"We're sorry about this and we appreciate that our readers called us on the mistake," the Opinion Page added in a Tweet.

Palin said in a tweet she's now considering her legal options, tweeting that she's "talking to attorneys this AM and exploring options" about a possible libel case.

CNN AND THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION -- CNN president Jeff Zucker hosted a breakfast with media reporters yesterday at the Time Warner Center in New York, ostensibly to celebrate the four year anniversary of the morning show "New Day." Our own Alex Weprin was there, and of course, as is often the case, the questions quickly drifted toward the Trump Administration and its relationship with the press.

Zucker on the violence and threats against journalists : "Obviously there has been tremendous spate of issues over the past six weeks, but we have been dealing with this at CNN in a heightened way over the past 18 months, where our correspondents were front and center at events where the chants about CNN are front and center. This has been a very serious issue for us for a long time. The amount of rhetoric and threats that our folks are subject to on a daily basis is much more serious than I think many folks realize, and we are incredibly concerned about it. This is what happens when you try and delegitimize an institution that is doing its job. I think it is shameful on the part of the administration and other politicians to cause a frenzy against something that is guaranteed in the constitution of the United States. It does a disservice to this country, and it does a disservice to the world, and allows for a heightened sense of rhetoric against journalists and media organizations, and it is unconscionable and dangerous, and they should know better."

"New Day" anchor Alisyn Camerota also noted that spokespeople for President Trump are not as helpful to journalists as they have been in previous administrations. "I just don't think that the president's spokespeople in this era are that useful. I don't expect them to be able to channel the president. I have changed my expectations. I don't think anybody can channel this president, and he has said as much with his twitter habit."

Zucker On the lawsuit CNN filed against the FBI, asking for James Comey's memos: "We think that the public has a right to see the memos. CNN filed it, but it is on behalf of everyone sitting at this table. We think it is in everybody's interests, and we are happy to take the lead on that, and it is in pursuit of the journalism we do every day. We think those should be part of the public record."

Zucker, regarding Fox's now-retired "Fair & Balanced" motto: "I don't think anyone who is a serious observer took that [slogan] seriously for a long time." Zucker added that "Very little that Fox does surprises me. I have said it before and I will say it again, it is basically state run TV."

REVOLVING DOOR:

-- **Kaitlan Collins is the latest CNN hire**, joining the network from The Daily Caller. Collins will stay in her same beat - White House correspondent - and will contribute both on-air and digitally. To make you feel old, Collins, who Ben Schreckinger and I featured in our [POLITICO Magazine piece](#) on the media this April, is 25 years old. Our dear friend and old colleague Kelsey Sutton first broke the news [over at Mic](#).

-- **With Collins' departure, Alex Pfeiffer has been promoted to White House reporter at Daily Caller**, Business Insider's Max Tani [reports](#).

-- **Congrats to our former colleague Jeremy Barr** on his new gig covering media/politics for The Hollywood Reporter based out of New York. Also at THR, Peter Kiefer has been named real estate and city editor. [Announcement](#).

-- **Casey Wooten is National Journal's newest tax policy reporter**. Wooten most recently worked as reporter at Bloomberg BNA's Washington bureau.

-- **Hildy Kuryk, a former finance director of the DNC, has moved on from her more recent job as director of communications for Vogue** and into a consulting role at the magazine, where Kuryk also has been EIC Anna Wintour's personal spokeswoman. Zara Rahim, named one of the ["30 under 30" rising stars in Florida politics](#) in 2013, has been promoted to the comms director role as of this week.

MUST READS:

-- "White House aides fret over Trump's Russia probe obsession" [[POLITICO](#)]

-- "A generation of media figures are cratering under the historical pressure of Donald Trump." [[Peggy Noonan](#)]

-- "Inside Bill Cosby's secluded courthouse hideaway, where he waits for a jury to decide his fate" [[WaPo](#)]

-- "We Got Our Hands On A Draft Of Milo Yiannopoulos's Book. It's Awful." [[BuzzFeed](#)]

-- "The Fake News Machine: How Propagandists are Using the Internet and Manipulate the Public." [[Trend Micro](#)]

MARK YOUR CALENDARS -- Ann Coulter will be at the Washington Post next Tuesday for an event about the first amendment. Other speakers include big names like Floyd Abrams and

Wajahat Ali, as well as presidents and executive directors of places such as the Knight First Amendment Institute, and the president of Brown and University of Chicago.

CNN AND USA TODAY FILED SEPARATE LAWSUITS SEEKING THE COMEY MEMOS -- The FOIA lawsuits seek to force the FBI to turn over former director James Comey's memos documenting his conversations with President Trump. Arguing that they are not classified and are of high public interest, the lawsuits seek to forced the FBI to expedite their release. Here's [CNN's write up](#) of their lawsuit, and lawyer Bradley Moss's [tweet](#) announcing he is filing a similar suit on behalf of USA Today and will be adding reporters from The Daily Beast and WIRED.

DID YOU NOTICE TWITTER'S REDESIGN? -- Across both the web and mobile versions, Twitter made some major changes. The first thing I noticed: Retweet and Like counters update in real time. Also changed: Navigation on the Twitter app, the avatar shapes (circles!) and the reply button is now a speech bubble. Not everything has changed - TweetDeck still remains its lovable/hateable self. [WIRED](#) covered all the changes here.

SOUND BITES:

-- "Isn't it newsworthy that I'm saying, don't air the interview? None of the media will pick it up. They just want me to be the devil because I'm the alternative media. That's not going to get people to trust the mainstream media. Fake news lives at NBC. They basically made me look like a Halloween character." [[Alex Jones](#)]

-- "Alex Jones takes a page from MIA's playbook and releases tapes of Megyn Kelly ordering the truffle fries." [[Matt Haber](#)]

-- "Trump supporters appear to be more angry at media and Hollywood for fueling anti-Trump rage culture than Democrat politicians," [[Charlie Spiering](#)]

-- "Everybody in this room, including the reporters, God bless you. God bless America." [[Donald Trump](#)]

HUFFPOST LAYOFFS MEANS HUFFPOST POLLSTER DOWNSIZES -- Yesterday the Huffington Post announced big layoffs, including some directly affecting the D.C. newsroom. Now as a direct result of the those layoffs, HuffPost's polling home has had to "dramatically reduce the scope" of what they track due to staff reductions, HuffPost polling director Ariel Edwards-Levy tweeted. "For the time being, we'll continue to follow national Trump approval and the 2018 House race. At this time, all other charts will no longer be updated," she wrote. Grace Sparks, a member of the HuffPost Pollster team, was laid off yesterday.

BILL SHINE GETS A NEW LAWYER: A new filing in the District Court for the Southern District of New York on Wednesday shows that the former Fox News co-president has hired a new lawyer to represent him in the case brought by Fox host Andrea Tantaros against the network and several of its executives. Shine has hired Marion Bachrach, a white-collar criminal defense lawyer and former Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Eastern District of New York. He had

previously been represented by the lawyers also representing Fox News.

SOUNDTRACK: John Fogerty "Centerfield"

EXTRAS:

-- "Breitbart News, Donald Trump's Pravda, is in Crisis" [Newsweek]

-- Related: "A top government ethics official is taking issue with a White House waiver that allows chief strategist Steve Bannon to talk to the news organization he used to run." [CNN]

-- The "Daily Show's" Donald J. Trump Presidential Twitter Library opens its doors today in Manhattan. [press release]

-- Inside The New York Times' new reader center. [NiemanLab]

-- Bloomberg Businessweek has joined the paywall club. [Digiday]

-- Union battle at The Village Voice. [Fusion]

To view online:

<http://www.politico.com/media/tipsheets/morning-media/2017/06/16/megyn-kelly-alex-jones-drama-heats-up-nyts-editorial-correction-doj-vague-media-prod-001293>

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