



NEWS

Extortion case closed

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A former contributor to the New York Post's Page Six gossip column who was accused of trying to shake down a billionaire in exchange for good press will not be charged in the sensational case, The Associated Press reports.

An individual familiar with the federal investigation, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the decision was not made public yet, said the case was being closed.

"There is no basis to proceed," the person said.

Jared Paul Stern's lawyer, **Joseph Tacopina**, confirmed in a statement that his client would not be indicted.

"I have been informed by the U.S. attorney's office that they are not proceeding with any case against Mr. Stern," **Tacopina** said.

Stern was under federal investigation into whether he tried to extort money from Ronald Burkle, a California billionaire who has given millions to political causes and invests in supermarkets.

Burkle said Stern demanded \$100,000 and a \$10,000 monthly stipend to stop negative stories about him. Stern had denied the charges, saying he was innocent.

"We have said from day one that this was a campaign to spread lies based on false accusations fueled by Burkle's personal vendetta against the New York Post, and that there was never any evidence of wrongdoing on Mr. Stern's part," **Tacopina** said.

A message left for Frank Quintero, a spokesman for Burkle, was not immediately returned.

In an interview, Stern said yesterday he was thankful he had finally emerged from legal limbo but he said the lengthy saga had left his life in tatters.

"It is definitely a relief," Stern said. "But I'm still basically in the same situation vis-a-vis my life being ruined. I never really believed that I'd end up in court. It was a smear campaign. But it was a success. I got fired and vilified and all of that."

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