Sandstone Luxembourg presses Criminal Charges against EUobserver

Tuesday 17 December, 2019

In an article headed “Blood from Stone. What did British PR firm do for Malta” the EUobserver published a claim that the UK-based PR consultancy Chelgate Ltd “hired a private intelligence firm in Luxembourg called Sandstone, founded and managed by Frank Schneider, to do a report on Caruana Galizia's killing” as part of a process in which Chelgate were said to be providing briefings to targeted European media on Caruana Galizia. It claims that “excerpts of Sandstone's research, seen by EUobserver, pointed away from Muscat to exotic theories that Russian president Vladimir Putin and Azerbaijan president Ilham Aliyev had conspired to assassinate Caruana Galizia, using a Chechen killer”. This report was separately referred to in an email by Andrew Rettman of the EUobserver, when he wrote to the Chairman of Chelgate that he had “got hold of this report Sandstone did for you with all sorts (sic) of bonkers theories about the killing of Galizia”.

This report led directly to significant related publicity. For example, quoting the EUobserver report, Guardian Journalist Juliette Garside tweeted: “Fake news material apparently circulated by UK pr firm @chelgate, working for the disgraced Maltese Government. It suggested the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia was ordered by Vladimir Putin and the President of Azerbaijan. Cynical, unethical, bonkers”.

These reports and allegations are false and damaging, and are now the subject of criminal and civil legal proceedings in Luxembourg, where Sandstone and Frank Schneider are based.

The facts are:

- The report referred to by the EUobserver does exist, but it was not prepared by Sandstone (or anyone working for Sandstone)
- Sandstone was not commissioned by Chelgate (or any other third party) to prepare this report.
- Chelgate has never commissioned Sandstone to prepare any other report of this type.
- Nor did Chelgate commission this report to be prepared by any other body.
- Neither the report nor the contents of the report were provided to Chelgate by Sandstone or any other third party.
- Until the publication of the EU Observer article, Chelgate had no knowledge of the existence of the report.
- It therefore follows that neither the report nor any of the theories, allegations or suppositions contained in the report were used by Chelgate or Sandstone in any briefings.

Sandstone have confirmed that the report in question was among the material received by them from a variety of sources while they were researching the background to the controversies affecting Malta during 2018. Sandstone took the view that the report was weak and unconvincing, and chose to make no use of it. It was never forwarded in any form to Chelgate Ltd, nor to any representative of the Government of Malta, nor to any other third party. It therefore formed no part of any media briefings.

The fact that this weak and inaccurate report was provided to the EUObserver, with false indications as to its usage, suggests an act of deliberate misinformation by a third party which by now has been identified by Sandstone and provided to the state prosecutor in support of the criminal investigation.

This information has been provided to the EUObserver, but at the time of writing the publication has made no attempt to correct or withdraw its damaging and misleading article.

Related Sectors:

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Related Keywords:

Malta :: Intelligence :: Galizia :: EUobserver :: Sandstone :: Luxembourg :: Schneider :: Muscat :: Guardian :: Chelgate :: Fane-Saunders ::

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