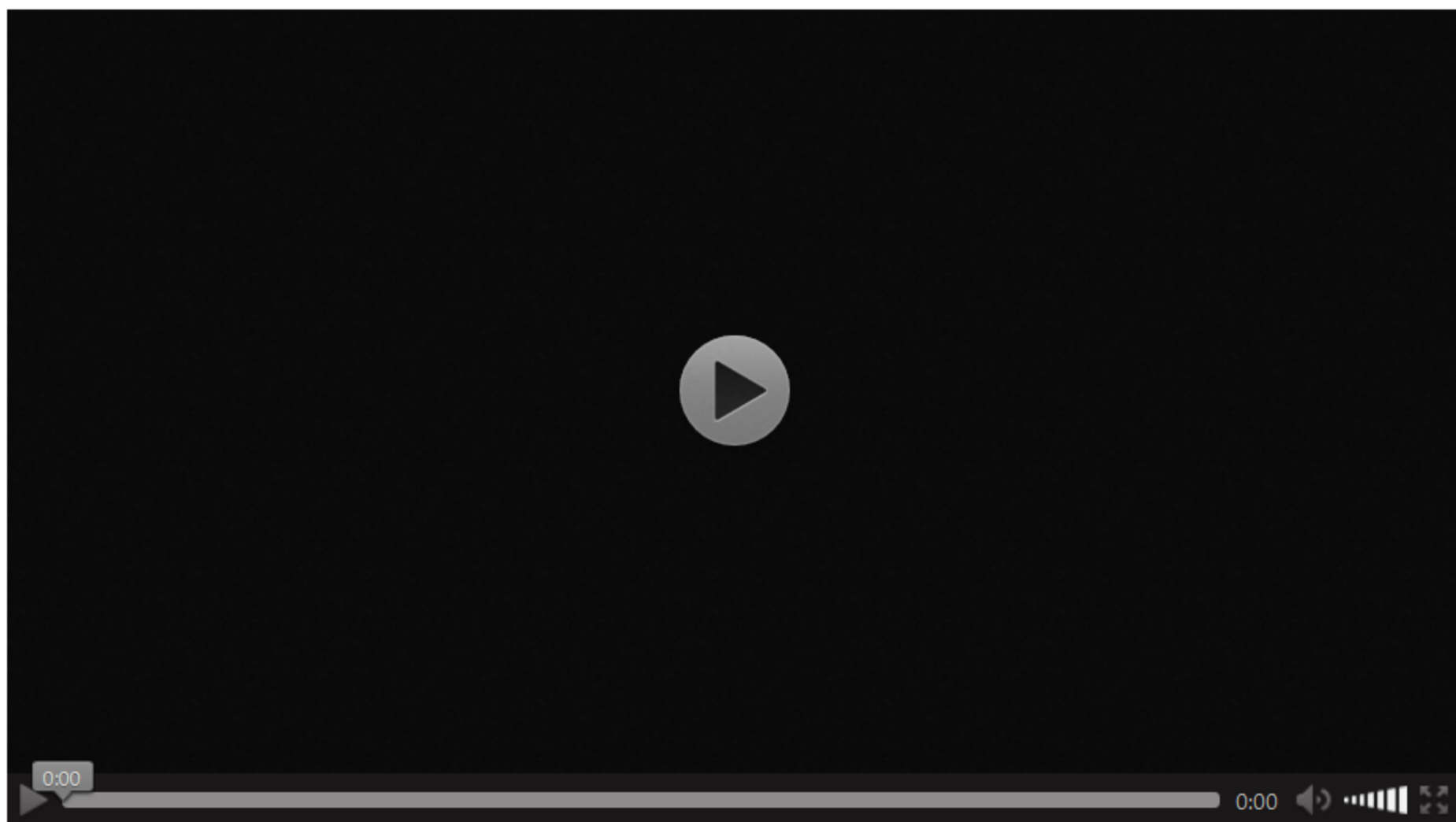


POLITICS

# National Enquirer Paid to Kill Story of Playboy Model's Affair with Donald Trump: Report

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A new report claims that owners of the tabloid newspaper *National Enquirer* paid a former *Playboy* model \$150,000 in order to kill her story about an affair she had with [Donald Trump](#).

Karen McDougal, the magazine's Playmate of the Year for 1998, claimed to friends that she had a consensual romantic relationship with the 70-year-old businessman in 2006 — while he was married to his current wife Melania, according to the [Wall Street Journal](#).

The affair lasted between 10 months to a year — and included a trip to the 2006 Miss Universe pageant where she was seated in the front row, her friend told the *Journal*.

She and American Media Inc. — the *Enquirer's* parent company — reportedly reached an agreement in early August for what she thought would be a exposé on their alleged affair, according to a contract obtained by the *Journal*. But the *Enquirer* pulled what is known in the industry as a “catch and kill” on the story – buying the rights to the McDougal's story forever without obliging to publish it, according to the *Journal*.





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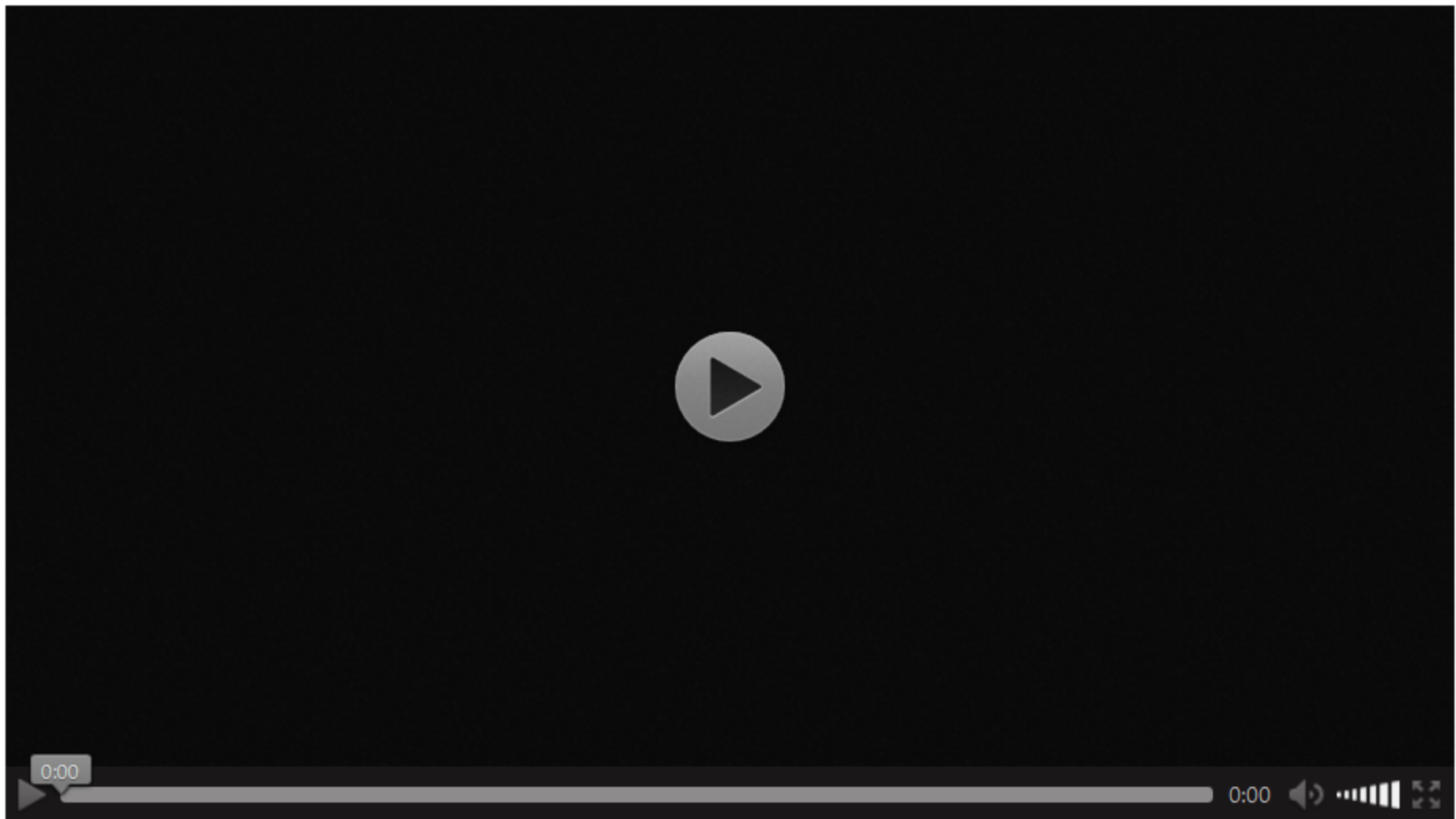
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Per the contract reviewed by the *Journal*, McDougal is barred from telling her story elsewhere. Sources familiar with the matter also told the *Journal* that the magazine never had the intention to run her story.

In a statement to the *Journal*, AMI said it “has not paid people to kill damaging stories about Mr. Trump.” They explained McDougal’s \$150,000 contracted earnings were for two years worth of magazine covers and fitness columns, as well as any relationships she has had with any then-married men.

Trump’s name is not mentioned specifically in her contract, the *Journal* reported. McDougal has not yet written any stories for AMI or appeared on the cover of any of its magazines.

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AMI Chairman and Chief Executive Office David J. Pecker and Trump are longtime friends, the *Journal* points out. The *Enquirer* has publicly endorsed Trump for president.

Pecker stood by his friendship with Trump in a statement to the *Journal*, but said the *Enquirer* “set the agenda” when exposing [Trump’s 1990 affair with Marla Maples](#). “That in itself speaks volumes about our commitment to investigative reporting,” he said.

In a statement to PEOPLE, Trump’s campaign denied the *Journal’s* claim that he had an affair with McDougal. “All aspects of this story are totally untrue. We have no knowledge of any of this.”

McDougal did not immediately responded to PEOPLE’s request for comment. ■

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