Beat: Politics

U.S. Congressman threatens New York reporter after TV interview

-, 29.01.2014, 15:40 Time

USPA News - A U.S. Congressman from New York physically threatened a reporter on late Tuesday evening after being asked about an ongoing federal investigation into his campaign fundraising. He later defended his actions, calling the reporter`s question "disrespectful and [a] cheap shot."

Michael Grimm, a Republican representative for New York`s 11th congressional district, made the threats after walking off an interview with NY1 reporter Michael Scotto. The interview had been arranged at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. to allow Grimm to voice his views on President Barack Obama`s annual `State of the Union` address, which had concluded earlier that evening. "And just finally before we let you go, we haven`t had a chance to talk about some of the..." Scotto said before Grimm cut him off. "I`m not speaking to you about anything that is off-topic, this is only about the president`s speech," the lawmaker responded, before walking off camera. But after Scotto wrapped up his segment for NY1, Grimm suddenly walked back to the reporter and began to threaten him, with the camera still rolling. "Let me be clear to you. If you ever do that to me again, I`ll throw you off this f*ing balcony," Grimm can be heard saying. The New York lawmaker then walks off again as Scotto tries to explain he was only asking him a question, which prompts Grimm to return once again. "Why? Why? It was a valid question," the reporter said, to which Grimm responded: "No, no. You`re not man enough, you`re not man enough. I`ll break you in half. Like a boy." NY1 Political Director Bob Hardt described Grimm`s behavior as "dumb" and called for a full apology. "It is extremely disturbing when anyone threatens one of our reporters - let alone a U.S. Congressman," he said. "The NY1 family is certainly alarmed and disappointed by the behavior of Representative Grimm and demands a full apology from him. This behavior is unacceptable." But in a statement released early on Wednesday, Grimm defended his actions, saying he was doing the New York 24-hour news channel "a favor" by allowing an interview with him. "The reporter knew that I was in a hurry and was only there to comment on the State of the Union, but insisted on taking a disrespectful and cheap shot at the end of the interview, because I did not have time to speak off-topic," he said. Grimm added: "I verbally took the reporter to task and told him off, because I expect a certain level of professionalism and respect, especially when I go out of my way to do that reporter a favor. I doubt that I am the first Member of Congress to tell off a reporter, and I am sure I won`t be the last." Grimm, who has not been charged with any wrongdoing himself, has been at the center of a federal campaign finance investigation since early 2012. Diana Durand, a Texas woman who was a friend and fundraiser for Grimm, was charged earlier this month with illegally funneling more than $10,000 into his 2010 campaign.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1847/us-congressman-threatens-new-york-reporter-after-tv-interview.html

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