

BREAKING: CNN liable for defaming Navy veteran in Jake Tapper segment, \$5 million awarded

The segment at the center of the suit aired on The Lead with Jake Tapper in November 2021.



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Washington DC

Jan 17, 2025

On Friday, a Florida jury found CNN guilty of defamation in a case brought forth by US Navy veteran Zachary Young against Jake Tapper and the network. Young alleged that Tapper had defamed him on his show. The verdict came after eight hours of deliberation.

Young was working to evacuate Afghans during the Biden administration's chaotic military withdrawal from that nation in August 2021. Tapper misrepresented Young and his work and Young stated that he hasn't been able to work since.

CNN was ordered to pay compensatory damages, with jurors still needing to decide how much the outlet will pay in punitive damages. The damages will be at least \$5 million, Law & Crime said. "In sum," they write, "jurors awarded Young \$4 million for lost employment and \$1 million for pain and suffering, and said that CNN should also be subject to punitive damages."

According to the Free Beacon, Young alleged that a segment which aired in November 2021 on The Lead with Jake Tapper singled him out and portrayed him as an "illegal profiteer" who operated in a "black market." Young, who said the segment irreparably destroyed his business, Nemex Enterprises, and reputation, worked to evacuate Afghans during the Biden-Harris administration's deadly and chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan. He testified that since the segment ran, he hasn't worked or made money.

During closing arguments, CNN attorney David Axelrod claimed that the story was "accurate" and "tough but fair" and that Young should have gone out of his way to convince journalists with the outlet that he wasn't "shady."

"Mr. Young put himself in the story, not CNN. He inserted himself into it to make a buck," Axelrod told the jury. He added, "Use your common sense. Do you see a conspiracy or do you see people just doing their best?"

Devin Freedman, Young's lead attorney, told jurors, "This is supposed to be the most trusted name in news. CNN is so arrogant, they are so used to getting whatever they want."

"But they stand up here and they talk down to us with bold-faced lies about what the segment's gist really is, and they expect you to believe it," he continued. "I mean, do they think we're all stupid?"

During opening statements, Freedman said that they were able to confirm that 1.6 million people viewed the broadcast, with high-range estimates hitting 2.7 million. "The correction was seen by 942,000 people. But let's be honest, the correction didn't do anything. Doesn't matter. The man can't get hired. It doesn't matter how many people saw it. They issued a correction because they were trying to get out of a lawsuit."

Axelrod said in opening statements regarding punitive damages that CNN's net worth has been in "gradual decline" and urged the jury not to "punish" CNN further, The Free Beacon's Jessica Costescu reported.