

A Couple Who Accused Former eBay Executives of 'Physically Terrorizing' Them Will Get \$3 Million Settlement

E-commerce giant eBay was ordered to pay a \$3 million criminal penalty by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts to Ina and David Steiner for the behavior of some former employees who "terrorized" the couple.

"Today's settlement holds e-Bay criminally and financially responsible for emotionally, psychologically, and physically terrorizing the publishers of an online newsletter out of fear that bad publicity would adversely impact their Fortune 500 company," said Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Boston Division, Jodi Cohen, of Thursday's settlement.

The Steiners founded a newsletter called EcommerceBytes, which reports on e-commerce platforms and can sometimes be critical of companies like eBay. According to the initial complaint filed in 2021, the Steiners alleged that after writing critically about eBay, a harassment campaign began against them, both in-person and online, as former executives at the company were displeased with the newsletter's "tone and content."

Examples included receiving packages of a bloody pig mask and live insects, and a book sent to David Steiner entitled "Grief Diaries: Surviving Loss of a Spouse."

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Other complaints allege that the former eBay employees planned to break into the Steiners' garage and put a GPS tracker on their car.

The e-commerce giant said it was "notified by law enforcement of suspicious actions by certain members of its security team" in 2019 before the formal complaint was filed by the Steiners and began investigating.

Authorities claim that the seven eBay employees named in the harassment campaign, including disgraced and former Chief Communications Officer, Steve Wymer, were discarding and "proactively disclosing certain evidence" that would have connected them to the case upon hearing that eBay had begun internally investigating.

"The company's conduct in 2019 was wrong and reprehensible," said Jamie Iannone, chief executive officer at eBay, in a company release. "From the moment eBay first learned of the 2019 events, eBay cooperated fully and extensively with law enforcement authorities. We continue to extend our deepest apologies to the Steiners for what they endured."

Six of the involved former employees have already been sentenced to jail time and home confinement while Brian Gilbert, ex-senior manager of security operations, is awaiting his sentencing.

"Since these events occurred, new leaders have joined the company and eBay has strengthened its policies, procedures, controls, and training," the release says. "eBay remains committed to upholding high standards of conduct and ethics and to making things right with the Steiners."

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