

Far-right Trump ally Thomas Barrack negotiating to buy Weinstein Company

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On Monday, Weinstein Company board of directors member Tarak Ben Ammar announced that the company had reached a preliminary agreement for a cash infusion from Colony Capital, an investment firm owned by longtime Trump friend and top campaign fundraiser, Thomas Barrack.

Barrack, the director of Colony Capital, issued a statement Monday: “We will help return the company to its rightful iconic position in the independent film and television industry.”

The announcement of the infusion was accompanied by news that Colony is in negotiations to purchase part or all of the company. This comes a week and a half after former Weinstein Company director Harvey Weinstein was fired from his position after the *New York Times* published allegations of widespread sexual assault. Five Weinstein Company board members have resigned in recent days, leaving only Harvey Weinstein’s brother Bob Weinstein, Ben Ammar and Lance Maerov on the board.

The sale has yet to be finalized and may result in Colony purchasing only some of the Weinstein Company’s assets. Harvey Weinstein could leverage his control of over 20 percent of the company’s shares to limit the extent of a sale to Colony. The *Hollywood Reporter* noted that the Weinstein board discussed the sale yesterday. In whatever way the deal moves forward, Barrack’s plan is reportedly to keep most of the staff but bring on new investors, impacting the artistic and political direction of the studio.

The timing and circumstances of the potential Colony Capital takeover raise many questions about the real forces behind the revelations of Weinstein’s sexual abuse. It strains credulity to believe that the rapid financial infusion of cash into the Weinstein enterprise from Colony, within little more than a week of the

outbreak of the sex scandal, was merely the outcome of lightning-speed improvisation.

For decades, Weinstein’s abuse of actresses and coworkers was an open secret in Hollywood, as dozens of actors, actresses, and Hollywood moguls kept quiet about his behavior. Now, following the *Times*’ October 5 story and the *New Yorker*’s follow-up, Barrack, a personal agent of Trump, is moving to take control of a major sphere of influence for the far-right in the entertainment industry.

Barrack, net worth \$1.3 billion, has been a personal friend of Trump for 40 years. He raised \$23 million for Trump’s presidential campaign, more than \$100 million as chairman of Trump’s inaugural committee, and gave a speech introducing Trump’s family at the Republican National Convention where he said the “necklace of globalism that we talk about has crumbled and shattered into a thousand pieces,” and that only Trump could fix it.

Upon winning the election, Trump reportedly offered Barrack the position of Treasury Secretary and vetted him for chief of staff. Barrack told Trump that he felt he was better positioned to help Trump from a private position, working to expand Trump’s influence in the media and entertainment industries.

In an October 11 article, the *Washington Post* quoted Barrack as saying, “In my communities, the financial community, the media community, the entertainment community, they really don’t like [Trump], in a visceral way. So to the extent that I can try to bridge a tolerance, I think I can help him the most.”

Questions are bound to be raised as to whether Barrack’s decision to bail out the Weinstein Company is the implementation of a strategy to provide the Trump administration with a significant beachhead to advance its right-wing views in Hollywood. Trump

regularly denounces the media and has threatened to revoke the broadcast license of outlets like NBC for publishing stories critical of his presidency.

There will inevitably be suspicions that Bob Weinstein, who now states that he and his brother were barely on speaking terms, or someone working on his behalf, fed the information to the *New York Times* in order to drive his hated sibling out of the company.

As the financial and political consequences of Harvey Weinstein's collapse emerge, there may well be a more critical examination of the role played by the *Times* and *New Yorker* in this extraordinary chain of events. Pressure may arise for both publications to shed light on the origins, development and supervision of the investigation. One question that will certainly be of great interest is whether they were used, wittingly or unwittingly, to advance the right-wing aims of a pro-Trump faction in Hollywood.

Whatever the answer, the sex scandal launched by the *Times* and the hysteria it generated created the conditions for reshaping the political landscape of Hollywood. Ironically, the purge of Weinstein has placed the assets of his company under the control of an ally of Trump, whose own practices at least equal, if not surpass, the alleged abuses that led to the sudden downfall of the Hollywood producer.



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