

## **Producer fired after e-mail blasting of Charlie Daniels' Iraq stand**

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By BRAD SCHMITT  
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The Great American Country cable channel has fired a producer after she told Charlie Daniels' publicist in an e-mail that the singer's views on Iraq were "bulls... propaganda."

The producer, Tamara Saviano, has now retained high-powered Nashville attorney David Raybin to battle not only the channel, but also Daniels' publicist, Kirt Webster, as well.

"He's the one who initiated this," Raybin said of Webster, owner of public relations company Webster & Associates. "It was his intent to have her terminated."

Webster yesterday said that wasn't so.

And GAC issued a statement saying Saviano was fired not for her views, but because she didn't state clearly enough in her e-mails that her opinions were her own and not that of the company.

"Our success as a television network requires that we have access to and good relationships with, country music artists, their management and their record labels...", the statement said. "We believe her actions threatened to seriously damage relationships key to GAC's success."

The controversy has captured the attention of many on Music Row: Was Saviano punished for exercising free speech, or fired for using company time and the company banner to butt heads with a country legend?

For his part, Daniels said he had nothing to do with Saviano's firing.

"I was unaware that Ms. Saviano had even written anything about me, and even if I had been, I would never retaliate," he said yesterday. "I know nothing about Ms. Saviano's relationship with her employer and have had absolutely no contact with them concerning this matter."

The hubbub started when Daniels, on his Web site [charliedaniels.com](http://charliedaniels.com), posted a rant against actors who have publicly opposed war on Iraq.

Webster copied it and sent it via e-mail to reporters and media figures in the country music field, and Saviano received it on her personal e-mail account, which she regularly had used for business.

In an e-mail exchange with Webster, she described Daniels' posting as "offensive," "an insult" and "bulls... propaganda."

The first of those e-mails, Saviano concedes, included GAC's name, address and phone number at the bottom. But she says GAC wasn't mentioned in subsequent e-mails.

Saviano then sent this e-mail, with Daniels' posting attached, to two Music Row friends: "Did y'all see this? I think it's time for everyone to boycott Charlie Daniels. If you disagree with his angry, bitter open letter to Hollywood, pass this on to all of your friends and tell them to stop purchasing CDB music or concert tickets."

Saviano also forwarded it to Webster with a note saying she was going to send it to 2,000 people.

Yesterday, she said she actually sent it to just three people, and that the mass e-mail claim was a "tongue-in-cheek" joke.

GAC apparently didn't think so.

"Without consent of the company, the employee sent a communication — via an e-mail account she regularly used in her capacity as a GAC employee — calling for a boycott of Mr. Charlie Daniels' music concerts in opposition to his 'Open Letter to Hollywood,' " the GAC statement said.

Webster said he called GAC last Wednesday not to complain about Saviano's views, but to make sure a special on Daniels scheduled to air two days later would, indeed, be broadcast, despite Saviano's views.

"I didn't call to complain, and I didn't call to get her fired," he said. "That wasn't our intention."

Saviano insists she expressed her opinion on her own time and on her own e-mail account. She also said she didn't consider her exchange with Webster confrontational.

"I didn't think it was testy at all," she said. "I just thought it was a free exchange of blather."

Plus, Saviano said, Webster knew her from other Music Row jobs and should've known that she was responding as an individual, not as a GAC employee.

"I just want to send a message that this isn't right," she said. "I believe that my personal convictions that I stated ... have nothing to do with my job performance."