

President Trump pressured Fox News to release fake story

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President Donald Trump is being accused of knowingly and actively trying to spread false news about the murder of DNC employee Seth Rich in a new lawsuit.

Rod Wheeler filed a complaint on Tuesday in the Southern District of New York against Fox News, Malia Zimmerman and Ed Butowsky claiming that they worked together to create a false narrative surrounding the death of Rich.

Also contributing to the creation of that fake news story was President Trump according to court documents, which claim that the Commander-in-Chief wanted the story to include multiple fake quotes which were attributed to Wheeler.

Wheeler is a former Washington DC homicide detective who investigated Rich's murder and frequently appeared as a guest on Fox News to discuss the case.

The filing also includes a text message from Butowsky, a Texas wealth manager and Trump supporter, to Wheeler, in which he discusses the President's eagerness to see the story published.

'Not to add any more pressure but the president just read the article. He wants the article out immediately. It's now all up to you. But don't feel the pressure,' Butowsky texted Wheeler according to the filing.

'The motivation behind the article: establish that Seth Rich provided WikiLeaks with the DNC emails to shift the blame from Russia and help put to bed speculation that President Trump colluded with Russia in an attempt to influence the outcome of the Presidential election,' states the lawsuit.

Butowsky is calling the lawsuit 'bulls***' while Fox News did not respond to a request for comment.

Fake news: Rod Wheeler filed a complaint on Tuesday in the Southern District of New York against Fox News, Malia Zimmerman and Ed Butowsky for allegedly releasing false information about the death of Seth Rich (above)

Big fan: A text from Butowsky to Wheeler (above) included in the filing shows that President Trump saw the story before it was published and wanted it out 'immediately'

Shocking claims: Butowsky and Zimmerman worked together to attribute to false quotes to Wheeler (above) in the story because 'that is the way the President wanted the article'

The lawsuit, in which Wheeler requests a jury trial, also claims that just before Butowsky texted Wheeler he left the former detective a voice message.

'A couple minutes ago I got a note that we have the full, uh, attention of the White House, on this. And, tomorrow, let's close this deal, whatever we've got to do. But you can feel free to say that the White House is onto this now,' says Butowsky in that message according to the filing.

That is when Zimmerman made the decision to add in two quotes which she attributed to Wheeler despite his claim that he never made the comments according to court documents.

'My investigation up to this point shows there was some degree of email exchange between Seth Rich and Wikileaks,' reads one of those quotes.

The second quote that Wheeler said was falsely attributed to him reads: 'My investigation shows someone within the DC government, Democratic National Committee or Clinton team is blocking the murder investigation from going forward. That is unfortunate. Seth Rich's murder is unsolved as a result of that.'

Wheeler said that as a result of those quotes, he has 'has suffered irreparable damage to his reputation and his career will likely never recover' and lost all credibility with the public.

'According to Butowsky, the statements were falsely attributed to Mr. Wheeler because that is the way the President wanted the article,' reads the lawsuit.

'Zimmerman, Butowsky and Fox had created fake news to advance President Trump's agenda.'

Wheeler states in the lawsuit that he was hired by Butowsky and Zimmerman, an investigative journalist with Fox News, to look into the murder back in February.

The private investigator claims that Zimmerman and Butowsky had already carved out the narrative of the story they hoped to write, which would reveal that Rich handed over the DNC emails to Wikileaks and that a member of the DNC murdered him in retaliation.

'Butowsky and Zimmerman hoped that, if Mr. Wheeler could confirm that Seth Rich leaked the DNC emails to WikiLeaks, that would debunk reports the Russians were responsible for the DNC hacks,' claims the complaint.

'In turn, Butowsky and Zimmerman hoped that, if Mr. Wheeler could shift the blame for the DNC hacks from the Russians to Seth Rich, this would undermine reports of collusion between Russia and the Trump Administration.'

Wheeler says he was first contacted by Butowsky via text on February 23, with the money man paying him a number of compliments before writing: 'Of all the people you have met in your line of work you have put me right next to those you view as the most confidential. I am extremely discreet. Is there a time I can give you a call this morning?'

The men then spoke for 20 minutes, with Butowsky saying that the Rich family wanted to hire an investigator into the case, and Wheeler appositely accepting that position.

Wheeler then met Zimmerman alter that months according to the lawsuit, but was cautioned by Butowsky to not let the Rich family know he was speaking to the journalist.

At the same time that he was looking into these claims he was also keeping in close contact with members of President Trump's staff, including Sean Spicer, Stephen Bannon and Director of Public Affairs at the Department of Justice, Sarah Flores.

Butowsky texted Wheeler in April and said: 'Are you in Washington DC area on Thursday afternoon? I am meeting Sean Spicer and want you with me.'

The next day Butowsky texted again, asking: 'Do you have summary done yet? [] Just bulletpointed. Just want to make sure we get point to Sean easily.'

Two days later the men met with Spicer and Wheeler handed over some of his notes claims the complaint.

Once the article was published, Wheeler claims that Butowsky sent him a flurry of texts informing him how best to frame the story when appearing on-air to discuss the matter.

'If you can, try to highlight this puts the Russian hacking story to rest,' reads one text.

'Just reflecting: we need to emphasize the FBI has a report that has been suppressed that shows that Seth rich did this. With Comey recently being fired this will gain a lot of attention and it's true,' said another text.

Zimmerman published the story less than 24 hours after Butowsky's text message in which he voiced President Trump's eagerness to see the story put online claims that lawsuit.

One day later however, Spicer denied having any knowledge of the story during the White House Daily Briefing when asked what President trump's reaction was to the report that Rich had been in communication with Wikileaks.

'Generally, I don't get updates on former DNC staffers. I'm not aware of that,' said Spicer.

He told a much different story after the lawsuit was filed, admitting that he had in fact met with Butowsjky and Wheeler back in April.

'Ed's been a longtime supporter of the president and asked to meet to catch up,' Spicer told NPR.

'I didn't know who Rod Wheeler was. Once we got into my office, [Butowsky] said, 'I'm sure you recognize Rod Wheeler from Fox News.'

It was also in April that Wheeler met with Detective Della-Camera of the DC police department, with the complatint stating that Butowsky texted him the night before the meeting to say: 'Della camera is either helping us or we will go after him as being part of the coverup.'

Detective Della-Camera said during that meeting 'he had nothing to say or to show that the shooting was related to emails or anything other than a street robbery.'

The story was published on May 16, six days after James Comey was fired by President Trump, and Wheeler offered up to give interviews by Butowsky.

'One of the big conclusions we need to draw from this is that the Russians did not hack our computer systems and emails and there was no collusion like trump with the Russians,' wrote Butowsky in a message to on-air talent including Steve Doocy, Gavin Hadden, Ainsley Earhardt and Brian Kilmeade.

The Rich family quickly spoke out against the story, at which point Zimmerman sent them an email defending the article, stating at one point: 'As you know, much of our information came from a private investigator, Rod Wheeler, who we understand was working on behalf of you.'

That in turn led to Rich's father Joel very publicly attacking Wheeler.

'We are a family who is committed to facts, not fake evidence that surfaces every few months to fill the void and distract law enforcement and the general public from finding Seth's murderers,' said Joel Rich in a statement.

'The services of the private investigator who spoke to press was offered to the Rich family and paid for by a

third party and contractually was barred from speaking to the press or anyone outside of law enforcement or the family unless explicitly authorized by the family.'

The Rich family then sent a cease and desist letter to Wheeler.

Wheeler eventually confronted Zimmerman about the quotes, who according to the complaint responded by admitting to adding to false statements from the private investigator.

Zimmerman admitted to making up the two quotes, with the court filing stating that she told Wheeler: 'Umm, well not not not . . . Not the part about the emails. Not the part about, I mean about the connection to WikiLeaks, but the rest of the quotes in the story did. A lot of the quotes in the story did.'

Butowsky allegedly added in that same conversation: '[O]ne day you're going to win an award for having said those things you didn't say.'

Fox News retracted the story on May 23, stating: 'The May 16 story was not initially subjected to the high degree of editorial scrutiny we require for all our reporting. Upon appropriate review, the article was found not to meet those standards and has since been removed.'

That statement did not say anything about the quotes which were falsely attributed to Wheeler, and so he requested and was granted a meeting with Dianne Brandi, Fox News's Executive Vice President, Legal and Business Affairs, and Jay Wallace, Fox News's Executive Vice President of News and Editorial.

Wheeler told the two that Zimmerman had made up the quotes about him in the article according to the court filing, and still nothing was hanged and no addition statement was released by Fox News.

In his lawsuit, Wheeler states that he was mistreated by Fox News because his black, both before and after the May 16 story was published on heir website.

'Throughout his career with Fox, Mr. Wheeler's white colleagues with comparable or inferior skills, expertise and experience have received more air time, made more appearances and been hired into full time positions,' reads the complaint.

'As a result, these white colleagues make more money, receive more notoriety and, in many cases, receive valuable benefits.'

The lawsuit lists Bo Dietel, Mark Furman, Steve Rogers, Pat Bronson and Griff Jenkin as examples of these 'white colleagues.'

Butwosky meanwhile took to Twitter to slam Wheeler back in June, writing: 'Fox News story was pulled b/c Rod Wheeler said [he] didn't say a quote . . . How much did DNC pay him?'

He followed that up with another post, stating: 'This shows Rod Wheeler has a major battle with the truth. Everyone needs to hear this. He says the precise words he swears he didn't say ???'

Douglas Wigdor, who is representing Wheeler, said in a statement on Tuesday: 'According to the complaint, at the same time that 21st Century Fox's General Counsel, Gerson Zweifach, was meeting with the UK regulators in an attempt to convince them that Fox had in place procedures to ensure compliance with broadcasting standards to purchase Sky, Fox News was working with the Trump administration to disseminate fake news in order to distract the public from Russia's alleged attempts to influence our Country's presidential election.'

Rich, 27, was gunned down in the affluent Bloomingdale neighborhood of DC in the early hours of July 10 while he was on the phone to his girlfriend after a night out at Lou's City Bar.

Rich worked as a data analyst at the DNC and had built a voter turnout database in the months before his death.

But despite speculation from the public, fueled by WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's own comments, Rich's father, Joel, insists that his son did not provide emails to WikiLeaks prior to the 2016 presidential election.

Joel believes that his son's death was robbery gone wrong, while a police report seen by DailyMail.com states the circumstances surrounding Rich's homicide are 'unknown'.

Security footage from a nearby store shows two men following Rich from a crosswalk in the moments before he was shot.

The camera only captured images of the assailants' legs and of Rich when he fell to the ground after being shot.

Following Rich's death, Assange offered a \$20,000 reward leading to an arrest of the killers. Republican lobbyist Jack Burkman offered an additional \$100,000 while the DC Police also offer \$25,000.

Police have said there had been numerous robberies in the area in the lead up to Rich's murder and suspect he may have engaged in a fight with his attackers.