

## Fox News' handling of Seth Rich story could snag British review of Sky deal

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Britain's media regulators appear to be reviewing [Fox News'](#) handling of an erroneous story that claimed slain Democratic National Committee staffer Seth Rich was the source of damaging leaks during last year's presidential campaign — not Russia.

Britain's Secretary of State for Culture and Media Karen Bradley on Tuesday asked Britain's media watchdog — the Office of Communications — to clarify portions of its assessment that 21st Century Fox, and the [Rupert Murdoch](#) family, which controls the media company, were “fit and proper” broadcasters.

British officials have been mulling whether to approve the Murdochs' \$14-billion bid to take full control of Europe's largest pay-TV company, Sky. The satellite TV service, which includes the Sky News unit, has 22 million customers in Britain, Ireland, Germany, Austria and Italy.

Bradley's query comes less than a week after an explosive [lawsuit was filed against Fox](#) and Fox News in New York by a former Washington detective, Rod Wheeler. Wheeler was a longtime paid contributor to Fox News and he alleged that quotes attributed to him in the Fox News article, which ran online for about a week in May, were fabrications.

Bradley, [in a statement](#), did not mention the discredited Fox News story — or the lawsuit alleging that [President Trump's](#) White House participated in the crafting of the story. Fox News has since retracted the story, saying it failed to live up to the network's standards.

Instead, Bradley asked Britain's Office of Communications, known as Ofcom, to provide clarifications on “a number of points” that have arisen recently. Bradley noted her office had reviewed a “large number” of allegations that have been lodged in relation to Fox.

“A number of these [allegations] raise new evidence and/or comment on the Ofcom assessment,” Bradley wrote. She asked Ofcom to report back by Aug. 25.

Wheeler's suit contends that a wealthy backer of Trump, Ed Butowsky, conspired with a Fox News correspondent and the White House to make up a story to deflect attention from the Russia probe. Rich was a 27-year-old aide at the DNC who was shot to death last summer.

Wheeler's attorney, Douglas Wigdor, separately sent a 110-page letter to Ofcom's Chief Executive Sharon White last week. Wigdor wrote that Wheeler's lawsuit “shed new light on whether 21st Century Fox executives were forthcoming and transparent with Ofcom during its investigation, as well as the question whether 21st Century Fox is capable of accurately and truthfully delivering news to the public.”

A Fox spokesman declined Tuesday to comment. Fox owns 39% of Sky, and wants to buy the shares it does not own.

“There is no way that the British government can make a decision to approve this \$14-billion takeover of Europe's largest pay-TV operator without assessing the seriously damaging allegations that Fox News colluded with the White House in a massive coverup,” said Will Davies, a campaign official with the activist group Avaaz, which opposes Fox's bid for Sky.