

# US judge mulls sending phone hacking case to UK

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(AP)—A federal judge in Los Angeles suggested Monday that Great Britain would be the proper place for a Hollywood stuntwoman to pursue a lawsuit against News Corp. and related companies over alleged phone hacking.

But after hearing legal arguments, U.S. District Judge Michael Fitzgerald said he would consider it further.

Fitzgerald's statement against the plaintiff undercuts efforts by New York lawyer Norman Siegel to take on Rupert Murdoch's companies in a U.S. courtroom, where discovery laws are more liberal than in England. Siegel is seeking more details about the alleged hacking scheme.

Eunice Huthart, a stunt double for Angelina Jolie, alleges her phone was hacked in 2004 and 2005 while she was in Hollywood filming "Mr. & Mrs. Smith." Jolie and Brad Pitt became a romantic item during that movie, and it was reported by the Sun newspaper. Huthart alleges they found out about it by hacking her cellphone.

She says she did not learn of the intrusion until British police came to see her in 2011 when the hacking scandal broke.

Siegel told the judge that sending the case to Great Britain would be tantamount to a dismissal because most cases associated with the hacking scandal have already been resolved and deadlines have passed for filing suits there.

He argued that the alleged violation of Huthart's rights occurred in the United States. "When the attack on privacy occurs within our borders it should not go unpunished," Siegel said.

The judge said Huthart was the victim of "what seems undisputed as a shocking violation of her privacy." But he suggested the underlying motive of the lawsuit was to get her monetary damages.

"I would not be here if all this was about was a check," said Siegel, a veteran civil rights lawyer.

"Counsel, this case is about a check," Fitzgerald said.

"It is not," Siegel said.

Defense attorney Joseph M. Terry said Huthart is an English citizen and her case belongs in Britain.

"When they choose a forum for more liberal discovery rules, that is forum shopping," he said. "They can't choose a forum because they think the laws will allow them to (question News Corp. chairman) Rupert Murdoch."

"You have a very interesting case," the judge said. "If this was a personal decision, I'd like to keep you here. And Ms. Jolie being a witness would be very interesting. But given that, I believe it belongs in England."

Fitzgerald did not set a date for his final ruling.

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