

Alex Jones hit with sanctions by judge in Sandy Hook lawsuit as case gets a proposed trial date

By Oliver Darcy and Lauren del Valle, CNN Business



Infowars host Alex Jones

A Connecticut judge on Tuesday sanctioned right-wing conspiracy theorist Alex Jones for suggesting that a lawyer for the Sandy Hook families, who are suing the InfoWars founder for his past claims that the 2012 shooting was staged, tried to frame him with child pornography.

The ruling, handed down from Bridgeport Superior Court Judge Barbara Bellis, came after

attorneys representing several Sandy Hook families in their lawsuit against Jones filed a motion on Monday asking the judge to review footage of Jones lambasting one of the attorneys in a Friday segment.

Bellis called Jones' behavior on the broadcast "indefensible," "unconscionable," and "possibly criminal behavior."

Bellis sanctioned Jones by

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- Defense Attorney **Norman Pattis** Speaking during the Infowars broadcast

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denying the defense the opportunity to pursue special motions to dismiss moving forward in the lawsuit. The court will also award attorneys fees and filing fees to the Sandy Hook families' lawyers related to the issue that Jones went off about in his broadcast: child pornography that Jones' team inadvertently turned over to the plaintiffs.

Jones is being sued by families of Sandy Hook victims in both Texas and Connecticut courts over his past claims that the 2012 shooting was staged. He has since acknowledged that the shooting was real. At the hearing, a proposed trial date of November 2020 was settled on by both sides and agreed to by the judge.

Jones suggested on a broadcast last Friday that an attorney for the Sandy Hook families tried to frame him by planting child pornography in emails that Jones' team then turned over to the plaintiffs as part of the discovery process. He later backed off the claim.

In their Monday court filing, the plaintiffs said they discovered "numerous images of child pornography" in the cache of discovery documents Jones provided them and immediately contacted the FBI.

The plaintiffs, however, noted the images "had apparently been sent to InfoWars email addresses."

In other words, it appeared a person or persons sent the images of child pornography to InfoWars email addresses and then, as part of the discovery process, those emails with the images were turned over to the plaintiffs.

It did not appear that Jones or anyone on his team solicited or even had knowledge of those images. Jones' attorney, Norman Pattis, said on an InfoWars broadcast that the FBI was treating Jones as a victim in the case, describing the emails that included the images of child pornography as "very hostile" toward him.

Sandy Hook attorney says YouTube's ban on hoaxer videos comes 'too late to undo the harm'

"I spoke to federal prosecutors last week," Pattis said on the broadcast. "They report that there is no indication anyone at InfoWars knowingly possessed child pornography."

In the Monday court filing, the plaintiffs added that it did not appear Jones' team had "engaged in even minimal due diligence" and "actually reviewed the materials before production."

In one of his trademark on-air tirades, Jones suggested without evidence on his Friday show that the child pornography was part of a plot by the lawyers for the Sandy Hook families to set him

up.

"And then now magically they want metadata out of hundreds of thousands of emails they got, and they know just where to go," Jones said, according to the Monday court filing. "What a nice group of Democrats. How surprising. What nice people."

Jones then mentioned a specific attorney for the Sandy Hook families, and "pound[ed] on a picture of his face," the court filing said.

In their court filing, the plaintiffs said they interpreted what Jones said as "threats against counsel ... made to a very large audience." The plaintiffs added, "The Court has an obligation to protect the attorneys, parties, and the judicial process."

On Monday night, Jones' lawyer Pattis acknowledged in a court filing that Jones "became impassioned" during Friday's broadcast, and that he "made direct reference to plaintiffs' counsel."

'There is a business plan but it's in Alex Jones' head': Court document sheds light on inner-workings of Infowars

But Pattis said in the court filing that Jones later "issued a public apology" on a Saturday broadcast.

"I'm not saying that the lawyers for the Sandy Hook families set this up or did this," Jones said



during that broadcast, which was the quote included in the Monday night court filing by Pattis.

Bellis, however, said in court on Tuesday that she was not “able to see an apology” in the broadcasts. She said in her ruling that the court had “no doubt” Jones was accusing the attorney of planting child pornography.

Jones’ attorney in court for most of Tuesday, Zachary Reyland, said the behavior demonstrated by Jones was “certainly inappropriate,” but he argued it did not rise to the level of a threat.

Pattis, who attended the hearing in the afternoon, said he had spoken to Jones who was “flabbergasted” at the possibility of being sanctioned. Pattis said if the attorney Jones had suggested planted child pornography was intimidated he should “be in a new line of work.”

In addition to mounting legal troubles, Jones and InfoWars have been banned from nearly every major social media platform for various terms of service violations, including hate speech.

A court document submitted earlier this month in the Connecticut lawsuit against Jones shed light on some of the inner workings of InfoWars.

The depositions emphasized

how lucrative it has been for Jones to sell products in his online store, and offered a glimpse into how being banned by social media companies like Facebook and Twitter has affected the business. The depositions also painted Infowars as an organization run entirely by Jones. ■