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Trump Sues Murdoch in Clash That Fractures Key Conservative Alliance

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The long-standing relationship between Donald Trump and Rupert Murdoch, once a pillar of conservative media power, is unraveling. On Friday, President Trump filed a lawsuit against Rupert Murdoch, Dow Jones, and News Corporation after The Wall Street Journal (WSJ), one of Murdoch’s flagship publications, ran a story that Trump called “malicious and defamatory.”

The article alleged that Trump contributed a questionable note to a birthday scrapbook for disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein, sparking a backlash the former president has been scrambling to contain. According to the WSJ, the letter featured a crude drawing and a message signed by Trump. Trump has firmly denied the claim, calling the report “completely false” and vowing legal retaliation. “I look forward to getting Rupert Murdoch to testify,” Trump said in a post on his social media platform, Truth Social.

The controversy deepens tensions between Trump and the 94-year-old Murdoch, who, according to former associates, may be recalibrating his stance toward the Make America Great Again (MAGA) base. “He’s testing out: is Trump losing the base on this?” one former Murdoch executive told reporters. Murdoch’s empire, which includes *Fox News*, *The New York Post*, and the *WSJ*, has historically had complicated dynamics with Trump, supporting him at times while criticizing him at others.

Trump’s popularity within the Republican Party remains robust. A recent CNN poll shows 88% of GOP voters still support him. Nevertheless, the Epstein-linked claims have prompted calls from some MAGA influencers like Charlie Kirk and Laura Loomer for more transparency. Prominent voices, including former *Fox News* hosts Tucker Carlson and Megyn Kelly, have either defended Trump or dismissed the WSJ story. Kelly labeled it “the dumbest attempted hit piece” she’s ever read.

According to Trump, efforts were made in the days leading up to the story’s publication to block it. He and his press secretary, Karoline Leavitt, reportedly contacted WSJ editor Emma Tucker, Murdoch himself, and News Corp CEO Robert Thomson to halt the piece. Trump claimed Murdoch assured him it would be “taken care of,” though it ultimately was not.

Dow Jones responded to the lawsuit, saying, “We have full confidence in the rigor and accuracy of our reporting, and will vigorously defend against any lawsuit.”

Historically, Murdoch has refused to pull stories even under pressure. Former WSJ bureau chief Gabriel Kahn recalled that Murdoch has “always loved a good scoop” and resisted efforts from Hollywood elites to suppress negative press.

The Trump-Murdoch alliance has always been more pragmatic than personal. Murdoch was never known to be fond of Trump, having supported alternative GOP candidates in the past. But with Trump’s return to the White House, Murdoch’s networks have again enjoyed record

viewership, particularly at Fox News, which continues to lead prime-time ratings. Trump's controversial yet headline-grabbing presence has proven to be good for business.

Still, friction has escalated in recent years. After the events of January 6, internal emails revealed Murdoch instructed executives to begin sidelining Trump. He also used his media outlets differently, sometimes supporting Trump on *Fox News*, while running more critical pieces in *The Wall Street Journal* and *New York Post*. The *Post* famously buried Trump's 2024 campaign announcement deep in its pages under the dismissive headline "Been there, Don that."

Despite personal distaste, Murdoch is unlikely to break with Trump completely. As one former aide noted, "He doesn't want to be flanked and lose the core conservative base."

Ultimately, this lawsuit highlights not only a legal fight but also a deeper battle for control over the conservative narrative. Whether Murdoch doubles down or distances himself from Trump, the future of their alliance could shape the messaging and momentum of the right in the run-up to the 2026 elections.