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## Trump ally Mike Lindell must face defamation suit over election-rigging claims

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By Jack Queen

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(Reuters) - MyPillow Inc Chief Executive Mike Lindell must face a defamation lawsuit brought by a voting machine company that the Trump ally falsely accused of rigging the 2020 U.S. election, a Minnesota federal judge ruled on Monday.

Judge Wilhelmina M. Wright denied Lindell and MyPillow's motion to dismiss the lawsuit by Smartmatic USA Corp, finding ample evidence that Lindell ignored publicly available information that contradicted his theories.

Judge Wright also found sufficient evidence that Lindell knew or should have known his statements were false and acted with "actual malice" in promoting them, a key legal threshold in defamation cases.

Lawyers for the defendants did not immediately respond to inquiries Monday.

An attorney for Smartmatic, J. Erik Connolly, told Reuters in a statement the company was pleased with the ruling.

"Mr. Lindell continues to spread disinformation and, by doing so, jeopardizes secure and accurate voting in the United States and elsewhere. It must come to an end," Connolly said.

Smartmatic operated voting machines in Los Angeles County in 2020 and says there were no irregularities in its tallies.

The London-based company alleged in its January complaint that Lindell knowingly made false election-rigging claims to boost MyPillow's sales and made Smartmatic "synonymous with election fraud."

The defendants said in their motion to dismiss that Lindell's statements were "not inherently improbable" and were based on publicly available information about problems with voting machines.

Smartmatic and competitor Dominion Voting Systems Inc have filed similar lawsuits against Trump allies and media outlets that spread the rigging claims, including Fox Corp and Newsmax Media Inc.

(Reporting by Jack Queen; Editing by Richard Chang)

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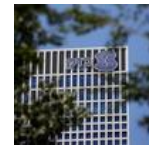
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