

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Alsanabani v. Spear Operations Group, LLC

Alsanabani · No. Civil Action No. 25-1684 (JDB) · Decided December 18, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Columbia granted Erik Prince’s motion to dismiss claims arising from alleged torts connected to the United Arab Emirates’ military campaign in Yemen. The court held that service was defective because the summons lacked the clerk’s signature and court seal, and dismissed the claims against Prince without prejudice after the plaintiff failed to respond to the motion.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Columbia
WRITING FOR THE COURT	John D. Bates
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Columbia
DECIDED	December 18, 2025
DOCKET	Civil Action No. 25-1684 (JDB)
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendant Erik Prince moved to dismiss claims against him under Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 12(b)(4) and 12(b)(5) for insufficient process and service of process. The plaintiff did not respond. The district court granted the motion and dismissed the claims against Prince without prejudice.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The Court considered whether the plaintiff had carried her burden to demonstrate proper service and whether dismissal without prejudice was an appropriate discretionary remedy for defective service and failure to respond to a dispositive motion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published district court memorandum opinion; persuasive authority within the District of Columbia but not binding on other courts.

TOPICS

- service of process
- motions to dismiss
- personal jurisdiction
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether service on Erik Prince was defective because the summons lacked the clerk's signature and the Court's seal as required by Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 4(a)(1)(F) and (G).
2. Whether the Court should quash service and permit another attempt or dismiss the claims against Prince without prejudice.
3. Whether the Court could treat Prince's motion to dismiss as conceded under D.D.C. Local Civil Rule 7(b) because Alsanabani failed to respond.

HOLDINGS

1. Service was improper because the summons served on Prince did not bear the clerk's signature or the Court's seal, as required by Rule 4(a)(1)(F) and (G).
2. The Court could treat Prince's motion to dismiss as conceded because Alsanabani failed to file a response within the time prescribed by D.D.C. Local Civil Rule 7(b).
3. Dismissal of the claims against Prince without prejudice was appropriate rather than merely quashing service and allowing another attempt.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Service of process is not trivial—if the requirements are not satisfied, a court lacks authority to exercise personal jurisdiction over the defendant.” (2)

“Actual notice ‘cannot by itself validate an otherwise defective service.’” (3)

“If a defendant is not served within 90 days after the complaint is filed, the court—on motion or on its own after notice to the plaintiff—must dismiss the action without prejudice against that defendant or order that service be made within a specified time.” (4)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Alsanabani sued private military contractors and related entities and individuals for torts arising from the United Arab Emirates' military campaign in Yemen. The summons served on Erik Prince lacked the clerk's signature and the Court's seal. After Prince moved to dismiss based on defective service, Alsanabani did not respond, despite having counsel and prior notice that failure to complete proper service could result in dismissal without prejudice.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Alsanabani filed the complaint on May 28, 2025, and an amended complaint on July 17, 2025. After the Court ordered her to provide proof of service or explain the failure to serve, she filed purported proof of service, including as to Prince. Prince moved to dismiss on November 24, 2025, asserting that the summons lacked the clerk's signature and the Court's seal. Alsanabani did not respond, and the Court treated the motion as conceded and dismissed the claims against Prince without prejudice.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Wilson v. Prudential Fin., 332 F. Supp. 2d 83, 87 (D.D.C. 2004)
- Light v. Wolf, 816 F.2d 746, 751 (D.C. Cir. 1987)
- Gorman v. Ameritrade Holding Corp., 293 F.3d 506, 514 (D.C. Cir. 2002)
- Omni Capital Int'l, Ltd. v. Rudolf Wolff & Co., 484 U.S. 97, 104 (1987)
- Cohen v. Bd. of Trs. of the Univ. of D.C., 819 F.3d 476, 480-84 (D.C. Cir. 2016)
- Freedom Watch, Inc. v. Org. of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, 766 F.3d 74, 81 (D.C. Cir. 2014)
- Staton v. Vesta Corp., Civ. A. No. 22-374, 2022 WL 2663824, at *1 (D.D.C. July 11, 2022)
- Fox v. Am. Airlines, Inc., 389 F.3d 1291 (D.C. Cir. 2004)
- Jackson v. Todman, 516 F. App'x 3 (D.C. Cir. 2013)

Retrieved from lawtools.ai · <https://lawtools.ai/cases/federal/united-states-district-court-for-the-district-of-columbia/2025/alsanabani-v-spear-operations-group-llc-gzbjmxw0>