

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

Seelig v. Central Intelligence Agency

Seelig · No. 25-cv-06592-JST · Decided August 21, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California adopted a magistrate judge’s recommendation to dismiss Christopher Seelig’s claims against the Central Intelligence Agency and other defendants without leave to amend. The court held that the claims were frivolous and denied as moot Seelig’s motion for an expedited hearing.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Jon S. Tigar
JURISDICTION	United States District Court, Northern District of California
DECIDED	August 21, 2025
DOCKET	25-cv-06592-JST
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The district court reviewed a magistrate judge's report and recommendation recommending dismissal without leave to amend, considered the plaintiff's timely objections, adopted the recommendation, dismissed the case, and denied the plaintiff's motion for an expedited hearing as moot.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The district court reviewed the magistrate judge's report and recommendation and the plaintiff's timely objections.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unknown; district court opinion with no reporter citation and no stated precedential status

TOPICS

- subject matter jurisdiction
- motions to dismiss
- pleadings
- civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- civil procedure
- federal jurisdiction
- remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the complaint should be dismissed as frivolous and too insubstantial to support federal subject matter jurisdiction.
2. Whether the court needed to decide whether the claims arose under statutes that provide a basis for civil liability.
3. Whether the plaintiff's motion for an expedited hearing remained live after dismissal of the complaint.

HOLDINGS

1. Claims that are frivolous, attenuated, and unsubstantial may be dismissed because they are too insubstantial to invoke federal subject matter jurisdiction. Seelig's claims were frivolous and therefore subject to dismissal.
2. The court did not need to decide whether the plaintiff's claims arose under statutes that provide a basis for civil liability because the claims were independently subject to dismissal as frivolous.
3. The motion for an expedited hearing was denied as moot because the complaint was dismissed.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“[F]ederal courts are without power to entertain claims otherwise within their jurisdiction if they are so attenuated and unsubstantial as to be absolutely devoid of merit, wholly” (at 1)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Christopher Seelig brought claims against the Central Intelligence Agency and other defendants under federal criminal statutes. The district court determined that the claims were frivolous and too insubstantial to support federal jurisdiction. The court dismissed the complaint without leave to amend and denied Seelig's motion for an expedited hearing as moot.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Magistrate Judge Thomas Hixson recommended dismissal without leave to amend on two independent grounds: the claims were based on federal criminal statutes that do not provide a private basis for civil liability, and the claims were frivolous. Plaintiff Christopher Seelig filed objections and moved for an expedited hearing. The district court adopted the recommendation, relying on frivolousness and the substantiality doctrine without deciding whether the claims could arise under statutes creating civil liability.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Hagans v. Lavine, 415 U.S. 528, 536–37 (1974)
- Ou-Young v. Rudy, No. 21-CV-07361-BLF, 2022 WL 2343043, at *3 (N.D. Cal. June 29, 2022)

- Feng v. Tripp, No. 24-cv-07539-JST, 2025 WL 1616638, at *2 (N.D. Cal. June 6, 2025)

OPINION

1 2 3 4 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 5 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA 6 7
CHRISTOPHER MICHAEL SEELIG, Case No. 25-cv-06592-JST 8 Plaintiff, ORDER
ADOPTING REPORT & RECOMMENDATION TO DISMISS 9 v. CASE; ORDER DENYING
AS MOOT PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR 10 CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY,
EXPEDITED HEARING et al., Re: ECF Nos. 5, 9 11 Defendants. 12 13 The Court has reviewed
Magistrate Judge Thomas Hixson's report and recommendation to 14 dismiss this case without
leave to amend.

ECF No. 5. Plaintiff Christopher Seelig filed timely 15 objections to the report and
recommendation, ECF No. 13, as well as a motion for expedited 16 hearing and several exhibits,
ECF Nos. 9, 14, 16. 17 Judge Hixson concluded that Seelig's claims were subject to dismissal on
two independent 18 grounds: that they are brought under federal criminal statutes that do not
provide a basis for civil 19 liability, and that they are frivolous.

ECF No. 5 at 4–6. In response, Seelig argues that several 20 grounds for civil liability exist and
that his claims are not frivolous. ECF No. 13. 21 Having reviewed the entire record, including all
of the documents submitted by Seelig, the 22 Court adopts Judge Hixson's recommendation to
dismiss this case without leave to amend.

The 23 Court does not decide whether Seelig's claims might arise under statutes giving rise to civil
24 liability because, for the reasons discussed by Judge Hixson, his claims are frivolous and
therefore 25 subject to dismissal. ECF No. 5 at 5–6; see also, e.g., *Hagans v. Lavine*, 415 U.S. 528,
536–37 26 (1974) (“[F]ederal courts are without power to entertain claims otherwise within their
jurisdiction 27 if they are so attenuated and unsubstantial as to be absolutely devoid of merit,
wholly 1 modified)); *Ou-Young v. Rudy*, No. 21-CV-07361-BLF, 2022 WL 2343043, at *3 (N.D.

Cal. 2 || June 29, 2022) (“Claims that are too insubstantial to give rise to subject matter jurisdiction
include 3 those alleging bizarre or wholly implausible conspiracy theories.”); *Feng v. Tripp*, No.
24-cv- 4 07539-JST, 2025 WL 1616638, at *2 (N.D. Cal. June 6, 2025) (dismissing complaint
without 5 leave to amend under the substantiality doctrine described in *Hagans*).

6 Because the Court dismisses Seelig's complaint, it denies as moot Seelig's motion for an 7 ||
expedited hearing. ECF No. 9. 8 The Clerk shall enter judgment and close the file. 9 IT IS SO
ORDERED. 10 || Dated: August 21, 2025 JON S. TIG 12 United States District Judge 15 16 = 17
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