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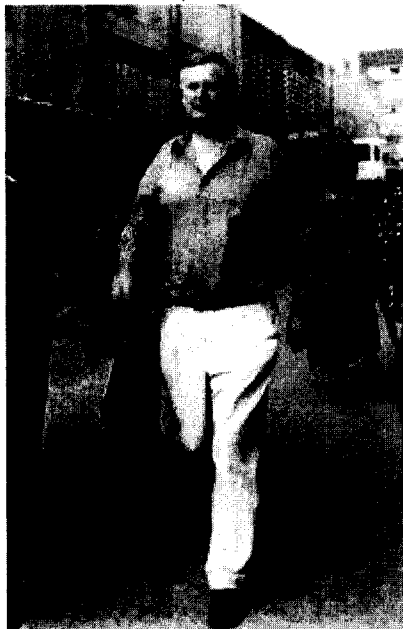
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Halloran sues paper for defamation

By Peter Gregory
Chief Court Reporter
December 30, 2004



Peter Halloran arrives at the courthouse in Freetown in August.

Photo: AFP

Victoria Police Superintendent Peter Halloran has launched defamation proceedings against *The Australian* newspaper and journalist Padraic Murphy, claiming they campaigned against him when covering his sex abuse trial.

Mr Halloran, who has been on trial in Sierra Leone, has denied allegations that he sexually assaulted a 13-year-old schoolgirl.

In a Supreme Court writ, lodged on December 24, Mr Halloran has accused *The Australian* and Murphy of carrying out a campaign to denigrate him.

The writ said eight articles were published between September 3 and November 10 "in a high-handed and arrogant manner with reckless indifference to the truth of the facts". It alleged the articles showed insolent disregard for Mr Halloran's reputation. That entitled him to aggravated damages, as well as exemplary damages to punish the defendants, the claim said.

Mr Halloran has asked for a judge and jury to hear the case.

According to the writ, Murphy published an unspecified article without attempting to check with Mr Halloran or his wife about the alleged facts.

Murphy ignored two letters from Mr Halloran's solicitors, the writ said. The first letter denied allegations contained in the first of the eight stories, and the second allegedly corrected assertions published in the fourth.

Mr Halloran is a former head of the Victoria Police homicide squad, former officer in charge of its witness protection program and had been working for the Special Court in Sierra Leone as a war crimes investigations commander when he was charged.

At his trial, it was alleged Mr Halloran had sex with the schoolgirl in his bedroom in a house he shared with other investigators.

Former Tasmanian police officer Mandy Cordwell, one of the investigators, reported to authorities the girl's

claims that she had sex with Mr Halloran after he interviewed her for a child-minding job.

Mr Halloran has strenuously denied three charges related to sex with a minor. His counsel, Nicholas Brown-Marke, has asked the trial judge to dismiss the charges on the basis that there is no evidence against him.

The writ claimed many of the articles in *The Australian* defamed Mr Halloran by saying that he had sexually assaulted the 13-year-old. It said individual articles included statements that reflected poorly on his reputation as a police officer.

As a result of the articles, Mr Halloran had been held up to public ridicule and contempt; had been seriously injured in his feelings and his personal and professional reputation, and had suffered loss and damage, and would continue to do so, the claim said.

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Thursday, December 30, 2004

REBUILDING IN THE GULF

Ramsey Clark to defend Saddam

Former attorney general says Hussein victim of 'selective prosecution'

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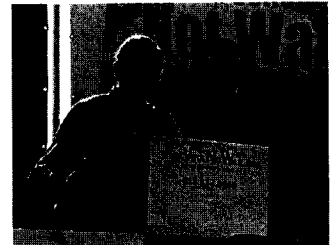
Ramsey Clark, former U.S. attorney general and leftist anti-war activist, announced yesterday he has joined the defense team of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Clark made the announcement in Amman, Jordan, and took the opportunity to slam the Bush administration, saying the U.S. should be tried for alleged "war crimes" in Fallujah, Iraq.

According to a report by Agence France-Presse, fellow Saddam lawyer Ziad Khasawna said Clark's presence on the ex-dictator's legal team "honored and inspired" the other attorneys.

Clark arrived Tuesday in Amman, where Saddam's legal team is based. Besides meeting with other lawyers, Clark met with Saddam's two daughters who live in Jordan.

The attorney general during the Johnson administration, Clark visited Hussein in Baghdad in February 2003 just before the U.S.-led invasion. He first met the dictator prior to the first Gulf War. The news service reports Clark has also been involved with the defense of former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic, on trial for war crimes in The Hague.



Ramsey Clark

Clark decried the fact Saddam saw a lawyer for the first time one year after his capture.

"In international law, anyone accused of crime has the right to be tried by a confident, independent and impartial court, and there can be no fair trial without those qualities," he told reporters.

"The special court in Iraq was created by the Iraqi governing council, which is nothing more than a creation of the U.S. military occupation and has no authority in law as a criminal court."

Referring to the former despot as "President Saddam Hussein," Clark says it's the U.S. that should go on trial, pointing to last month's siege of Falluja, destruction of houses, alleged torture in prisons and the military's role in the deaths of thousands of Iraqis.

A Baghdad court ruled in July that Saddam faced seven preliminary charges, with more precise charges to follow.

"It's selective prosecution and it's the worst form," Clark said. "You pick your enemies and you prejudge the case and you go through the formalities and you convict them."

Clark called the U.S. "an arrogant power that is not dealing with rights."


Reuters quotes Clark as saying Saddam's defense could take years to prepare with many witnesses who would have to testify, among them world leaders and politicians.

"Assuming Saddam Hussein is going to be tried you have to prepare the defense and that's an enormous task maybe two years of prosecution evidence and hundreds of witnesses," he said.

The Iraqi government has announced it will begin trying several of Hussein's henchmen soon with proceedings likely to begin before the Jan. 30 elections.

Clark, who runs the International Action Center, a front group for the communist Workers World Party, is a longtime critic of Bush foreign policy, referring to the president's actions as "criminal offenses, they are high crimes, they are indictable offenses, and they are impeachable offenses."

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Access To Saddam Key To Justice

30/12/2004 10:51 AM

Suleiman al-Khalidi

A controversial US civil rights lawyer has reported that he will be joining the legal team to defend former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, who is expected to eventually be tried for war crimes.

Former US attorney general Ramsey Clarke, who has cultivated ties with Saddam since the early 1990s, criticised Washington and the US-backed Iraqi authorities for limiting access to the jailed former ruler, saying justice could not be done without full defence access.

"I think it's a clear priority to establish direct, consistent and effective communication with President Saddam Hussein...he has to communicate freely and that has not happened so far," Clarke said after meeting Saddam's Amman-based team and the former Iraqi ruler's two exiled daughters.

Clarke said one significant step towards an improvement in access was Saddam's first meeting with a member of his defence team two weeks ago.

"They have systematically prevented that for a year until that one meeting... so the significance of that is extremely important," Clarke said.

A Baghdad court told Saddam in July that he faced seven preliminary charges, with more precise charges to follow.

Iraq's US-backed government is preparing to begin war crimes hearings for some of Saddam's aides during campaigning for what they have touted as the first free elections after decades of rigged politics under the former autocratic ruler.

Saddam is expected to be among the last to face trial.

Clarke said Iraqi authorities wanted to push ahead with the trials to score political points ahead of the Jan. 30 elections and questioned the impartiality of the Special Tribunal running the trials.

"It's selective prosecution and it's the worst form. You pick your enemies and you prejudge the case and you go through the formalities and you convict them," he said.

The veteran anti-war campaigner, who first met Saddam before the 1991 Gulf War, was among the last Westerners to see him just several weeks before the US-led invasion in March 2003.

Clarke, who had visited Iraq to lobby against the impact of UN economic sanctions imposed after the country's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, has also sought permission to see Saddam.

"The problem is not going to Iraq but the problem is getting the US to agree (access to Saddam)," Clarke said. "We are dealing with an arrogant power that is not dealing with rights."

He said Saddam's defence could take years to prepare with

many witnesses who would have to testify, among them world leaders and politicians.

"Assuming Saddam Hussein is going to be tried you have to prepare the defence and that's an enormous task maybe two years of prosecution evidence and hundreds of witnesses," he said.

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HEADLINE: Diamonds for Blood;
How terrorism funds itself.

BYLINE: Vance Serchuk, The Weekly Standard

BODY:

Blood From Stones
The Secret Financial Network of Terror
by Douglas Farah
Broadway Books, 225 pp., \$24.95

WEST AFRICA, A REGION not usually uppermost in the minds of American foreign policymakers, is nonetheless responsible for two of our most intractable post-9/11 intelligence puzzles.

In these two very similar cases, Arab operatives in West African countries allegedly seek to exploit local smuggling operations to buy precious and tightly controlled natural commodities. The CIA investigates, but the veracity of the stories remains uncertain, and, consequently, the subject of protracted, acrimonious debate within the intelligence community.

Of these stories, one--Iraq's purported attempts to acquire uranium from Niger--is well known. The other--al Qaeda's purchase of conflict diamonds in **Sierra Leone** and Liberia--is not. Thus it makes a well-deserving subject for a new book, namely Blood From Stones by veteran investigative journalist and former Washington Post West Africa bureau chief Douglas Farah.

Farah first posited the connection between black market gems and radical Islam in the fall of 2001. Blood From Stones carefully lays out the evidence that senior al Qaeda operatives traveled to West Africa in the late 1990s and again in the summer of 2001 to buy diamonds from Sierra Leonean rebels, with the connivance of then-president Charles Taylor of Liberia.

Taylor, a thuggish kleptocrat under U.N. sanctions, was desperate for cash to fund proxy wars against his neighbors, while al Qaeda in turn was eager to launder tens of millions of dollars into commodities like diamonds, gold, tanzanite, and emeralds. "All are essentially parallel currencies," Farah explains, "easy to transport, smuggle, and convert."

Farah builds his case largely from field intelligence he gathered personally. His story certainly doesn't lack for color. In spare, deadpan prose, the book surveys a bizarre and often grotesque raft of characters,

such as a hairdresser-turned-warlord known as "General Mosquito" (the legendarily effective killer is said to suck the life out of his enemies); a rebel army of orphaned child soldiers, notorious for hacking limbs off noncombatants; and a former bodyguard to Muammar Qaddafi, veteran of Hezbollah, and all-around soldier of fortune, who insists he is actually a used car salesman. By the end of this tour through the West African bush, the reader will be forgiven for finding, by contrast, the evil of al Qaeda's Islamic fundamentalism reassuring in its familiarity.

Sensational though Farah's charges are--he was evacuated from West Africa with his family in 2001 after U.S. and foreign governments discovered threats of "retribution" for his reporting--*Blood From Stones* raises as many questions as it answers. Farah calls the West African diamond trade "some of al Qaeda's most vital financial operations," but it remains unclear to what extent this emphasis on commodities is really commensurate with their importance in Osama bin Laden's budget. Both the 9/11 Commission and an independent task force recently organized by the Council on Foreign Relations, for example, concluded that the overwhelming bulk of al Qaeda's money comes from fundraising in the Gulf.

IN FAIRNESS, Farah expands his analysis of terrorist financing well beyond Africa's diamond fields, diligently detailing al Qaeda's reliance on Islamic charities and underground financial networks like hawala, a trust-based system for transferring funds in the Muslim world. But as the book's title implies, the intellectual and emotional crux of this project lies in exposing the interstices between commodity trafficking and terrorism.

Although Farah's diamond thesis has thankfully not been politicized to the same degree as uranium smuggling in Niger, it has polarized the intelligence community all the same. The CIA has furiously denounced the argument ("a pile of horse--t," according to one Agency spokesman who spoke to Farah), while European intelligence agencies, the U.N. **Special Court in Sierra Leone**, and independent sleuthing by NGOs have unearthed further evidence to support it.

But regardless of whether an al Qaeda-diamond nexus is ever conclusively proved, *Blood From Stones* is still valuable for its broader revelations about where our intelligence capabilities are disturbingly lacking.

As Farah points out, "The CIA had lost more assets in West Africa than almost anywhere else in the world after the Cold War. Many stations around the continent, which had been used primarily as recruiting grounds for Soviet bloc agents, were closed or cut to the bone." Yet the 9/11 Commission found that West Africa is among the half-dozen places where, "if you were a terrorist leader today . . . you [would] locate your base." So it is clear that the conventional wisdom concerning the region's strategic irrelevance is both anachronistic and dangerous.

There are hopeful signs that the United States is beginning to redress its West Africa blind spot. Earlier this year, the Pentagon dispatched Special Forces and Marines to Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad to train local militaries in counterterrorism. Of particular concern to the American military are the ungoverned wastelands that stretch across the southern rim of the Sahara, which radical Islamist networks are believed to be using as a safe haven.

Much of the war on terrorism will require venturing deep into these collapsed corners of the Muslim world, far from where America's spies, soldiers, and diplomats are accustomed to working.

As our national security establishment adapts to confront the considerable challenge posed by such places, we can be grateful to intrepid explorers like Douglas Farah who have already made the journey--and have returned to tell us about it.

Vance Serchuk is a research associate in defense and security policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

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