

National

Former hostage files \$5 million imprisonment suit

LOS ANGELES — The lawyer who unsuccessfully took on the OPEC oil cartel filed a \$5 million false imprisonment suit Wednesday against Iran and the United States on behalf of a Marine taken hostage during the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

Attorney James H. Davis filed the federal court suit on behalf of Sgt. John D. McKeel Jr., of Balch Springs, Texas, charging the Iranian government illegally held the Marine hostage and stating the agreement with Iran to free the hostages was illegal — "the same as ransom."

Eleven other Americans who were stationed in Iran at the time of the takeover of the embassy have filed similar suits seeking financial retribution from the Iranians and challenging the agreement that brought about their release.

Davis, who lost a well-publicized federal court suit last year that sought to break up OPEC because of violations of U.S. antitrust laws, said McKeel contacted him to file the action. "One of the ways we can help discourage future terrorism is

by making governments responsible for the acts of terrorists," Davis said. "When governments ratify the acts of outlaws, they should pay for it."

McKeel, who will be reassigned to embassy duty next month, did not attend the news conference to announce the filing of the suit.

During his imprisonment, McKeel's Iranian guards told him his mother had died, and if he wanted to go to her funeral, he'd have to answer their questions. He refused, although his mother later said he never was sure she was alive until he arrived at Weisbaden, West Germany, after being released.

The 35-page complaint in the lawsuit, which seeks \$2 million in general damages and \$3 million in punitive damages, also asserts release of Iranian assets in the United States by then President Carter in the negotiating for freeing the hostages is null and void because it was done "under direct threat of force and duress."

Davis said Carter "overextended his authority" when he freed Iranian assets that were frozen during the 444-day hostage crisis. He said if a settlement is won — and the Iranians do not pay — the U.S. government may be forced to come up with the money.

"The hostages I've talked to do not want the judgment paid by the United States, but if it comes down to that, the United States may have to pay," he said.

Davis pointed out Iranian assets are still available in the United States for payment of the judgment. He noted the Bank of America headquartered in San Francisco has obtained a court injunction against release of \$91 million in Iranian assets it holds.

The attorney said he may go to court to seek a similar injunction freezing Iranian assets within the next week or so.

McKeel is not the first ex-hostage to file suit against Iran. Three former American hostages, including two women

released in November 1979, filed suit on Feb. 13 in federal court in Washington against Iran and its leaders seeking \$30 million each for being held captive at the embassy.

That suit was filed by Steven Lauterbach, of Dayton, Ohio, one of the 52 Americans released on Jan. 20, and two women, Lillian Johnson of Burke, Va., and Elizabeth Montagne, of Washington, D.C., who were released with the first group of Americans in Nov. 1979.

In addition, former hostage Sgt. Gregory Allen Persinger, one of the 52, filed suit in Washington on Feb. 2, charging he was illegally arrested and detained in Iran in violation of U.S. and international law.

In the last year, eight other Americans who were stationed in Iran at the time of the takeover have filed suit against Iran in U.S. District Court in Washington. They include three who were hidden at the Canadian Embassy and five others released by the militants in November 1979.

El Salvador aid need disputed

WASHINGTON — Disputing the need for increased U.S. military aid to El Salvador, former Ambassador Robert White said today the real threat to the Central American nation comes from the extreme right — not the extreme left.

"There is no demonstrable need for putting U.S. military advisers into El Salvador," White told a House Appropriations subcommittee. "It would put El Salvador into the position of being a vassal state of the United States."

But Senate Republican leader Howard Baker, dropping clues to possible future U.S. policy, said today it is "entirely appropriate" for the United States to commit small numbers of American milit-

ary advisers to support the embattled government.

"On the question of advisers, of course we should have advisers," Baker told reporters after meeting with President Reagan at the White House. "On the question of combat troops or those who might be involved in combat, at this moment, I think we should not."

The House panel opened hearings on possible aid to El Salvador just one day after Reagan said the United States will not play a Vietnam-style role in the Central American nation but will support its government "against those who believe in the violent overthrow."

White, who was fired from his post by the new administration, described as "demonstrably false" a Pentagon assessment published

Friday claiming El Salvador's armed forces cannot deal with the leftist guerrilla threat.

"The threat to the stability of the government of El Salvador comes not from the extreme left but from the extreme right," White said.

"Military aid to this government is not crucial and it runs the risk of diverting the attention from the real problem of El Salvador, which is political reconciliation. To apply a military solution to a leftist threat is to go down the wrong road."

White blamed the extreme right, including government security forces, for the deaths of about half of the estimated 10,000 people killed in the past year.

"The issue is not military aid. The issue is how you are going to supply military aid to a military

force that is killing and assassinating thousands and thousands of people down there," White said.

But he agreed with the administration's warning to the Soviet Union and Cuba about their massive arms shipments to El Salvador last year, and said there definitely was direct Nicaraguan involvement in the arms shipments.

Secretary of State Alexander Haig said this week the administration was considering various options to stop communist-supported insurgents in El Salvador.

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Tax protesters face IRS prosecution

DETROIT — State and Internal Revenue Service officials say they will take whatever action necessary, including criminal prosecution, to stop a tax revolt by 3,500 auto workers — a movement they deny is spreading nationwide.

Michigan officials said Tuesday they will join the IRS in a crackdown on the tax revolt fever, which began in Flint and spread to Pontiac and Detroit.

Auto workers in the three cities are claiming as many as 99 dependents on withholding forms, thereby avoiding tax reductions from their paychecks.

Public affairs officer Tony Bombardieri said the IRS will "take whatever action is necessary to get these protesters to comply with the law — and if that means criminal prosecutions, then we'll prosecute."

State and federal officials both stressed the tax revolt was "strictly a local movement," despite messages of support from across the country.

But protest organizers say the Michigan rebellion, which has attracted a substantial number of white-collar workers as well as auto workers, has piqued the interest of sympathetic taxpayers from across the nation.

"In the last three days, we've done nothing but be on the phones," said William Hughes, a founder of We the People ACT (American Citizens Tribunal), an organization fueling the tax protest.

The 700-member club, which claims the direct federal income tax is unconstitutional, has taken calls from Washington, Utah, South Carolina, Illinois, West Virginia, Nevada and California — "Los Angeles, especially," he said.

State Treasurer Loren Monroe, whose agency has been investigating We the People since November, said his staff will be "looking very carefully" at workers claiming high numbers of dependents "and we will probably ask the employers to withhold Michigan income taxes without benefit of any exemptions in those cases."

Monroe said it was unclear whether any criminal charges would be filed, but he noted tax evasion carries a prison term of up to five years under Michigan law while perjury statutes — which might apply — carry sentences of up to 15 years.

State Revenue Commissioner Sydney Goodman said violators will be prosecuted both indepen-

dently and jointly with the IRS, but conceded the state lacks the resources to take action against all those involved.

He said filing a false tax return, like tax fraud, is a felony under Michigan law.

Although local IRS officials from other states said they have seen no evidence of an organized rebellion, Florida has reported a tax evasion similar to the Michigan protest "on a limited basis in the Tampa Bay area" for several years.

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