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PALESTINIAN TERRORIST FUNDRAISER TAKES STAND  

User Rating:      / 0

Poor     Best

Subj: UP153

Date: 1011212000 2:40:17 PM Pacific Daylight Time From: Mwupi

To: lkjos@upi.com

October 12, 2000 ALLEGED PALESTINIAN TERRORIST FUNDRAISER TAKES STAND By MARK WEISENMILLER of UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

Bradenton, Fl. (UPI)—An alleged Palestinian terrorist group fund raiser being held on secret evidence took the stand in his trial for the first time today.

Mazen AI-Najjar, who has lived in the U.S. for the past 20 years, spent most of the day denying federal government charges that he raised thousands of dollars for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Investigators for the Immigration and Naturalization Service gathered evidence, that has since been classified as Top Secret, that AI-Najjar used a Tampa-based think tank and numerous political conferences for fundraising for Palestinian terrorist groups.

Instead, AI-Najjar told the court today that that money he raised was for Middle Eastern orphans, not secretive slush funds for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

"He was excellent (testifying). I think everybody in the courtroom believed him," said Nahla AI-Arian, AI-Najjar's sister. AI-Najjar has been in jail for more than three years without a criminal charge. He is being held on a visa violation.

"He is not the monster that the government has made him out to be," stated Joseph Hohenstein, AI-Najjar's attorney. Late Thursday afternoon, cross examination began and concentrated on Sami AI-Arian, AI-Najjar's brother-in-law, who is also being investigated by federal authorities on possible ties to Middle Eastern terrorist organizations.

The case is expected to finish by Friday afternoon.

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NUMEROUS HIV CLINICS AND PHYSICIANS OFFICES CLOSE IN FL.

User Rating:      / 0  
Poor      Best

NUMEROUS HIV CLINICS AND PHYSICIANS OFFICES CLOSE IN FL.

By MARK WEISENMILLER of UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL 3/15/2000

St. Petersburg, Fl. (UPI)--- The tenth AIDS clinic and family practice physician specializing in the HIV virus in central Florida will be closing down within a week and it's owner is not happy about it.

" This is happening all over the country. Every HIV physician that I meet at national conferences is struggling," said Dr. Robert Wallace, whose St. Petersburg office is soon to close.

Dr. Wallace was referring to low reimbursement rates from managed care companies for HIV physician's patients claims. When Dr. Wallace closes his office on March 21", his 400 patients--- almost all of which have the HIV virus or AIDS---will be scattered to doctors throughout central Florida.

" It's very disconcerting for a patient who has had care from a HIV physician for many months to have that relationship broken," stated Paul Aarons, Medical Director of the Bureau of AIDS of the Florida Department of Health.

Dr. Wallace's patients are not the only HIV or AIDS people to lose their doctors due to managed care. In the last year, six AIDS clinics and HIV physicians have gone out of business in the Miami-St. Petersburg area.

As chairman of the Florida Academy of HIV physicians, Dr. Wallace has said that he and other members of the group have tried to look at the problem from the side of the HMO's.

" Numerous times, we've asked ourselves ' If we were running an insurance company, why would we carry a HIV patient ?' The answer that we come up with is that they would try to get rid of the patient as soon as possible," said Dr. Wallace.

At St. Joseph's Hospital in Tampa, the third busiest hospital in the state of Florida, the hospital's two AIDS clinics must rely on grants to survive.

" Reimbursement for anything in medicine these days is low. Our HMO and Medicaid reimbursements are very minimal," said Vicki Kenyon, a Registered Nurse who helps to take care of the 1,000 patients at both facilities.

One insurance company did get good marks from Dr. Wallace. " United HelathCare is now meeting with HIV physicians all throughout the state to talk about this problem of low reimbursement rates. That's a good sign," stated Dr. Wallace.

Another major insurance company in Florida is Cigna. " We pay very competitive rates with other HMO's in the area and the state," proclaimed David Fein, Cigna spokesperson. " All we want to pay for are services rendered. All of the contracts that the doctors sign with us are on a voluntary basis."

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JAPANESE SCIENTISTS EXAMINE POLLUTED TAMPA BAY 

User Rating:      / 0  
Poor     Best

JAPANESE SCIENTISTS EXAMINE POLLUTED TAMPA BAY  
By MARK WEISENMILLER of UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

Tampa, Fl. (UPI)— A Japanese delegation of university professors and researchers told local scientists that Japan's bays and harbors are being polluted in the same manner as Tampa Bay in the 1960's and 1970's.

Japan's current population boom, along with dredge and pollution mostly made by shipping companies is killing sea life and vegetation, according to Hideaki Nakata, a University of Tokyo professor who led the quartet.

The four-member group from Japan talked with representatives of the Southwest Florida Water Management District and The Tampa Bay Estuary Program.

Despite demonstrations by concerned citizens to protect Japan's waters, the government has provided minimal funding or support, stated Professor Nakata.

The Japanese delegation's trip was sponsored by the non-profit, Tokyo-based Ship and Ocean Foundation.

Fish, shellfish, and beds of sea grass have vanished as Japanese maritime contractors have developed the waters, Hiroshi Tamar of the Ship and Ocean Foundation told reporters.

The four-man delegation was taken on a tour of Tampa's Cockroach Bay and it's ongoing restoration project. They saw how algae blooms and sea grass pits, thought to be dead, were resurrected by scientists from The Tampa Bay Estuary Program.

The Japanese visitors toured Chesapeake Bay last week and, before going home, will examine the ecosystem of San Francisco Bay.

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### FEDERAL TRIAL OF ALLEGED INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL IMPOSTER BEGINS IN TAMPA



User Rating:      / 1

Poor      Best

FEDERAL TRIAL OF ALLEGED INTERNATIONAL

FINANCIAL IMPOSTER BEGINS IN TAMPA 4/5/2000

By MARL{ WEISENMILLER of UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

Tampa (UPI)— Testimony began today in the federal trial of an alleged international imposter financial magnate.

In opening statements, federal prosecutors told a U.S. District Court trial jury that Carroll R. Tessier, 48, was a con man of world wide acclaim.

Tessier, who speaks six languages, is now in court facing five conspiracy charges and one fraud charge in a scheme that entangled Phil Esposito, former Tampa Bay Lightning General Manager and a key player in bringing a NHL hockey team to Central Florida.

When Esposito met Tessier on March 28, 1991, Tessier offered to help the Hall of Fame former hockey star finance an arena for the Lightning. This was presented to jurors in the federal prosecutors opening statements.

" What followed from that fateful meetings was a variety of schemes... a string of lies, misrepresentations, and falsehoods," said Jay Hoffer, lead federal prosecutor, in his opening statement.

Tessier was known for posing as England's 12 ' Duke of Manchester. As the Duke--full name: Angus Charles Drago Montage--he was caught and convicted of fraud in 1996.

Skipping bail, federal marshals caught him in Rome last year and brought him to central Florida for trial.

The defense tried to shift blame to Esposito and describe him as naive. " Despite Mr. Esposito's athletic prowess, he was not a man of business; he had no ( financial) acumen," stated Brent D. Armstrong, defense attorney, in his opening statements.

Hoffer also explained that while posing as an employee of Link International Ltd., a Dublin, Ireland-based company, that Tessier told a number of banks about Link's numerous assets. Tessier hoped that that information would get loans from banks to help Esposito get money to build a new hockey arena in Tampa.

No transactions ever happened. However, the Tampa Bay Lightning paid Tessier \$20,000 in expenses.

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