



Public defenders have major credentials

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CAMDEN

When six foreign-born men were brought to U.S. District Court on Tuesday on charges of planning to kill soldiers at Fort Dix, media representatives weren't the only ones bustling around Camden's federal courthouse.

Each of those charged needed a lawyer and none had the wherewithal to hire one with enough experience to fight the charges or enough savvy to deal with the press.

Along come 20 attorneys named to what is called the CJA (Criminal Justice Act) list, lawyers who have been screened and found most able to deal with complex federal litigation and be paid out of the public's pocket.

"I think some defendants are afraid the judge is going to reach out and get a worker's compensation lawyer to represent them, but they get us," said Michael Huff of Camden, who is on the list of lawyers available for court appointment in Philadelphia and New Jersey.

Statewide, there are 100 lawyers available for court appointment to federal criminal cases: 60 in Newark and 20 each in Trenton and Camden. Those responsible for making the appointments try to match lawyers with the venue of the three federal courthouses in the state, so they are not driving back and forth on the Garden State Parkway or New Jersey Turnpike.

Selection for the list is good for one, two, or three years, and the application process starts anew when that time is up.

Cherry Hill attorney Frederick W. Klepp, formerly in charge of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Camden, has been on the list for 20 years and gets assigned to about a dozen cases a year.

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The selection process isn't easy, Klepp said, and it requires knowledge of federal laws and the federal system.

"They don't just put you on the list because they like you and think you need a job," Klepp said.

The CJA list comes into play with most multi-defendant cases because a federal public defender can represent only one client in each case because of potential conflicts. Many drug and racketeering cases include a half-dozen or more defendants.

The six Fort Dix defendants met the criteria for appointment of a CJA attorney. U.S. Magistrate Judge Joel Schneider said the defendants "don't have to be indigent but don't have financial resources and income enough to obtain qualified counsel." They weren't expected, he said, to let their families starve or lose their homes because of their legal bills.

CJA lawyers are paid \$92 an hour, for in- and out-of-court work. That's about one-fifth the going rate for criminal defense attorneys with the credentials of private defense attorneys.

Attorneys assigned in the Fort Dix terrorism case are:

Troy A. Archie, 38, is representing Eljvir Duka. A Camden lawyer, Archie grew up in Camden and graduated from Rutgers Law School, where attorney Rocco Cipparone was one of his professors. His trial practice is limited to criminal defense but he also represents several professional football players, including Rashad Baker of the New England Patriots and David Garrard of the Jacksonville Jaguars, as well as basketball player Marcus Haislip, who plays in Istanbul, Turkey.

Archie previously represented Rakeem Baskerville, who had been a fugitive in connection with the murders of two government witnesses before being arrested during a filming of the "America's Most Wanted" television show. Last year, he represented Inge Donato, a member of a Vineland-based religious society that evaded \$300,000 in taxes owed by their construction company.

Rocco Cipparone, 44, is representing Mohamad Shnewer. A Haddon Heights lawyer, Cipparone is a former assistant U.S. attorney in Camden, where he headed the drug task force and organized crime detail from 1988 to 1992. For 14 years he has taught a course at Rutgers Law School in Camden. His recent clients included former Camden City Councilman Ali Sloan El, who pleaded guilty to corruption charges; John "Jay" Phillips of Pennsauken, who defrauded banks and mortgage lenders of more than \$6 million; and former Washington Township Mayor Jerry Luongo, who diverted \$36,000 of his campaign contributions for his personal use. He is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

Michael Huff, 38, is representing Dritan Duka. A Camden lawyer, Huff is a graduate of Widener Law School and has been practicing law in Pennsylvania and New Jersey since 1994. He recently represented Atlantic City Councilman Ramon Rosario, who pleaded guilty to accepting \$14,000 from an undercover FBI agent in return for a promise to steer city contracts to a contractor.

Lisa Evans Lewis, 41, a federal public defender, is representing Agron Abdullahu. A graduate of Duke University School of Law, Evans Lewis has been with the federal public defender's office since 1998. She previously worked as a public defender in Philadelphia and while in private practice, was on the CJA list in Philadelphia.

Evans Lewis previously taught paralegal and real estate courses at Camden and Gloucester County colleges. She is one of four full-time federal public defenders in Camden.

She represented Jose Soto, one of three men charged with bank robbery, carjacking, conspiracy, and weapons offenses. Soto was one of three men arrested after being surrounded by police at a New Jersey Turnpike rest stop while they were waiting for an armored car to arrive.

This year, she represented one of four men charged with a Gloucester Township home invasion in December 2005.

Michael Riley, 59, is representing Shain Duka. A Mount Holly lawyer, Riley was the first assistant prosecutor in Burlington County from 1983 to 1999, where he brought nine capital murder cases to trial. Among the most notorious defendants were Charles "Yakky" Williams, who killed a McDonald's manager in 1992; James Clausell, convicted twice of the murder of a Willingboro man in a dispute over dog droppings; and Jacinto "Joey" Hightower, who fatally shot a Willingboro convenience store clerk in 1985.

As a defense attorney, Riley represented Cherry Hill Rabbi Fred Neulander, convicted of hiring a hitman to kill his

wife; and Ronald Pituch of Medford, who beat his mother to death with a barbell in 2002 and then fatally stabbed Gregory Katsnelson, 11, and dumped his body in a pond. He also is the defense attorney for Christopher Kornberger of Evesham, charged with the stabbing murder of an Evesham woman outside her townhouse and a series of rapes in Camden and Burlington counties.

As a CJA lawyer he recently represented Bernard "B-Nice" Murray, a major Camden drug dealer who was one of the killers of Camden student Hiram Rosa.

Riley is a graduate of Villanova Law School, and has taught courses in trial advocacy and forensic science at Widener Law School since 1987.

Richard Sparaco, 51, is representing Serdar Tatar. A graduate of Rutgers Law School, he has offices in Cherry Hill, Mount Holly, and Pleasantville. Sparaco has been on the CJA list since 1984.

His clients have included Saul Febo, a Camden drug dealer who testified for the government in trial of Jose "J.R." Rivera and in the corruption trial of former Camden Mayor Milton Milan. He also was the court-appointed attorney for Craig Orlor, a member of a white supremacy group who pleaded guilty to illegally selling weapons.

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Rocco Cipparone represents Mohamad Shnewer, 22. Cipparone is a Haddon Heights lawyer and former assistant U.S. attorney in Camden, where he once headed the drug task force and organized crime detail. Shnewer, born in Jordan and a Cherry Hill resident, works as a taxicab driver in Philadelphia.



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