

Lawyers: Soering's confessions should be suppressed

By Leslie Postal
Staff writer

BEDFORD — Jens Soering's attorneys want statements, which include confessions, their client made to Bedford authorities four years ago barred from his upcoming trial, according to a motion filed Monday.

Defense attorneys Richard A. Neaton and William H. Cleaveland asked a judge to suppress the statements the 23-year-old West German gave while a prisoner in Great Britain, arguing they were coerced and made because he thought his girlfriend was in danger.

Soering, charged with the 1985 stabbing deaths of his girlfriend's parents, was interviewed by British

and Bedford police officers during the first week of June 1986. At the time, he was in a London prison awaiting trial on unrelated fraud charges.

After interviewing Soering, Bedford authorities returned to Virginia and presented evidence against him to a grand jury, which then indicted him on charges of murdering Derek and Nancy Haysom, a prominent Boonsboro couple.

Court records show that during those June interviews Soering admitted that he killed the Haysoms. He made a similar confession to West German authorities six months later.

According to the motion, Soering first spoke to officers on June 5 and during initial conversations refused to answer questions and asked for an American attorney. After two such conversations, Soering was returned to his cell where British officers visited him and "made threats of physical harm to Elizabeth Haysom if the defendant continued to demand an attorney and continued to refuse to talk."

Elizabeth Haysom was Soering's girlfriend and had also been arrested on the fraud charges in Great Britain. She later pleaded guilty to helping

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plan her parents slayings, but said Soering committed the murders.

On the evening of June 5, Soering waived his Miranda warnings and gave a three-hour taped statement to Investigator Ricky W. Gardner of the Bedford County Sheriff's Department. Gardner had flown to Great Britain when British authorities informed him that Soering and Haysom, who had disappeared from the University of Virginia seven months earlier, had been arrested.

For the next two days, Soering was again interviewed and each time requested an attorney and was told he could not have one until he returned to Virginia.

"Instead of concluding the interrogation, the police continued to interrogate the defendant

in violation of his constitutional right against self-incrimination," the motion said.

On June 8, British officers again told Soering that Elizabeth Haysom was in danger and that he "was not being cooperative and that he was being evasive in his answers."

Because of that conversation, Soering agreed to speak again with Gardner and did so for about five hours.

Judge William W. Sweeney will rule on the defense attorney's motion Feb. 7.

At that time, Sweeney will also consider whether to remove himself from the case, disqualify Commonwealth's Attorney James W. Updike Jr. and move the case to another jurisdiction — other defense requests made in preparation for the scheduled March 8 trial.

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