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Bank officials sued for defamation

Employee claims CEO, security officer harmed his credibility

by **REBECCA MULLINS**
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A Richmond bank employee is suing the bank's security officer and CEO, accusing them of trying to ruin his credibility for his involvement in a criminal investigation.

Private detective and Richmond Bank Special Operations Officer John Landreth filed a lawsuit Thursday against security officer Bernie Reddy and Chief Executive Officer William M. Walters for allegedly conspiring to hurt his

standing in the community.

The suit claims the alleged defamation began after Landreth and former Richmond Bank Vice President Robert Puckett had talked to federal and local policing agencies about possible money laundering through the bank.

The suit says Puckett was fired after his discussion with policing agencies and "other subsequent events."

Landreth claims the defamation started after he told "agents and representatives of Richmond Bank" that Puckett's actions had Walters' consent.

The suit states Reddy conspired with Walters to defame Landreth by telling bank cus-

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John Landreth

tomers Landreth had been involved in selling illegal machine guns to the Ku Klux Klan and had been involved in kidnapping. Landreth was still working at the bank at the time as an investigator.

Landreth is asking for compensatory damages against Reddy and Walters, punitive

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damages, leave time and other relief.

Landreth wouldn't comment on the alleged federal investigation into money laundering through the bank involving the Internal Revenue Service and Drug Enforcement Administration when contacted Thursday.

He made it clear that there are no criminal charges against him or other bank personnel. He is filing only a civil complaint against the bank for Reddy's alleged statements against Landreth.

"The idea that I'm selling machine guns to a terrorist organization is absolutely ludicrous," Landreth told the Register Thursday. "I don't have anything to hide under a sheet... or I wouldn't be talking to the press."

Landreth was still employed at the bank as of Thursday, he said.

The DEA, IRS and Richmond police wouldn't comment on the issue when contacted by The Register. Richmond Bank officials also did not comment.