



# Russell Crowe hired Bill Clinton's PI to stalk takeover foes

Susannah Moran | April 03, 2009

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**ACTOR Russell Crowe and businessman Peter Holmes a Court used a top US private investigation firm to do surveillance work on people opposed to their planned takeover of the South Sydney Football Club, a court heard yesterday.**

Investigators followed people thought to be making threatening calls to Mr Holmes a Court and Crowe, took covert photographs and tracked phone calls.

Crowe first hired San Francisco-based husband-and-wife team Palladino & Sutherland, after receiving a death threat in the lead-up to the vote for South Sydney's future, Mr Holmes a Court told the NSW Supreme Court yesterday.

Jack Palladino is famous for working for former US president Bill Clinton in the early 1990s. Mr Clinton hired him to investigate a number of women who had come forward with claims of relationships with Mr Clinton in the lead-up to the presidential election.

Mr Holmes a Court said yesterday that Crowe had engaged the investigators but that he had also given instructions to Sandra Sutherland and the firm had used its "Australian associates" to conduct surveillance. Mr Holmes a Court was recalled to the witness box yesterday in the NSW Supreme Court in a defamation case brought against him by Tony Papaconstuntinos, known as Tony Papa.

Mr Papa claims to have been defamed in a March 2006 letter written by Mr Holmes a Court to Mr Papa's boss, Andrew Ferguson, the NSW secretary of the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union. Mr Holmes a Court denies the allegations.

Mr Papa opposed the takeover bid by Mr Holmes a Court and Crowe, who were ultimately successful in their bid for the Rabbitohs club after a long and bitter fight.

Yesterday, Mr Holmes a Court was questioned about the surveillance work.

"Did you or did you not give instructions to (Sandra) Sutherland to conduct surveillance on members of the "no" campaign?" asked barrister Rod Weaver.

"Yes," Mr Holmes a Court replied.

The "no" campaign was the group of people opposed to Crowe and Mr Holmes a Court's proposal. An allegation that the contents of the garbage bin of one Souths member were emptied on Mr Holmes a Court's desk was also put to the businessman but the question was rejected by judge Lucy McCallum and Mr Holmes a Court was not required to respond to it.

Mr Holmes a Court said he never gave instructions for Mr Papa to be investigated and did not consider him a suspect in a nasty letter-writing campaign or in the death threat against Crowe.

Mr Holmes a Court said he conducted his campaign fairly and said his modus operandi was to "never play the man, always play the ball".

The letter was sent to Mr Ferguson because he had heard Mr Papa was spreading misleading information to members, Mr Holmes a Court said.

The hearing continues.

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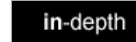
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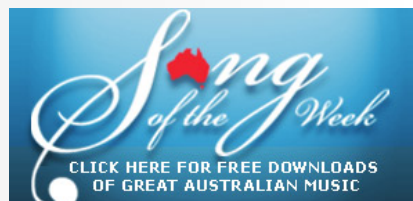
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