

AN ARMADA OF DECOYS

I RECENTLY HEARD A NEWS REPORT ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL trying to restrict the sale of torture devices. I heard about stun belts, tasers, compliance batons, self-tightening handcuffs, and other nasty devices. Fortunately, aside from being handcuffed briefly by the LAPD after a motorcycle accident in which I was injured and my motorcycle damaged, I have never been subjected to any of those devices. Aside from being kicked in the ass for years during military school, and having the aforesaid LAPD try to break my arms just before they handcuffed me, I have rarely been the victim of intentional efforts to cause me suffering.

No, in order to bring the experience of torture into my own life it has been necessary to purchase a fax machine. Why a fax machine, you ask? Because using a fax machine, that I had to pay for, my legal adversaries are able to instantaneously beam into my office scores of pages of accusations, challenges, arguments, and other terrifying things. The other guy can spend months pulling together information, gathering it into an attack refined through hours of dedicated effort. And the whole thing pops into your office in ten minutes, neatly typed, meticulously argued, carefully proofread, arrogantly signed.

Every lawyer's favorite time to send a fax stuffed with powerful toxins and terrifying portents is 4:48 p.m., Friday afternoon. That way they can screw up your whole weekend. Most fax machines ring before they begin to fuck up your life. Then, like a loyal servant who has become a mouthpiece for the enemy, they begin to spit out just what you did not want to see, packaged for your consumption by the last person you wanted to hear from, the other guy.

So it was that, on the evening of November 12, 1999, the fax machine began to disgorge its ill-omened load of paper, faxed directly from Duboff, Dorband, Cushing & King. What popped out was a flotilla of decoy depositions. Without the slightest preliminary discussion, Cohen had announced his intention to take nine different depositions at locations around the globe so far separated that I doubted any two were in the same time zone. The names of the people were unusual, like Thanin