

Alleged clone said to be in Israel

Paula McMahon

South Florida Sun-Sentinel (KRT)

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — The legal effort to appoint a guardian to protect the rights of the world's alleged first human clone ended in Broward Circuit Court on Wednesday and may now shift to Israel.

The head of Clonaid, the group that claims to have produced the first cloned baby, testified under oath Wednesday that "Baby Eve" is, and always has been, someplace other than here.

"I can tell you this baby is not in the United States and has never been in the United States," Clonaid's chief executive and top scientist Brigitte Boisselier said. "This baby is in Israel."

Broward Circuit Judge John Frusciante had to order Boisselier to answer his questions about where the baby, born Dec. 26, is located. The judge then said he had no choice but to dismiss a lawsuit filed by a private attorney, asking for a lawyer to be appointed to ensure the baby — if

she exists — is getting whatever medical care she needs.

Frusciante said he dismissed the case reluctantly and only because he could not claim jurisdiction over the baby because of Boisselier's testimony that the baby has never been in the country and her parents do not live in Florida.

If the child had ever passed through Florida, Frusciante said, he would have continued to hear the case until he was satisfied she was safe and getting appropriate medical care.

Even after hearing Boisselier testify under oath that Baby Eve was cloned, the judge indicated he was very skeptical about whether that was true. He also lectured Boisselier on her ethical responsibilities.

"At this point, I'm not giving any more credibility to this than it has already been given," Frusciante added. Boisselier is a bishop in the Raelian religious sect, whose members believe life on earth was started by extra-terrestrials.

The judge urged child welfare

agencies and government officials in Israel to try to determine whether the baby is safe. He said he hoped officials in any country who suspected the presence of a cloned child would attempt to ensure the child's welfare.

After Wednesday's hearing Bernard Siegel, the Coral Gables attorney who filed court papers seeking protection for Baby Eve, said he hopes an attorney or agency in Israel will investigate the child's welfare.

"I wanted to try to raise the child-advocacy issue," Siegel said. "Not every country in the world bans cloning, but practically every country has child abuse laws. I hope this can be a braking mechanism to rogue scientists who want to clone irresponsibly."

The judge did not force Boisselier to disclose where the alleged cloning took place. She said pediatricians are caring for the child somewhere in Israel. She could not supply the exact address, Boisselier said, because the baby's parents

took flight about a week ago.

As she left the courtroom, Boisselier would not share any substantive information about Baby Eve.

When she announced with great fanfare at the end of December that Baby Eve had been born to U.S. citizens, Boisselier said the child would undergo independent DNA testing. She later backed off that promise, claiming that the lawsuit filed in Broward County had made the child's parents fearful the baby would be taken away from them.

On Wednesday, she said Baby Eve would undergo DNA testing "when I'm sure the baby is safe."

She said the other two babies that Clonaid claims to have produced, in the Netherlands and Japan, also will be proven to be clones — but would not give any schedule for testing. She would not say when she plans to have her claims authenticated by her peers, which is standard in the scientific field.

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Americans in northern Iraq in danger of assassination, Kurdish officials say

Warren P. Strobel

Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

WASHINGTON — Kurdish officials on Wednesday warned Americans in northern Iraq that they were targets for Iraqi assassins.

Officials in Washington said the warning did not originate from Iraqi opposition groups in the region, whose credibility is sometimes suspect. Instead, one official said, allied officials passed it on to their American counterparts, who passed it to the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, one of the main Iraqi Kurdish parties.

"We view the information as a credible threat," a U.S. official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Some analysts said the threat might have originated with one of the two sons of Saddam Hussein, Uday and Qusay.

PUK security officials in Sulaimaniyah called together the handful of American journalists in the city and several foreign aid experts involved in U.S.-sponsored programs to warn them of the threat.

"U.S. journalists and those (foreigners) associated with the United

States have been targeted for immediate assassination by the Iraqi regime on the pretext that you are working for some government to bring about the downfall of Saddam Hussein," said Bafel Talibani, the son of PUK leader Jalal Talibani.

He described the source of the information as highly reliable, but declined to disclose any further details.

Talibani said the threat was directed "at individuals who are in Sulaimaniyah and specifically individuals who are staying at the Suleimani Palace hotel."

The hotel is one of two main hotels where foreign journalists stay in Sulaimaniyah, the city from which the PUK controls its half of the Kurds' self-governed safe haven in northern Iraq.

Gun-toting PUK fighters were posted around the hotel amid a general increase in security in the city center, and PUK officials offered journalists protection in a guarded compound.

PUK officials said a large number of Hussein's agents were operating in the city, and a U.S. official in

Washington said Iraqi opposition groups have been thoroughly penetrated by Hussein's agents, who are "abundant" in the independent Kurdish zone.

The Iraqi security services, the official said, also might have made a deal to use members of the militant Islamic group Ansar al Islam ("Partisans of Islam"), which has some ties to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terrorist group, to attack Americans and members of the opposition.

Ansar fighters and a number of al-Qaida members who fled Afghanistan have imposed strict Islamic rule in a pocket of territory that they have seized on the border with Iran.

U.S. and Kurdish officials say that Ansar also receives weapons and other support from Hussein.

In Washington, another U.S. official said there has been a recent "spike" in communications between Baghdad and the Ansar group, which some analysts believe Hussein supports in an effort to destabilize the independent Kur-

dish zone in northern Iraq.

"What that represents is unclear," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

But he called Ansar "the lead candidate right now" in terms of threats against Americans in the region.

The group was bloodied in a recent engagement with PUK forces and may be looking to exact revenge, he said.

A senior administration official who read the intelligence reporting, and who spoke on condition of anonymity, said he considered the threat "very serious" and advised news organizations, nongovernmental groups and others who have Americans in the Kurdish area of northern Iraq to do likewise.

Another official noted that the Iraqis don't distinguish between journalists and other Americans, but consider all Americans in Iraq to be spies.

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