

Terry faces new charges

NEW YORK (CNS) — U.S. District Judge Robert Ward has appointed New York Attorney General Robert Abrams to prosecute Operation Rescue leader Randall Terry on criminal charges related to last month's Democratic convention.

Ward took the action after U.S. Attorney Otto Obermaier refused to take up the case, saying it would be inappropriate for a federal prosecutor to press criminal charges because the Justice Department has argued in Operation Rescue's behalf in a similar case now before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Terry is accused of having violated a court injunction when Operation Rescue members attempted to hand presidential candidate Bill Clinton an aborted fetus during the Democratic National Convention in July.

Only Terry faces charges of criminal contempt. Other Operation Rescue members involved in the protest face civil contempt charges.

Ward said criminal charges should be brought against Terry because civil charges and fines appear to have had no effect in stopping him.

Operation Rescue was under an injunction, based on the 90-year-old Ku Klux Klan Act, barring it from blocking abortion clinics or other activities during the convention.

The Supreme Court is reviewing a similar case charging that Operation Rescue conspired to keep an entire class of people from engaging in interstate commerce by blockading a Northern Virginia abortion clinic.

Ward had said that if Obermaier refused the case he would appoint Abrams, who had sought the original injunction after Terry said he intended to try to hand a fetus to Clinton.

Federal guidelines permit judges to appoint a special prosecutor when the U.S. attorney declines to pursue a criminal contempt case.

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