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**How Jack Shepherd lawyer won legal aid lawyer of the year**

By Neil Sears for the Daily Mail  10/1/2019

The lawyer defending Jack Shepherd at public expense has built his career on representing those accused of high-profile crimes.

Richard Egan, a senior partner at Tuckers Solicitors, has been praised for successfully defending cases with ‘complex legal issues’.

The solicitor rose to prominence in the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attacks on New York’s Twin Towers in 2001.

The US sought the extradition of British resident Lotfi Raissi, claiming he had trained the suicide hijackers.

Mr Egan, who was a duty solicitor at the time, was given the case at random after Mr Raissi was arrested.

He successfully marshalled a case against extradition and was praised for clearing the name of an innocent man.

Mr Egan then sued for substantial damages. As a result he became the Legal Aid Practitioner Group criminal legal aid lawyer of the year in 2003.

The judges for the award said: ‘In the face of world-wide hostile Press coverage, and facing the might of the US government, Mr Egan dismantled the extradition case against Mr Raissi until the magistrate released him, completely exonerated.’

In 2015, Mr Egan came third in the ‘client-partner’ category of the Lawyer of the Year.

A year earlier, he represented Tania Clarence, then 42, after she was charged with murder for suffocating her three disabled children at her £2million home in south-west London.

She admitted manslaughter, and was detained indefinitely under the Mental Health Act.

Mr Egan said after the Old Bailey trial that his client’s care for her children had been ‘extraordinary’, but went on: ‘Her story of dedication and love became a story of despair and utter hopelessness.’

The legal guide Chambers has called him ‘a real heavyweight’ and ‘one of the best lawyers of his generation’.

Among his cases is a military tribunal in Belize in which he got an attempted murder charge against a British soldier thrown out.

He also acted for defendants charged in a terror plot in 2006 in which liquid explosives disguised as soft drinks were to have been detonated on transatlantic flights, and for the leading defendant in the London and Glasgow terror attacks in 2007.

Tuckers said it would be ‘negligent’ if it ceased to represent Shepherd because he had absconded. A spokesman said: ‘We are criminal defence solicitors and have an important role in the criminal justice system to represent those accused of criminal offences.

‘We represent. We do not judge. That duty does not go away because of the perceived morally dubious actions of any particular client – and in the context of a criminal lawyer that would be absurd.’

Tuckers said it had done 95 per cent of the legal aid work when Shepherd fled.

The spokesman added: ‘The fact that Mr Shepherd absconded was notified to the court, the CPS and police. The court was aware that we would act in his absence. We would be negligent and in breach of our professional duties were we not to proceed because the client had absconded.’

Shepherd was granted the right to appeal on the basis of European case law, which states fleeing justice is no bar to an appeal. Tuckers said: ‘We are duty bound to proceed with the appeal.’