

Lawyer: Garrido to plead guilty Thursday

By Sam Stanton, Sacramento Bee



Accused kidnapper Phillip Garrido is expected to plead guilty Thursday to the 1991 abduction of 11-year-old Jaycee Lee Dugard in a bid to show compassion for Dugard as well as his wife, Nancy, one of the lawyers in the case told The Bee today.

Stephen Tapson, Nancy Garrido's attorney, said this afternoon that a deal was reached last week that calls for Phillip Garrido to enter a guilty plea and spend the rest of his life in prison. However, Tapson said he expects Nancy Garrido to face trial unless El Dorado County District Attorney Vern Pierson agrees to a compromise that might allow Nancy Garrido to be released from prison in 30 years or so.

Neither Pierson nor Phillip Garrido's public defender, Susan Gellman, could be reached immediately today.

But Tapson said Phillip Garrido's expected guilty plea will allow Dugard to avoid testifying against the man who kept her captive for 18 years and whose sexual assaults of her resulted in two daughters being born in captivity.

He also said Garrido was showing mercy to his wife by agreeing to plead and showing that "the major evil person is out of the way."

Phillip Garrido's lawyer has conceded there is no way her 60-year-old client can ever hope to win release from custody. But Tapson holds out hope that Nancy Garrido, 55, may be able to win a deal that could see her walk free in 30 years. Tapson said prosecutors originally offered Nancy Garrido a 40-year

deal and that he was told the Dugard family did not object to that. But prosecutors later upped the offer to 184 years, he said, adding that it made no sense for him to accept an offer like that rather than go to trial.

Tapson said he still is hoping for an offer "within reason to avoid the tribulations of a trial at great cost to the taxpayers."

The Garridos are accused of snatching Dugard off the street outside her South Lake Tahoe-area home as she was walking off to a school bus stop.

Nancy Garrido is believed to have been the one who dragged Dugard into the car. The couple is accused of taking Dugard to their Antioch home and keeping her captive in tents in the backyard and locked sheds until she was rescued in August 2009.

Both suspects admitted to their involvement in recent interviews with detectives, including one with Nancy Garrido that Dugard watched, Tapson has said.

Phillip Garrido, a convicted kidnapper and rapist, was on parole at the time of the kidnapping. Jaycee Dugard won a \$20 million settlement from the state of California over parole agents' failure to detect her presence at the Garrido house for years.

Dugard, who is now living in seclusion in Northern California and writing a book, has yet to speak publicly about her ordeal.

Her mother, Terry Probyn, filed a civil suit against the state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation seeking special and general damages for negligence, failure to discharge mandatory duties, negligent hiring and training and infliction of emotional distress.

The suit, filed March 22 in Sacramento Superior Court, accuses the department of “egregious conduct” that caused Probyn to suffer “severe emotional distress learning of the torture and abuse her daughter endured while a captor of Garrido’s and trying to re-establish the relationship lost over all those years.”