

# Owner of Alabama Car Dealership Labeled “Taliban Toyota” Awarded \$7.5 Million

By: Rutledge & Yaghmai

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The owner of a large southwest Alabama car dealership labeled by a competitor as “Taliban Toyota” has been awarded \$7.5 million in damages after a jury trial for his slander claim. The jury deliberated for just three hours before awarding Shawn Esfahani \$2.5 million in compensatory damages and \$5 million in punitive damages

Iranian-born Shawn Esfahani, owner of Eastern Shore Toyota in Daphne, Alabama, filed the [Alabama business lawsuit](#) against Bob Tyler Toyota after employees at that Pensacola, Florida-based dealership falsely portrayed him as an Islamist militant to customers.

Specifically, Esfahani’s lawsuit alleged that Bob Tyler sales manager Fred Kenner told at least one couple considering buying from Eastern Shore Toyota in 2009 that Esfahani was of Middle Eastern descent and was “helping fund the insurgents there and is also laundering money for them.”

Another Bob Tyler salesman was accused of telling the same couple that Esfahani was from Iraq and calling him a “terrorist” who put soldiers including the salesman’s brother in harm’s way.

In reality, Esfahani, a naturalized U.S. citizen, fled his native Iran in 1980 following the Islamic revolution that toppled the U.S.-backed Shah and swept Shi’ite Muslim clergy to power, his lawsuit said. He opened his Alabama car dealership in 2007.

Source: [Reuters](#)

*[Rutledge & Yaghmai](#) is a full service litigation firm that offers more than fifty-seven years of diverse legal experience. The attorneys of Rutledge & Yaghmai leverage that experience to assist large and small businesses throughout Alabama in achieving their business goals while minimizing their risks.*

*In addition to offering transactional business services such as Alabama business formation and planning, Rutledge & Yaghmai prides itself on the diversity of Alabama business litigation cases it has handled successfully.*

*To learn more about the wide range of transactional and business litigation services we offer Alabama businesses, please [contact](#) the attorneys of Rutledge & Yaghmai today.*

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**About Rutledge & Yaghmai**  
<http://rylaw.net/>

Rutledge & Yaghmai (R & Y) is a full service litigation firm that offers more than fiftyseven

years of diverse legal experience. Formed in 2006, Rutledge & Yaghmai concentrates on giving each case individual attention as opposed to carrying a mass a number of cases. That way they are able to develop a lifelong relationship with clients.

### **William Rutledge**

William Eugene Rutledge graduated from the University of Alabama in 1960. He graduated from the University of Alabama Law School 1966. Mr. Rutledge served as a Captain in the Judge Advocate General's Corps, U.S. Army and as Chief of Military Justice at Fort Bliss, Texas. He was trial counsel for the United States where he prosecuted several nationally publicized court marshalls. He was the recipient of the Distinguished Service Medal for his trial work in the Army.

He began the practice of law in Birmingham, AL on August 1, 1966. His early trial practice was a mixture of business litigation and railroad related litigation. He has a strong appellate practice in which he has excelled since the early 1970s and continues that practice till the present time. He has handled over 100 cases in the state appellate system and 80 cases in the federal appellate system.

He specialized through the years of his practice in business formations. He has assisted new entrepreneurs in the formation and strategy of their businesses. Also, he represents companies in business litigation. Cases have ranged from business disputes among members to representing smaller companies against the "larger corporations." Practice memberships include the Bar of the Alabama Supreme Court, the United States District Court for the Northern, Middle and Southern Districts, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, and the Supreme Court of the United States. He is married to Sherry Crittenden Rutledge and has four children and six grandchildren.

### **Greg Yaghmai**

Greg graduated with honors from The Citadel where he received his bachelor's degree in Business Administration. In 1997, he received his law degree from Cumberland School of Law.

For the first four and half of years of his legal career, Greg served as a Deputy District Attorney for the Jefferson County, Alabama District Attorney's Office. By age 26 he tried his first death penalty case. He went on to try either solo or as lead counsel seven capital murder and six murder cases. He also had the benefit of being the first lawyer in Alabama to be certified by the Alabama State Troopers as a Traffic Homicide investigator. He obtained this after attending a two-week seminar, which required him to live in a closed military base with forty other police officers. He also had the unique experience of being provided alcohol in a controlled setting so he could be utilized by the Jefferson County Sheriff's training academy in officers learning how to administer field sobriety tests. He is a member of the National College for DUI Defense (NCDD) which is a prestigious organization defending those charged with DUI.

He subsequently left the DA's office to become a partner in a forty lawyer civil litigation firm. This firm concentrated mostly on civil defense work, but Greg continued to expand his plaintiff and criminal defense practice.

In 2006, he co-founded Rutledge & Yaghmai. One of Greg's goals was to reduce the number of cases handled to allow for more individual attention to each case. Rutledge & Yaghmai maintains a general litigation practice. Greg focuses on personal injury, business litigation, and criminal defense cases.

Greg has truly handled cases from all sides: criminal prosecution/defense and civil plaintiff/defense. Overall, Greg has tried more than seventy-five jury trials to conclusion. He has significant experience in using visual presentations and present day media applications in presenting cases to jury. His ultimate jury consultant is his wife, Brandi, who he met when she served on the jury of a rape/kidnapping case he tried.

He has recently been asked to teach Trial Techniques for the International Web based site Solo Practice University. There he will share his expertise in trying jury cases.

Greg is licensed in all state and federal courts in Alabama and the 11th Circuit